

# **Final Performance Report for USFWS Agreement F21AC02950-00 (Coordination)**

Date: 9/28/2023

Report submitted by: Melissa Smith, Coordinator, Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership

Reporting Period: June 24, 2021 to May 31, 2023

Project Title: Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership Coordination and Projects (Coordination)

## **Project Accomplishments by Objective:**

### **Facilitating and record keeping for regular meetings of the steering committee**

The coordinator facilitated 16 regular meetings for the KPFHP steering committee in this reporting period. This included scheduling meetings, generating content for meeting, soliciting guest speakers, providing meeting agendas, taking notes, and distributing meeting minutes to the steering committee.

### **Coordinating of one biennial science symposium**

The 2023 Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Science Symposium was held on April 20-21, 2023, in Kenai, Alaska. A total of 97 people attended the two day symposium. Participants included representatives of state, federal, and local government, academic institutions, tribal organizations, and nonprofits. Guided by a theme of “Building Connections to Protect Fish Habitat,” the symposium consisted of 28 technical presentations from individuals working in various aspects of fish habitat around the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Topics included proactive conservation, water quality, outreach, historic and social-ecological perspectives, and more. Plans for two major development projects were discussed as well as the current status and management of aquatic invasive species. Another highlight was a panel discussion, Translating Science to Policy, which included multiple local researchers and representatives of various levels of government. Acknowledging that turning good science into policy can be complicated and confusing, this panel took an in-depth look at the process and existing barriers. The symposium also included a poster session and an evening social; offering attendees additional networking opportunities.

### **Regularly updating and maintaining of the KPFHP website and related content**

Significant updates were made to the KPFHP website, including routine updates to funding opportunities, steering committee member contacts and recruitment, partnership members, and news updates. A “Donate Now” option was added to the KPFHP website as well as an option for members to subscribe to the mailing list for partnership updates. Additional, content and forms were generated for the 2022 KPFHP Science Symposium, including online registration, requests for abstracts, abstract submission, symposium agenda, and abstract booklet. PowerPoint slides from all presenters, as well as an audio recording from the panel discussion were uploaded to the website.

### **Conducting an annual call for proposals to address components of the KPFHP Strategic Plan and Conservation Action Plan**

The KPFHP conducted two calls for proposals in this funding period. These resulted in KPFHP receiving nine project proposals for FY2023 and eight for FY2024. Both calls for proposals were open for several

months and distributed broadly to over 100 partners. Only projects that addressed one of the top threats to fish habitat as listed in KPFHP's Conservation Action Plans were eligible for funding. Projects were scored and ranked by the steering committee before being submitted to the NFHP Board by the March 31<sup>st</sup> deadline.

### **Working together with other fish habitat partnerships in Alaska and in the Lower 48**

KPFHP worked together with the five other Alaska-based fish habitat partnerships on an outreach and rebranding effort. The products of this effort include the complete redesign of the Alaska Fish Habitat Partnerships website ([www.alaskafishhabitat.org](http://www.alaskafishhabitat.org)), a new logo, sticker designs, booklet, and brochures. The KPFHP coordinator participated in multiple planning meetings with other FHP coordinators and the contractor to plan this project, divide roles pertaining to website maintenance, provide content for printed materials, and approve deliverables.

In 2023, KPFHP worked with Trout Unlimited and the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership to plan a habitat restoration project on the Kenai River. The project will engage the local fishing community through planting trees on a heavily degraded section of river bank. Funding for this project was awarded by NOAA and work will begin in 2024.

### **Acting as the point of contact for the KPFHP with the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board**

The coordinator regularly attended NFHP Board meetings, NFHP Coordinator Check-In meetings, and Partnership Subcommittee meetings; in addition to email communications. News and information from the NFHP Board and staff was then shared with the KPFHP steering committee and partners.

### **Responding to inquiries about the KPFHP**

The coordinator regularly communicated with partners regarding KPFHP. This included emailing, phone calls, and interviews for local newspapers.

### **Other Accomplishments:**

#### **Transitioned coordinator position**

In spring 2022, Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) advanced towards hiring a new stand-alone contractor for the Partnership Coordinator. Historically, this role has been held by the KWF executive director. An extensive review of historical finances was conducted in order to determine salary, a hiring campaign was executed, and three final candidates were interviewed by a three-person hiring committee. In November 2022, Melissa Smith was hired as the new KPFHP Coordinator.

#### **Updated Freshwater Conservation Action Plan**

In 2022, the KPFHP Freshwater Conservation Action Plan was updated. The planning process occurred in January and included a series of six planning meetings with 18 participants and a month-long comment period. Parties involved with the planning process included a diversity of state and federal agencies and non-government organizations. The document was compiled and copy-edited by interim Partnership Coordinator Benjamin Meyer in March – July 2022. In August, the 2022 CAP was completed and included a climate change supplement.