

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Kenai Watershed Forum****Federal Tax ID: 91-1829284****Project Title:****Project Type: Other**

Kenai Watershed Forum - Educational Programming

State Funding Requested: \$100,000**House District: Kenai Areawide (28-30)**

Future Funding May Be Requested

Brief Project Description:

Funding for Stream Watch and Adopt-A-Stream educational programming

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost:	\$300,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$200,000)
FY2015 State Funding Request:	<u>(\$100,000)</u>
Project Deficit:	\$0

Funding Details:

none

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

KWF coordinates two foundational education programs: Stream Watch (SW) and Adopt-A-Stream (AAS). These programs are vital for meeting KWF educational objectives.

Stream Watch Background

The Stream Watch program is a volunteer driven, peer-to-peer coldwater fishery education and protection program that is making a difference on South-central Alaska's Kenai Peninsula. The Kenai Peninsula is home to three of the most popular sport fisheries in the state of Alaska. Each summer over 150,000 visitors come to enjoy the world-class fisheries on the Kenai, Kasilof and Russian Rivers. These rivers are listed in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Catalog of Waters Important for the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes as Chinook, sockeye, pink and coho salmon in addition to rainbow trout, dolly varden and steelhead are found in their waters. These rivers demonstrate need for SW sites as they experience salmonid habitat degradation that results, in part, from the mass influx of summer anglers that fish their waters. Local land management agencies as well as river conservation entities have identified these rivers as areas of concern, highlighting them in their strategic conservation plans (e.g. Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership).

SW this year celebrates its 20th year of addressing the fish habitat concerns on the Kenai Peninsula. Originally started in 1994, the program was forged to address the habitat degradation occurring on the Russian and upper Kenai Rivers. The program continues to address these habitat threats on the Russian and upper Kenai River but has recently expanded to include the Kasilof and lower Kenai Rivers due to agency requests and growing need. SW addresses habitat degradation through both short and long term approaches.

Short-term program habitat protection measures include the installation and maintenance of seasonal protective habitat fencing, river debris clean up; educational and regulatory sign installation and fishing line collection and recycling. Program

partners provide guidance and assistance in the design and implementation of short-term habitat activities. In return volunteers complete river projects and provide much needed site observations to short staffed land managers. The intent with short-term activities is to quickly and effectively address habitat degradation before it becomes a major issue requiring more time and financial support to remedy.

The program addresses long-term habitat issues by providing riverside educational messages on fishing regulations and cold water fisheries habitat protection to create life-long, knowledgeable habitat stewards both on the Kenai Peninsula and on the angler's home waters. The program does this by sharing educational messages at popular fishing sites as well as airing educational radio messages and staffing educational booths at local community events to promote cold water fisheries protection and river stewardship across the peninsula to a variety of people. Multiple salmonid species, including species of concern (e.g. Chinook salmon), will reap the long-term benefits of the program through a variety of activities that work to proactively protect these critical coldwater fisheries on the Kenai Peninsula and beyond.

Stream Watch Proposed Outcomes

The Stream Watch program will strive to attain the following outcomes annually:

- Engage 70 volunteers in river protection and education activities
- Share river protection information with 3500 people
- Remove 500 pounds of wildlife endangering litter
- Install and maintain 2 miles of salmon habitat protection fencing
- Restore 2 miles of beach
- Prevent 100 pounds of soil from eroding into peninsula rivers
- Restore 10 acres of wetland and riparian areas
- Orchestrate 2+ sponsored volunteer events
- Increase the impact of agency efforts to protect salmon habitat.
- Increase river user knowledge of river protection activities and regulations, generating lifelong river stewards.
- Foster a river protection ethic for the benefit of wildlife and humans in Alaska and beyond.

These outcomes are critical to salmon habitat protection. Effectively educating river users so that they can make decisions to protect the river system is imperative. More often than not, anglers are not aware that their actions can have a negative impact. However this is the case especially when 350,000+ anglers fish an area. Education becomes critical to success.

Adopt-A-Stream (AAS) Background

Adopt-A-Stream is an established aquatic education program in local schools on the Kenai Peninsula during the school year and at summer camp during the summer in Soldotna, Alaska. The Adopt-A-Stream program is presented in partnership with the US Fish & Wildlife Service - Kenai Field Office (USFWS), which provides a Student Conservation Association Environmental Education Intern to assist with presenting the program to local schools during the school year. KWF provides an Education Coordinator to facilitate and oversee both the school and summer aspects of the program.

The AAS Education Coordinator works regularly with 15 classes in 6 schools throughout the school year, in addition to special programming with K-4 classes in another 12 classrooms. Sessions include lessons on water quality, macro-invertebrate and insect importance, cold weather safety, and habitat. A typical month consists of 30+ classroom visits and 800 contact hours.

To complement the classroom portion of AAS, the Education Coordinator organizes graphing projects, stream cleanups, and campfire programs with classes. The Educational Coordinator facilitates AAS presence at local educational events,

such as Alaska Department of Fish & Game's annual Salmon Celebration (hosting 750 students), and the Kenai Birding Festival's youth education program.

The benefits of AAS continue through the summer, when the Education Coordinator orchestrates an outdoor science learning and adventure experience through KWF Summer Camp. In the summer of 2013, 74 campers explored stream banks, played games in the forest, helped pull invasive weeds and learned about their environment through story, song and instruction.

Through Adopt-A-Stream's many arms, knowledge of water ecology takes root in Peninsula youth. Education through place-based learning grounds students in their environments, not only imparting important and lasting general conservation messages but acquainting students with the particular set of ecological processes at work around them. AAS and KWF Summer Camp work to invest students in the streams and rivers in their backyards, and provide the skills necessary to ethically investigate, enjoy and protect them.

Adopt-A-Stream Proposed Outcomes

The Adopt-A-Stream and Summer Camp programs plan to attain the following outcomes:

- Bring water ecology curriculum to hundreds of students in 20 classrooms across 16 Peninsula schools
- Achieve consistent, substantive contact with students during 25 monthly visits
- Average 800 student contact hours per month during the school year
- Provide supplementary outdoor science curriculum and presence at local community events
- Instill stream ecology knowledge and foster an ethic of stewardship in students
- Grow the KWF Summer camp to 100 campers
- Diversify KWF Summer Camp curriculum to maximize opportunities for fun and learning in returning campers
- Continue the Kenai Peninsula's tradition of providing area students with background natural science knowledge necessary for a lifetime of environmental awareness and care

Adopt-A-Stream works in coordination with teachers and school administrators to provide students with engaging water science curriculum specific to the Kenai Peninsula. Natural science education for youth is key to cultivating an engaged and knowledgeable citizenry, and because the Kenai Peninsula hosts some of the most revered salmon fisheries in the world, facility with our river processes is paramount. Students AAS reaches leave the program understanding how our streams function and their roles in preserving river health for years to come.

Has the project been through community or public review process?

Yes, the matching funds provided through the CIAP program were considered by and approved by the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

Project Timeline:

This request would support KWF's educational programs for FY14 through FY17.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Robert Ruffner, Executive Director

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

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Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? Yes No

<i>For use by Co-chair Staff Only:</i>
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