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2023 Final Performance Report

This report serves as a summary of the work completed during this project. This project was a collaborative effort between the Ninilchik Tribe, the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust and the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The project elicited exciting new experiences combining traditional knowledge through artistic expression with western science, however due to circumstances beyond our control in year one of the project, a decision was made to end the project early. The primary cause for the decision to end the project was the abrupt departure of the Ninilchik Traditional Council Cultural Heritage Liaison, a position which was not transferred to another member of the Tribe. Without the guidance, leadership, and artistic vision of the Cultural Liaison, the project was unable to move forward.

Details around each outcome are included below.

Outcome 1) Maps showing traditional ecological knowledge and western science landscape support for salmon streams, as well as real and potential impacts.

KBNERR completed compilation of landscape support GIS data layers, including peatlands, groundwater support, predictive models for juvenile salmonids, and infrastructure development for the Ninilchik watershed that relate to landscape support for salmon stream productivity. Due to the premature cancellation of the project, traditional ecological knowledge maps were not completed.

Outcome 2) Field trips featuring storytelling, ecosystem support identification, and conservation actions.

During the first year of the project, a special new celebration was developed by the Ninilchik Traditional Council, called 'Janen', meaning *Land Day Appreciation*. This event featured presentations by Ninilchik Traditional Council leaders, KBNERR and Kachemak Heritage Land Trust leaders, new art sculptures created by Ninilchik Traditional Council Cultural Liaison, Argent Kvasnikoff depicting landscape support for salmon through alders and sculptural maps representing way finding and stream networks (see below). Ninilchik Tribe staff prepared a fest for the event that included salmon and other important cultural foods. The event also featured participatory art with a floating basket designed by Mr.Kvasnikoff that was released upstream and followed by Janen participants downstream to the river mouth.



The first Janen Celebration featured sculptural art indoors and out, incorporating aspects of indigenous knowledge and well-being and science created by renowned Ninilchik artist, Argent Kvasnikoff. The image shows an inflatable basket floating down the river. Janen participants followed along the bank and in the water.

The second 'annual' Janen (Land Day Appreciation) celebration was planned for August 27th 2022 at the Ninilchik River. Reserve and Land Trust staff conducted a trial Fish Need Land Too field trip with Ninilchik Traditional Council members in preparation for community field trips that would be conducted after Janen. The day before the celebration, we learned that Argent Kvasnikoff, Cultural Liaison for Ninilchik Tribe, and our primary contact at the Ninilchik Traditional Council for this project, had to resign due to unforeseen circumstances. Left without a local tribal lead on short notice, the Reserve and Land Trust decided to cancel the Janen celebration.

As part of preparing for the storytelling and field trip activities that were planned for the project, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust Communication and Development Manager participated in a training by Alaska Humanities Forum called The Art of Powerful Questions. The intent of this training was to teach participants how "to hone their questioning skills and gain new insights about real dilemmas they are facing in their personal or professional lives." This inclusive, supportive, welcoming course brings people from all backgrounds together to address challenging topics and learn how to use powerful questions to make deeper connections, build bridges, gain trust, and explore further. This course brought great value to Kachemak Heritage Land Trusts ability to engage in powerful, meaningful conversations with people of diverse backgrounds and experiences which is at the core of the Ways of Knowing grant objectives. Additionally, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust Communication and Development Manager and Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Coastal Training Program Coordinator jointly presented at a KPFHP Science Symposium about the Fish Need Land Too program. The goal of this presentation is to share with stakeholders and peers the value that this collaborative, multi-industry program has brought to protecting critical salmon habitat. Bringing different groups of people onto salmon habitat land has fostered connection, enabled a sharing of knowledge, and built foundations for future collaboration and protection of important lands and waters.

Outcome 3) Art installations communicating stewardship.

Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust and Homer Council on the Arts, and Ninilchik Traditional Council collaborated on developing community participation activities for art that would be included alongside of Mr. Kvasnikoff's sculptures. Activities developed included acrylic paint pouring from river to sea and watershed silk painting.



Reserve staff and partners pilot art-based cultural ecosystem services methods.



A structural map of the Niqnalchitnu (Ninilchik) watershed and interpretive alder sculpture (left). Detail showing representational alder root nodules (right)

Outcome 4) Future stewardship actions.

With the departure of Mr. Kvasnikoff, and the lack of a replacement Cultural Heritage liaison, the decision was made to cancel the project before its intended completion.