HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE **KENAI WATERSHED FORUM TEAM**

Dear KWF Friends

As 2025 comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on a question we've been asking around the office: "What has inspired or surprised you most since joining the Kenai Watershed Forum?"

For me, the answer comes easily—it's you. It's the unwavering support from this community and our membership, whether through donations or the countless hours you volunteer to help with our programs and events. Every single day, I'm reminded that we're not just an organization—we're a community that genuinely cares about the Kenai Watershed.

This year really drove that home during our Kenai King Forum. The turnout was extraordinary. Seeing so many of you come together to discuss the future of our iconic salmon runs, share knowledge, and work toward solutions reminded me why this work matters so much. You showed up—not just in numbers, but with thoughtful questions, genuine concern, and a commitment to being part of the solution.

That's the kind of community support that makes everything we do possible.

As we head into 2026, we're counting on that same spirit to keep our work going strong. Your year-end gift helps us continue monitoring water quality, engaging and educating the community, protecting habitat, and bringing people together around the resource we all love.

Whether you can give $50, $500, or $5,000, every contribution makes a tangible difference. And right now, as we close out the year, your support is especially meaningful as we plan for the seasons ahead.

Thank you for being part of this community. Thank you for caring about clean water, healthy salmon, and the future of the Kenai Watershed. And thank you for continuing to surprise and inspire me with your dedication.

Here's to another year of working together.

With gratitude,
Trenten T. Dodson
Executive Director
Kenai Watershed Forum



TRENT

DONATE TODAY

OUR STAFF REFLECTS ON WHAT HAS INSPIRED OR SURPRISED THEM MOST SINCE JOINING KWF



BENJAMIN

What has inspired or surprised me most since joining the Kenai Watershed Forum?

I'm more excited to tell you about what I find un-surprising, which is: I'm still just as full of questions and ideas as I was on day one here. I could write to say I'm "surprised" that I've never been bored with my work at KWF, but surprise wouldn't be the right word. Long before I worked here, I knew KWF's mission aligned with my values and interests.

This month I celebrate my fifth year at KWF. Even as I hit this milestone, I am unable to recall a day that I've been bored. From the lowliest mosquito-clouded swampy wetland to high alpine fields to everywhere in between, my work with KWF continues to take me to exciting places. Even on office days- while certainly there's times we could use a little more excitement- I've never wondered if my work will ever have impact or value. This year we launched one of our most ambitious research projects ever, and I can't wait to see what's next.

- Benjamin Meyer, Research Coordinator

2025 has been a year of transitions! As a new addition to the Kenai Watershed Forum, I have been blown away by the amount of support and camaraderie offered by my colleagues. Whether it has been getting set up in the education office, building shelving in our onsite educational storage shed, or getting connected with local schools and teachers, I have been floored by the amount of support offered by the team at KWF. I'm looking forward to continuing my upstream journey in 2025, and giving my all for our local communities, children, and watersheds!

- Brandon Rolf Gustafson, Education Specialist, Summer Camp Coordinator



BRANDON

Since stepping into my role in June, I've been genuinely inspired by the connections and collaborations that have formed so naturally within this community. Whether it's partnering with local businesses, bringing new voices into our programs, or working alongside organizations who care deeply about the same things we do, I've been overwhelmed, in the best way, by how many people are ready to show up, lean in, and work together for the Kenai Watershed Forum. I've also felt incredibly supported by my colleagues from day one. The acceptance, encouragement, and teamwork within this staff have made even the busiest seasons feel purposeful and energizing. It's rare to step into a workplace where you instantly feel both trusted and inspired, and I don't take that for granted.



CIERRA

This year's Kenai King Initiative has been one of the clearest examples of what makes this work so meaningful. Watching our community rally around an issue as important as king salmon recovery, listening, learning, and committing to action showed me the power of collaboration at every level. Being part of that effort has been a highlight of my first year here and a reminder of why this work matters.

I'm grateful every day for the partnerships, the teamwork, and the shared passion that drive our mission forward. And I'm excited for everything we'll continue building together in the year ahead.

- Cierra Vandehey, Community Engagement Coordinator

The Kenai Watershed Forum is the place where I fell in love with the Kenai Peninsula and its waterways. I arrived on the peninsula in late May, and by a stroke of good fortune, landed at the Watershed Forum. I found myself thrust into the world of life and conservation on the Kenai River, and the Watershed Forum was the nexus. The fever pitch of the Alaskan summer found me spending nearly every moment of my free time on the water, volunteering with KWF events and projects, and generally just hanging around the Watershed Forum and the people I had met there.

I had an idea of how life on the Kenai Peninsula might look before I arrived, and it looks only a little like I imagined that it would. KWF is more than just a group of people interested in being good stewards of the Kenai Peninsula's waters, fish, and habitat. It is a place where lasting community can be found. A community that is firmly grounded in the idea that we are good stewards of our waterways, not only through our actions, but through the actions we encourage in others. The Kenai Watershed Forum inspired me to make the Kenai Peninsula my home, not just a place where I work and live.



CHRISTOPHER

- Christopher Haberbush, Stream Watch Coordinator



CANDACE

As I reflect on the past year, it is not that I am surprised but rather I am humbled by the generosity of our donors and the community, who supported the Kenai Watershed Forum and other non-profit organizations who faced funding cuts and continue to grapple with diminishing financial support from federal partners.

My colleagues continued passionately to fulfill their obligations despite the uncertainty of the sustainability of their programs. Much was the same for our incredibly dedicated volunteers and partners.

We encouraged and supported each other to hold to our promise to 'work together for healthy watersheds of the Kenai Peninsula'.

We are all brought together for the purpose of protecting that which we are blessed to have. The Kenai River and surrounding watersheds, and the teeming life and communities dependent upon them, have shown themselves to be resilient, but only with our support – through the generosity of the donors, community, and funders and the dedication of my colleagues, our volunteers, and our partners.

So, when asked 'what I found to be inspirational this year', it is this deep understanding of being a part of something bigger, something that will remain long after I have moved on.

There isn't enough gratitude that can be expressed for this sense of community.

Best Wishes to all. Happy Holidays.

- Candace Nakagawa, Accounts & Grants Manager



WINSTON



SER



AURORA

happy holidays