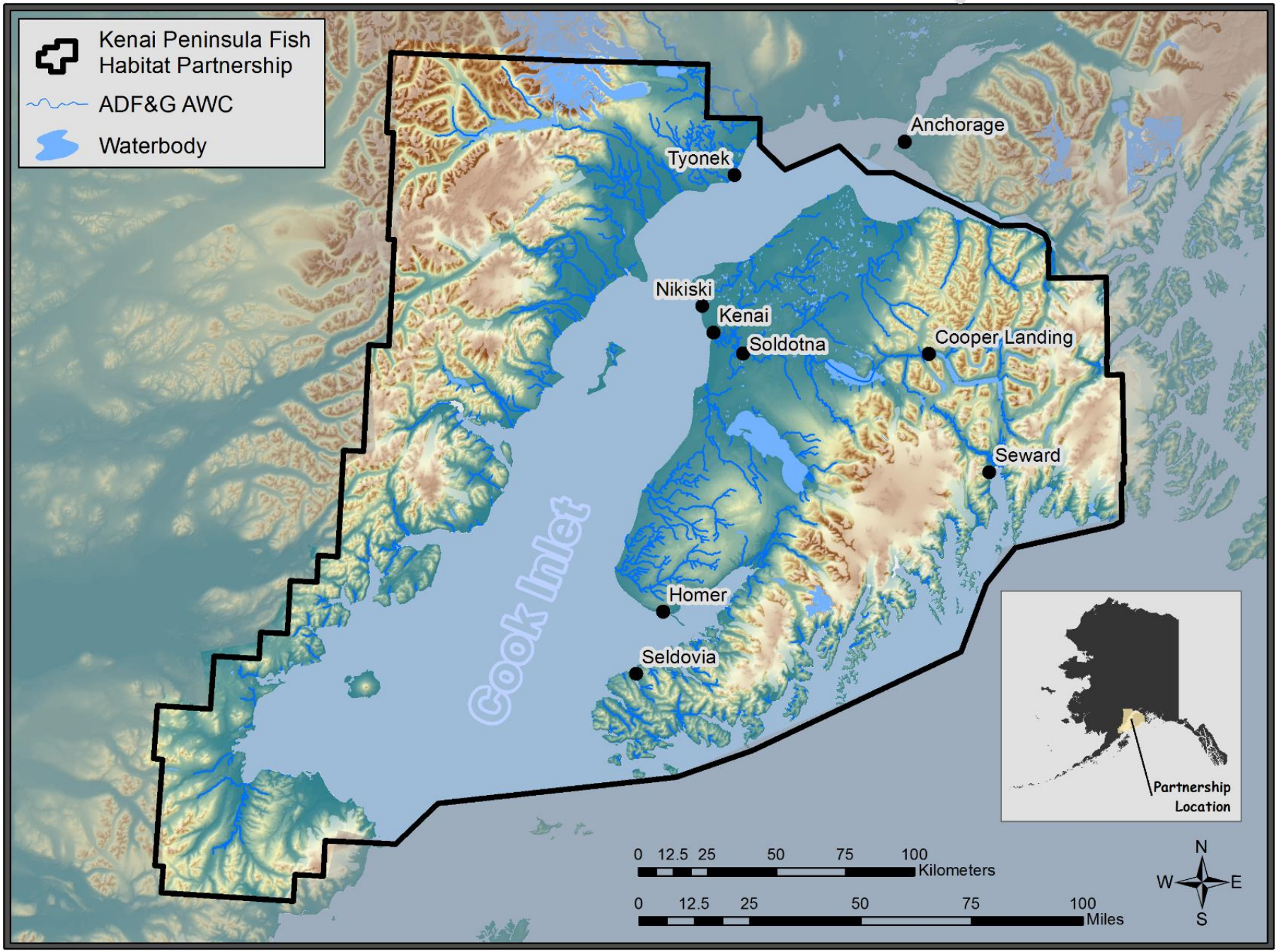
Home is Where the Habitat Is

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

April 5 & 6 • Sterling Community Center • Sterling, AK

KENAI PENINSULA FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership



Home is Where the Habitat Is

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership Science Symposium

Welcome!

The Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership would like to welcome you to their Third Biennial Science Symposium! Thank you for choosing to join us for two days of interaction and collaboration focused on habitat of the Kenai Peninsula.

On January 15, 2010, The KPFHP was approved as a recognized Fish Habitat Partnership at the meeting of the National Fish Habitat Board. The Partnership became the 15th regional fish habitat partnership in the U.S. and the 3rd recognized partnership in Alaska. The KPFHP works closely with the other Alaska Partnerships: The Mat Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership, the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership and the Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership -which was recently recognized by the National Fish Habitat Partnership in 2014. Welcome Southeast!

The geographic area covered by the KPFHP closely follows those of the Kenai Peninsula Borough. This includes approximately 25,000 square miles, encompassing 14 major watersheds, over 20,000 miles of stream habitat as well as more than 350,000 acres of wetland habitat.

Purpose: To create and foster effective collaborations to maintain healthy fish, healthy people, healthy habitat, and healthy economies in the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

Mission: To protect, maintain, restore and enhance fish habitat.

Vision: For future generations to have healthy, sustainable fish and aquatic ecosystems.

We hope you enjoy the Symposium! KPFHP

The KPFHP Steering Committee

Erika Ammann, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Branden Bornemann-Trout Unlimited
Christy Cincotta, Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD)
Kyle Graham, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Ginny Litchfield, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
Sue Mauger, Cook Inletkeeper (CIK)
Matt Maxey, USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest
Marie McCarty, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust (KHLT)
Marcus Mueller, Kenai Peninsula Borough

Jack Sinclair KPFHP Coordinator

April 5 - Wednesday

9:30 Registration and Check-In

10:00 Opening/Welcome –

Jack Sinclair-Kenai Watershed Forum/Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership

Mayor Mike Navarre -Kenai Peninsula Borough

10:20 Key Note Address- Ian Dutton
New partnerships and tools to generate greater returns on fisheries research and management investments

10:45-11:00 Robert Massengill, Fisheries Biologist-
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Status of the Kenai Peninsula Invasive Pike Control
Presentation will inform on recent research and control actions aimed at invasive Northern Pike on the Kenai Peninsula. Talk will include discussion of control methods and recovery of native fish populations. Future pike control plans will be introduced.

11:05-11:20 Melissa Steritz, 2016 Stream Watch Coordinator
Kenai Watershed Forum
The Stream Watch
Summarizing the successes of the Stream Watch volunteer program, in which locals are trained to be stewards and ambassadors of our rivers. Our volunteers work along the Kenai, Kasilof, and Russian Rivers to educate the public about ethical angling, bear awareness, and best practices while also collecting almost an entire ton of trash each summer. This presentation will introduce Symposium participants to our program and how it benefits fish habitats.

11:25-11:50 Mike Gracz, Wetlands Assessment Specialist
Kenai Watershed Forum
Peatland Contributions to Streamflow During the Summer Low Flow Period
Peatlands are widespread habitats in many northern watersheds, where they can have an important influence on the hydrology of streams. However, the capacity of peatlands to contribute to stream flow during the summer dry period remains uncertain due to the difficulty of estimating shallow groundwater discharge from extensive peat deposits. We compared two approaches to quantify this contribution from peatlands to a creek in Southcentral Alaska with a spawning and rearing population of king salmon. A water budget from a representative peatland within this watershed showed that a substantial surplus may be available for discharge during a dry period. This finding was corroborated by calculations from an end-member mixing analysis (EMMA) showing that 55% of the stream flow during a dry period originated from the near surface layers of peatlands. Contributions from peatland habitats to stream flow may therefore provide an important buffer against the potentially harmful effects of rising stream temperature on commercially important fish species.

11:50- Kaitlin Vadla- The story behind the posters

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch Break

Notes-

1:00- 1:25 Jeff Knopf, GIS Analyst - Adjunct Instructor
St. Mary's University of Minnesota
Status National Hydrography Dataset Mapping on the Kenai Peninsula
The National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) for many parts of Alaska is out of date and in need of revision. The existing digital hydrography data for much of Alaska was derived from the conversion of 1:63,360 paper topographic maps and digital raster graphics (DRG). These maps were compiled and printed in the early 1960's (using traditional cartographic methods). Changes in the natural landscape and the extent of human development have altered the regions hydrography. In addition, given the original compilation scale, this original hydrography is generalized and unsuitable for site specific applications. Advancements in spatial data development methodologies have led to cost-effective means to update this hydrographic data to capture the changes since the 1950's at a variety of scales more conducive to watershed planning and site-specific applications.
The watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula are vital to not only the natural landscape and wildlife that exists there, but the Kenai is well known as a premier sport and commercial fishing destination. It is important to protect and enhance the native fish and aquatic resources of this region for both its natural beauty and its benefit to the economy. The NHD is useful for contributing to planning efforts for habitat conservation and restoration. With its lakes and streams mapped this data can be used for planning to better assess where stream features may be affected negatively through land use. This data can also be used to inform policy makers of conditions affecting the watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula.
The purpose of this project was to review, validate and, where necessary, update the Kenai Peninsula NHD in order to meet the national quality standards identified by the USGS. This validation process is possible because up-to-date, large scale imagery and digital elevation data is now available for the Peninsula.

1:30 – 2:00 Sue Mauger, Science Director
Cook Inletkeeper
Water Faucets, Back Alleys and Haul Outs: Groundwater Guiding Salmon Through Warm Streams
Life is challenging for juvenile salmon growing up in the creeks and connected lakes of Cook Inlet. Summer temperatures can be warmer than cold-water fish like and, with many predators lurking about and high flows to contend with, getting big enough to make a dash for marine waters is not easy. Fortunately, scattered throughout our streams are unique groundwater–fed habitats bringing in colder water and providing spaces to escape from predators and faster flows. For a fish biologist, these groundwater faucets, back alleys and haul outs are not always easy to find instream but by using thermal infrared imagery (TIR), we can locate these refugia that may be critical for juvenile salmon survival. Building on our previous work from the lower Kenai Peninsula, we used TIR to guide site selection within the Big Lake basin to determine if Coho Salmon preferentially use cold-water habitats for summer rearing. We selected sites in Fish, Herkimer and Lucille creeks and sampled reaches with measurable influence from cold-water inflows and compared them with control reaches. Our results reinforce the value of groundwater-fed habitats and offer insight for targeted protection of salmon habitat across the Cook Inlet watershed in the face of rising stream temperatures.

2:00-2:20 Christy Cincotta, Executive Director
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD) is committed to a locally driven, cooperative approach to protecting natural resources. In 2014, TTCD began developing a Tyonek Area Watershed Action Plan, encompassing drainages from Nikolai Creek north to the Beluga River on western Cook Inlet. The overall goal of this plan is to provide a framework to restore, enhance, and protect the freshwater systems in this area. The project includes the following objectives: 1. Monitor the overall health of the Tyonek Area Watershed, 2. Identify current and future threats to the health of the Tyonek Area Watershed, 3. Work with landowners to address current watershed issues (i.e. pike, fish passage, invasive plants, etc.) and 4. Develop best practices to maintain watershed health. This presentation will cover TTCD's progress on the Tyonek Area Watershed Action Plan and progress to date to address threats to salmon habitat.

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2:25-3:00 Alan Boraas, Ph.D.
Professor of Anthropology
Kenai Peninsula College
Fish, Family, Freedom and Sacred Water
The Environmental Protection Agency assessment of the Native villages of the Nushagak and Kvichak watersheds regarding the proposed Pebble Mine (Boraas and Knott 2013) and the Native American Rights Fund Section 106 assessment of the potential impact of the proposed PacRim Coal Mine (Boraas et al. 2015) on the village of Tyonek followed similar themes. First wild salmon, as a keystone species, has shaped cultural institutions for at least 4000 years, and second, indigenous cultures of southcentral Alaska have successfully made the transition from prehistory to the present based on the same keystone species—wild salmon. Wealth, in these villages revolves around three tangible and intangible entities: full freezers of salmon and other subsistence foods, strong social ties symbolized by sharing salmon, and freedom to live one's cultural traditions. The overriding spiritual concept is that clean water is sacred as expressed in Orthodox villages by the Great Blessing of the Water.

3:00- 3:15 Break and Poster Session
Poster-Benjamin Meyer Fisheries Researcher-University of Alaska-Fairbanks
Growth and Foraging Patterns of Juvenile Chinook and Coho Salmon in Three Geomorphically Distinct Sub-Basins of the Kenai River

Poster-John Hagan
Conservation Technician
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District
The Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD) shares its boundaries with Alaska Game Management Unit 16B, covers a total of 6.6 million acres of land and is home to thousands of miles of anadromous waterways supporting all 5 species of Pacific salmon. Salmon are an important subsistence resource to the local Alaska Native Village of Tyonek and hold great ecological importance for the region. Each year, TTCD monitors juvenile salmon population distributions both independently and with state and federal agencies. This poster will showcase current and ongoing salmon monitoring projects and highlight the importance of collaborative field monitoring in the remote, off the road system waterways of the Conservation District. These efforts include: juvenile salmon smolt trapping on two stream systems impacted by fish passage barriers, Anadromous Waters Catalogue updates with Alaska Department of Fish and Game, fish passage site assessments with Alaska Department of Fish and Game and fish barrier removal and habitat restoration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Poster-Sarah Warnock - Nautilus Impact Investing
State of Alaska's Salmon and People Synthesis
Alaskan salmon management has a firm science foundation and well-established research and monitoring programs to inform fisheries allocation, management and policy. However, it can be difficult for stakeholders of Alaska's salmon system to readily access up-to-date, accurate and integrated information. Existing information is often fragmented and lacks a significant body of indigenous knowledge. In addition, a range of salmon science, policy and management questions are not yet addressed due to insufficient interdisciplinary approaches. These knowledge gaps can leave salmon stakeholders inadequately informed about the status of salmon populations and habitats as well as options to address the increasing pressures on salmon systems. Information asymmetries can undermine the stakeholders' ability to equitably and knowledgeably participate in the management processes.
A new multi-institution initiative, the State of Alaska's Salmon and People (SASAP), seeks to provide an interdisciplinary perspective on Alaska's salmon systems and the people who rely on them. The SASAP project connects knowledge across disciplines and agencies, between cultures and users, and across

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regions to establish a foundation for integrated knowledge. Eight diverse working groups span a range of disciplines including social and biological sciences, and Indigenous knowledge holders are actively engaged as equal partners in synthesis research. In addition, throughout 2017 we will be engaging with salmon stakeholders across Alaska to determine ways to make SASAP synthesis results applicable and accessible to salmon users, advocates, and decision-makers.

Poster-UA Center for Salmon and Society-Poster

3:15-Tidbits (unscheduled 3-minute project summary or announcements)

3:20- 3:45 Presenter: Coowe Walker, Program Watershed Ecologist
Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Title: Salmon Habitat Security and Watershed Connectivity in the Kenai Lowlands
While the majority of Alaskan's value and feel strongly about salmon, these feelings don't always translate into salmon-friendly land use decisions, especially in landscapes with a complex patchwork of ownership, such as the Kenai Lowlands. Management approaches are complicated because streams that provide salmon-habitat, and the landscape elements that support those streams, often pass through parcels with multiple stakeholders. To help facilitate decision-making that promotes resilient salmon, The State of Alaska's Salmon and People (SASAP) funded a synthesis workgroup for the Kenai Lowlands that began in the fall of 2017. This is a group of stakeholders, from multiple perspectives, working collaboratively to design tools to facilitate decision-making for sustaining salmon supporting watersheds. Workgroup members include researchers, regulators, policy-makers, conservation non-profits, tribes, data managers, and collaboration experts. Through this workgroup, we are synthesizing existing research and data that relate to how salmon habitats in the Kenai Lowlands are affected by landscape processes, and how human activities intertwine with these processes. We are developing tools, including an interactive geospatial tool, that provides a foundation for making decisions and developing strategies that promote salmon habitat security and watershed connectivity.

3:45- 4:00 Meagan Krupa- Salmon 2050- University of Alaska
Title 16 Revision Proposals, Habitat, and Management

4:00 Sponsor Presentations
EPSCoR Alaska

4:20 Evening Overview ~ Directions to Meet, Greet & Eat ~

4:30 Day one ends ~ Dismiss to Meet, Greet and Eat!

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April 6 – THURSDAY

8:30 Registration and Check-In

9:00 – 9:30 John Morton- Supervisory Fish & Wildlife Biologist
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
Elodea on the Kenai Peninsula
Elodea canadensis x *nuttallii* was first detected on the Kenai Peninsula in September 2012. Partners in the Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area quickly coalesced around this threat, conducted additional surveys at coarse- and fine-scales, identified the appropriate treatments (fluoridone, diquat), developed an Integrated Pest Management Plan, raised funds ($800K), secured permits, garnered public support, and implemented prescriptions. By June 2014, the first of four planned herbicide treatments to eradicate elodea over 3 years was applied in Stormy, Daniels and Beck Lakes near Nikiski, the only three water bodies known to be infested with elodea on the peninsula. By 2016, we believed elodea was successfully eradicated from the peninsula. However, in February 2017, elodea was discovered in Sports Lake in Soldotna. Although the feasibility of eradication has been demonstrated, we believe it will be difficult to accomplish without continued aggressive action here and elsewhere in the state.

9:35 – 9:55 Mandy Bernard- Kenai Mountains to Sea Project Coordinator
Kenai Mountains to Sea Partnership
Promoting Anadromous Riparian Corridor Connectivity
Although almost three-fourths of the peninsula is managed in three Federal conservation units by the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service, road and home building, groundwater withdrawal, logging practices, recreational activities, loss of salmon habitat and increasing human-wildlife conflicts fray at the ecological and cultural integrity of the peninsula. The Kenai Mountains to Sea (M2S) goal is to build a broad-based partnership to support and strengthen long-standing and effective private-public alliances dedicated to voluntarily conserving and enhancing fish and wildlife habitats for the continuing economic, recreational and cultural benefits to residents and visitors of the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The M2S partnership promotes resilience to rapid climate change and land development by taking a long-term, peninsula-wide approach to connecting natural resource-based community assets. The partnership will leverage existing land conservation by focusing on 20 interjurisdictional anadromous stream corridors that pass from federally protected conservation areas through nonfederal lands (including private parcels) to reach the sea. The M2S partnership will focus on four main strategies when working with willing landowners, agencies, nonprofit organizations, tribal entities, and other stakeholders in a non-regulatory context.

10:00– 10:20 Jen Peura, Invasive Species Specialist
Kenai Watershed Forum
The Kenai Watershed Forum conducted a pilot study at Beaver Creek starting in 2008 and Slikok Creek starting in 2009. The results of the pilot study in Beaver did not support the use of management tactics deployed in Beaver Creek. Slikok Creek has seen a significant reduction of infestations, but with high labor costs.

10:25 Networking Break

11:00 Tidbits (unscheduled 3-minute project summary or announcement)

11:15 – 11:45 Robert Ruffner
Alaska Board of Fish , Kenai Watershed Forum
The Future of Habitat and Salmon

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12:00 Lunch Break

1:00- 1:15 Sharon Kim, Chief of Resource Management
Kenai Fjords National Park,
Kim will present spring/summer 2017 resource management projects and programs. Presentation will include long-term vital signs monitoring program with our NPS Southwest Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Network in addition to projects only occurring this year.

1:20- 1:35 KPFHP Strategic Plan discussion – Jack Sinclair, KPFHP Coordinator
Introduction to the Partnership's guiding documents and potential changes in

1:40 – 2:25: Panel Discussion

2:30 – 2:45 Networking Break

2:45-3:45 Table Topics (20 minutes 1st choice table, 20 minutes 2nd choice table, last 20 minutes sharing)

1. **Collaborations**

*Which groups are working together and how?
*How can information be shared better?
*Where should relevant fish habitat information be housed?
*Is there a better way or need to share GIS data?

2. **KPFHP Feedback**

*Any habitat protection or restoration project ideas for the Partnership to fund?
*How can we get the word out to the public and local conservation community about the Partnership?
*Any questions regarding the project application process?
*Comments or questions for the Partnership

3. **Invasives**

*Mechanical measures have been overrun, is it time to consider chemical measures?
*If so, when?
*Who and how?
*What other species should be on the radar?

4. **Fish Passage**

*What's out there we need to know about?
*How do we tackle the "big ones"?
*Are we winning the battle?

5. **Climate Change**

*What are the impacts to fish habitat likely to be on the Kenai Peninsula due to climate change?
*What kind of research could the KPFHP fund/support to improve our knowledge of these impacts?
*What kinds of adaptation strategies would improve fish habitat resilience to climate impacts?

3:45 Movie- Super Salmon

4:15 Thank You's & Event Evaluation Forms

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Thank you!

We are grateful for the generous support of Alaska EPSCoR for investing in KPFHP's third Science Symposium.
Their support has made this event possible.