



Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership Steering Committee September Meeting - Notes

September 15, 2023, 9:00am to 12:00pm
In-person: Donald E. Gilam River Center, Soldotna
Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/92064166870>

In Attendance:

Steering Committee Members: Katherine Schake, Ben Meyer, Adam Cross, Peter Micciche, Jess Johnson, Samantha Lopez

Quorum Present? Yes

Partners: Maura Schumacher (USFWS), Alexa Millward (TU), Coowe Walker (Headwaters to Ocean), Jillian Jablonski (TTCD), Erin Larson (UAA), Morgan Aldridge (KPB), Trent Dodson (KWF), Brandon Drzazgowski (KWF), Katey Shedden (KWF), Candace Nakagawa (KWF), Katrina Danzinger (KWF), Bonnie Bernard (KWF), Lynn Whitmore (Headwaters to Ocean)

Agenda:

1. Introductions
2. NFHP Overview Presentation, Melissa
3. KPFHP Overview Presentation, Melissa
4. New member election
 - After a review and discussion of KPFHP's Policy and Procedures, the steering committee voted unanimously at 11:10 am to elect Alexa Millward and Coowe Walker as new steering committee members.
5. FY25 RFP
 - Melissa - Major revisions are needed for FY25 to align RFP with USFWS and NFHP requirements.
6. Membership Meeting
 - Melissa - An annual membership meeting will be held this winter, likely January.
7. NFHP Board Buddy System

- Melissa - This is a new program, which was approved in the September NFHP board meeting. NFHP board members will be paired with individual FHPs to gain a better understanding of how they operate. Board members may be involved in partnership activities, such as steering committee meetings and annual membership meetings.

8. Proposed work plan

9. Winter 23/24 meeting schedule

- Melissa – suggested we have 6 to 7 steering committee meetings from now until next April. With this schedule there would not be a December meeting.

10. Suggestions?

11. Partner updates

- Erin – The Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR) has 3 years of funding for the Salmon Watershed Stewardship Project. We are working towards a joint symposium with Mat-Su and Kenai Fish Habitat Partnerships. We had an initial planning meeting last week. Mat-Su and Kenai share similar concerns and research priorities. The next meeting will be after the New Year. If anyone would like to be involved in future conversations please email Erin at elarson15@alaska.edu.
- Coowe – The borough will be voting on new material site extraction code, which is considering fish habitat for the first time, particularly in reference to groundwater. The vote will take place in October.
- Lynn – Ruby creek is a headwater stream for the Anchor River and historically had an abundance of coho salmon. The two Sterling Highway culverts are not adequate for fish passage and need to be replaced with fish culverts when DOT starts highway construction near Anchor Point next summer. The replacement of these two culverts may have been dropped from DOT's plans. We may need to urge fish and game to ensure they are included in the project.
- Katherine – Under the bipartisan infrastructure law, 20 research reserves across the country were given the opportunity for competitive funding for land acquisition. KBNERR applied for and received 1.2 million dollars to pass through to the City of Homer for acquiring peatland on Kachemak Drive which is going to be part of a green infrastructure, storm water management system. There may be future opportunities for land acquisitions. We have applied for two more locations in Homer. This would protect drinking water sources and the Bridge Creek watershed reservoir, which is where Homer gets its drinking water. And there are also some peatlands around Beluga Lake. The flooding we are experiencing this week on the Kenai Peninsula is evidence of the need to manage storm water and keep peatlands intact.

KBNERR submitted a letter of interest to NOAA's climate regional resilience

challenge. This was a 30 million dollar proposal to help us solidify the reserve's vision for moving forward with the watershed ecology program. We want to ensure that community members and stakeholders are aware of the scientific research and information we have. This project is looking for ways to create tools and spatial data layers that will make this information available. We are also looking to continue research to expand those groundwater flow path across the Kenai Peninsula.

- Jess – I've been filling in for a vacant Cost Share position in Fairbanks and helping out with a new person in the Mat-Su. If anyone has been attempting to get a hold of me, please keep trying. I was able to Resurrection Creek yesterday with Angela Coleman and some other agency staff.
- Adam – The Resurrection Creek project has been getting a lot of media coverage recently. The contractors have moved out at this time and we are trying to solidify a revegetation plan. We are also working on post construction monitoring for the first phase. We are seeing small numbers of coho using the newly restored reach. In general, coho numbers are much lower in all systems along the Turnagain arm this year.

There are two perched culverts obstructing fish passage on Palmer Creek. This is a large area primarily utilized by resident fish. I have been working with Angela Coleman since 2012 to get those culverts replaced. They will be replaced in FY24 or 25 using Legacy Roads and Trails funding.

Final contract cost for phase 1 of the Resurrection Creek restoration project was \$1.3 million, which included harvesting 200 trees that will be used next year.

- Ben – I've tallied up the number of stream miles from the past 3 years that we will be nominating to the AWC this fall. All these waterbodies are within a half hour drive from our office. It adds up to 15 or 16 miles of stream as well as hundreds of lakes. This project was done in collaboration with the Kenai Chapter of Trout Unlimited and a small army of volunteers. Future conservation efforts should focus on inventorying and conserving what we have. I hope to expand on this work on the Kenai Peninsula and looking for funding sources.

Baseline water quality monitoring project update: We have participation with hands on and financial support from over 15 or 16 entities throughout the Kenai Peninsula. Those entities include nonprofits, tribal, private, State, and Federal agencies. Thank you to everyone that was involved. We currently only have funding for the hands on and laboratory work portion of this project. It is always a scramble to fund people to analyze the data.

Coowe – we nominated over 150 miles of stream to the anadromous waters catalog in the headwaters of Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River.

- Brandon – Stream watch program update: We reached over 9,000 people and picked up 4,470 pounds of trash on the Kenai Peninsula this season. We also installed two new caches at popular fishing areas. We are looking to expand stewardship days. We hosted a stewardship day yesterday with Leah Ellis, which included an informational talk about her stream gauge and instream flow reservations work in the Cooper Landing area. We also work with youth based organizations to get them out on stewardship and learning days.
- Samantha – Working with FEMA to update the borough’s regulatory flood maps for the Kenai River. Took advantage of the flooding this week to ground truth the new maps. These maps will be made publicly available next year or possibly by spring of 2025.

Next Meeting:

TBD, October 2023

Prepared by:

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