October 6, 2014

**KPFHP Steering Committee Meeting** 

2pm - 3:50pm

Location: Kenai Watershed Forum, Soldotna

Present	Telephonic	Absent
Robert Ruffner, KWF	Sue Mauger, CIK	Jeff Anderson, USFWS
Rhonda McCormick, KWF	Peter Micciche, SOA/Conoco	
Ginny Litchfield, ADF&G	Mark Chilcote, USFS	Marie McCarty, KHLT
Branden Bornemann, TU	Doug Limpinsel, NOAA	
Paul Ostrander, KPB (till 3:38)	Roger Harding, ADF&G	
	Heather Fuller, USFWS (2:20)	

Intent of meeting is to interact with proposal applicants by group as a whole
Applicant representatives will be calling in at 2:30 to answer any questions
Tyonek Tribal, Alaska State Parks, Kachemak Bay Research Reserve
Applicants with current steering committee members will also answer questions

Spring Symposium Update by Ginny

Looking at possible keynote speakers

David Montgomery - "The King of Fish"

Controversial?

Spoke at CIK Summer event

Spoke at the University last winter

**Daniel Schindler** 

Looking at titles for sessions

#### National Multi-State Grant

\$526K available nationwide

\$70K available to all partners in Alaska on July 1

Will be looking for input

Working on 1 data set for national hydrology data set

Blue lines on maps are not good – up to ¼ mile off

Different agencies have been mapping on their own

#### Restore American Estuaries National Summit

Robert attending in November for 4-5 days in Maryland

NFHP Board meeting will be included

Training for all Coordinators included

#### **KPFHP** Project Funding

Last year \$225K total was awarded

\$75K to KWF for coordination costs

\$150K to projects

This year - Won't know final amount available until April/May 2015

This year we anticipate lower funding Will rank projects and then adjust when funding is approved Submitted proposals total slightly more funding then we think will be approved

#### ~~~ PROJECT QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH APPLICANTS ~~~

## Kachemak Bay Research Reserve - Coowe Walker \$46,604 requested \$47,000 match Importance of Wetland Structure and Protection on Juvenile Salmon Diet and Growth in a Kenai Lowlands Estuary

Q: Will the same protocols be used as on the Fox River work?

A: Pretty similar, yes. Adding a few things – antennas and infuana work. Anchor has a more benign environment than the Fox, so there are more things to do than at the Fox. Generally, the same protocols.

Q: Will this be taken to publication?

A: Yes. A student is interested in this.

Q: Will there be a timeline issue? The funding won't be nailed down until early in the season (one project didn't get money until September). Your fieldwork is scheduled to start in May 2015. How will uncertain funding affect the project after the fieldwork starts?

A: The State Wildlife Grant is providing funding for the larger part of the project. Will go ahead and put antennas in. If additional funding is not provided, will have to pull the antennas early and not do the bioenergetics piece. If funding is known, but not actually provided at the beginning, portions of the project can be juggled around. The bioenergetics piece is very important part of the project. The Anchor is similar to some of the other estuaries on the Peninsula.

Q: The Steering Committee and CAP group developed a conservation action plan. This project is linked to the threat of incompatible shore zone development in the marine environment. What this will tell us that will help a decision maker when thinking about shore zone? Will show that sediment transport is important in shore zone development? What will it tell more information to for a decision maker?

A: In terms of activities happening in the estuary – fishing and offshore boat traffic – with more information about how long these fish are there, what types of habitats they are using, particularly in near shore, there hasn't been any work done in Alaska. They are starting to see things in Oregon and Washington. Fish are rearing in the mouths of the rivers. We are having a lot of activity in those zones that is not regulated at all. What we learn will help toward that decision-making.

Comment: Would be helpful to have layperson terms used in description of project description and outcomes. Would make it easier for a policy maker to see why work is valuable if wording was easier to understand.

A: Happy to help. Is that okay with protocol at this stage?

Robert Ruffner – This is all new to us. We haven't processed proposals in this way before. Not sure if proceeding should be with more layman language now or as part of the submitted proposal after approval.

Q: Attachment A or 1 is missing? In that section is how the project links to the strategic plan.

A: The project summary must have not been distributed to the committee or sent to Robert.

Q: That portion has the information that is cut and pasted into the USFWS submission system. It also may address some of the previous concerns about science jargon.

A: It can be simplified. They types of decisions the information researched could be used for is included.

Comment: Historically it is believed the smolt enter the marine environment and don't come back. Newer research indicates they linger in the estuaries and eat and get fat – which increases their survival rate. Increases the odds they will return to spawn years later.

A: Another example is we were often asked for information regarding permitting during research. Winter permitting to allow heavy equipment because they thought there were no fish. There is evidence of salmon over wintering in Anchor. That information could help decision makers with the timing of permitting activities.

Q: Paperwork for permitting or other events (Baker Platform fire) causes paperwork to be filled out indicating what natural resources, marine organisms or fish are in a specific area at a specific time. All of this information if valuable for management purposes as well as permitting.

Comment: Due to this process, it seems the applicant should be able to address questions or clarifications the committee has with revisions to their proposal. Will discuss at end.

Q: After hearing feedback about more laymen terms wanted, does is seem reasonable to modify and re-submit? Would help if the grant reviewers were not savvy with science terminology?

A: Yes, happy to. Am used to writing for that type of audience – didn't realize this would be different.

Q: Is a great proposal. Need to communicate needs to all levels. Not all policy makers have knowledge of science terms. All of the scientists should become more comfortable with presentations of work in more easily understandable terms for laypersons to understand to get value from all sectors.

Robert Ruffner - Will contact Coowe regarding modifications

### Tyonek Tribal Conservation District – Christy Cincotta \$40,000 requested \$700,000 match Old Tyonek Creek Fish Passage Restoration

Q: Tell us a little bit about the creek.

A: The creek is Old Tyonek Creek. Locals refer to it as "Robert's Creek". It's anadromous. Supports spawning and rearing habitat for Chinook, CoHo, Euchelon. Has fish passage blockage from undersize culvert blocking 8.3 miles of pristine habitat. Goal of the project is to remove that blockage, install an appropriately sized culvert, and restore the 8+ miles of fish passage.

Q: Is it a partial barrier depending on water flow or is it a complete barrier? For adults and juveniles or one or the other?

A: Complete barrier. May be some adults making it through, but doubt any juveniles making it through.

Q: Has fish trapping occurred? And is that part of the post project monitoring?

A: Hasn't been fish trapping efforts other than Fish and Game several years ago. That will be part of the post monitoring. Will work with Fish and Game to get TCC staff trained to do fish trapping in the spring.

Q: Where are these fish spawning? Is there a lake system or is it in-stream?

A: In-stream.

Q: Is this is the creek that runs to the fish camp?

A: Yes. There are no shortages of fish passage barriers over there. But this is the one that goes to the fish camp that is a major area for subsistence users in the Tyonek area. Robert Ruffner - For reference, in comparison to local river system – little bit bigger than Beaver Creek. Not twice as big, but it's a pretty big system. Flood issues in the past, can tell where it washed out in the past.

Q: Great job on talking about cultural link. Can you elaborate on importance/need of community outreach before and after project within Tyonek?

A: TCC has done 2 culvert replacement projects in the past in the Tyonek area. It is something the community is very interested in. So far, the community has been involved as much as possible in the previous projects, including bringing the preschool out for a willow planting at culvert sites. One of the main goals of the organization is to provide outreach within the community on best conservation practices and the importance of good management activities. We will be doing outreach beforehand. Have already had a few meetings with stakeholders and community members to let them know this is the priority project. Will have meetings throughout the project to make people aware of what's happening in their community and follow-up meetings with the school and larger community to communicate the importance of improving fish passage and how that can effect the fish populations.

Comment: That's a really important component of the project. It's nice to restore habitat, but education is equally important.

Q: There's \$700,000 match. Can you tell us where the money is? Secured?
A: \$300,000 is secured through Fish and Wildlife Service applied for through the fish passage program. Applied for \$200,000 through Fish and Wildlife Service through Tribal Wildlife Grant. Have current Tribal Wildlife Grant and like the program. Submitted a \$100,00 proposal to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The pre-proposal was accepted and asked to submit full proposal, which will be submitted tomorrow. Site visit with stakeholders who make be interested in contributing funding, included CIRI, Hilcorp, Auroura Gas. All 3 use the road system there and have contributed to prior projects. Next week site visit scheduled with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. They may be able to contribute.

O: Close to half is secured?

A: Yes. With secured funding an engineer has been hired to start design. Hopeful to see costs go down as field surveys are done and design completed. Estimate was through feasibility study completed in 2013. That was to determine different approaches for site – culvert replacement or bridge. Community members and landowner, Tyonek Native Corporation, chose the culvert replacement approach.

Q: Engineering firm did that estimate?

A: Yes, Dowl.

Q: These culverts that are perched are on the fish camp access road?

A: They are higher up on the road, not directly at the fish campsite. There is map included in the proposal that shows where the blockage is.

Q: Photo of 2 culverts? There were a number of culverts that washed out last fall. Did this wash out also?

A: Did not wash out directly at the site, but just above the site where there is an overflow culvert. The road was washed out about 50 feet from culvert. That entire site, including the overflow area and 2 culverts are included in the project.

Robert Ruffner – Will contact Coowe and Christy in the next few days. May consult Peter to help with "laymen" language for revision of KBRR submission.

# Alaska Fish and Game – Rob Massingill \$20,000 requested \$20,000 match

## **Invasive Northern Pike Detection Using Environmental DNA**

Comments: Rob unavailable due to fieldwork. Robert/Ginny don't know much the project. Interesting to determine Northern Pike by just water samples. Could be useful tool. KPFHP funded a portion of this project (not the DNA testing) 2 years ago. New technology. If run through Fish and Wildlife lab, how much more would it take to determine presence of salmon for anadromous waters catalog?

Robert Ruffner – Easy to ask: Can we also look for salmon markers? And what would that change to the cost?

Comment: Question to add: What will be the integrity of samples? They will be sitting in cold storage for 2 years before they are actually analyzed. Any degradation? The further you get away from sampling date, the less confident the results are. Can be done at any time span, but significantly adjusted over time.

Robert Ruffner - Will add that question.

Comment: Prior conversation with Rob revealed the only other options to identify pike are very expensive and time consuming.

# Alaska State Parks – Roger MacCampbell \$8,350 requested \$8,350 match

## **Reconnecting Cold Water Habitat to the Ninilchik River**

Comment: Roger not available but has worked closely with Sue Mauger and is comfortable with her addressing questions.

Q: Is this stream or trib just run-off? No stream seen. Is it only seasonal?

A: I've only seen it in the summer. Not sure. In the summer it appears big enough that it would flow all year. Likely not providing over winter habitat. Where input is hitting main channel, juvenile salmon were present in that pocket before impacted by foot traffic. Provides summer use habitat. Also pouring in a lot of cold water, so likely not just summer run-off. Wouldn't be so much colder than main channel if it was just run-off. Obviously has ground water source to it.

Q: Is it in the catalog?

A: No. It's pretty small. Although I have seen fish there, it is not mapped as a tributary. It's a spring fed channel.

Q: How long is the reach you expect to see fish?

A: Not sure what looked like before foot traffic. Gets fairly steep above where bridge would cross. Maybe 50 feet of actual habitat. The foot traffic is trampling the whole thing and allowing the cold water get more diffuse and more exposed to sun. The cold water value is degraded, not as good as it would be if it were an intact channel. Not a huge habitat in terms of river miles. But in terms of location where a lot of foot traffic, you have a captive audience you can outreach to, there is a unique opportunity to talk about the value of cold water and side tributaries that can be really important, and that trampling habitat can affect deeply, spring habitats are sensitive. Hope to communicate to people who will take knowledge to other creeks.

#### \*\*\*Roger MacCampbell joins the meeting via teleconference (3:13pm)

Q: Does that stream run year-round?

A: I don't believe so. Ices up in the wintertime, depending on temperature.

Q: Doesn't ever dry out? Always water in it?

A: Don't recall ever hearing it has dried out – even during very dry year couple years ago. The trail is crumbling and old bridge, people using it knocking soil into the stream.

Q: If bridge is beefed up and educational signage provided, what is feeling about response? Is place generally "trashed" by users?

A: It's close to a "Ranger Station" – actually an office back in the woods by popular campground. People use the trail and it's obviously worn out. It's popular access route for people to fish upstream. Or they just drop straight down over the edge at the bridge.

Q: This bridge would be placed 50 feet from the source where the water comes from? This is an underground seep?

A: Yes.

Robert Ruffner – Typical for streams for cold water refugian (warm water in the wintertime). It's along those seeps.

A: It's really the best place for an access point. When bridge originally built and upgraded from social trail, was an act of management. Budget is very limited. No way to move the trail – only place to do this work.

## Cook Inletkeeper - Sue Mauger \$19,299 requested \$19,299 match

# Building an Index Watershed Program to Track Land Use and Climate Impacts - Phase 1

Q: Is an index watershed a standard way to assess the status of threats in a watershed? A: Not quite sure what asking. MatSu and Southwest Partnerships are beginning to explore an index. There are so many river systems where concentrated work is happening in hopes that what you learn will be applicable to other similar watersheds. CAP process identified different types of systems in our geography. A lot of time went into work on the CAP, and more work to be done as a guiding, strategic document. Concept is a little rough – would benefit from a lot more discussion with CAP folks or Steering Committee. Tried to take the threats and the systems that are the most sensitive to those threats and drill down into particular index watersheds to understand those threats more deeply. We have culvert assessments, invasive species assessments, but those are becoming old. Revisiting some of that work in those particular watersheds will show trends across the landscape and where we ought to be putting dollars.

Q: As in the Partnership?

A: Yes.

Q: Uneasy – don't see enough separation between this project and the Partnership. Sounds like a continuation of the CAP process, which is concerning to be done by 1 entity. Clarify? This is a separate document? Not a document that the Partnership is producing – that Cook Inletkeeper is producing? Or are you producing data for Partnership to make decisions?

A: Envisioned as the next step of the CAP process. KWF will be a partner due to involvement in the culvert assessments and some invasive species work. Forest Service hasn't been reached out to yet. If Resurrection Creek is determined to be a good index watershed for that river type, it's a good opportunity to collaborate with Forest Service. Sue would do a large amount of work, but purpose is to further strategic actions and better targeted funding for projects that address very specific threats. Are at risk of leaving the document "on the shelf" and not really implementing it. The index watershed concept is being explored by other groups, the Partnership should too. Comment: Doesn't ease reservations, but answers question.

Q: A couple other partners of KPFHP are listed – Kenai Watershed Forum/Trout Unlimited, what are their relative roles?

A: A budget narrative exists that was not submitted at time of the deadline makes roles more clear. KWF and TU would be helping with some of the assessments shown in the chart/table looking at threats in the 4 different watersheds. KWF doing some GIS work to update culvert assessments and fieldwork associated with that. Partnership to discuss/determine "how do we assess residential development impacts in our streams?" The 50 foot setback has generated discussion on the importance of the intact riparian zone, but how to assess how much impact has happened on a river? Is it increasing? By floating? By GIS? Arial imagery? Need to understand how much we are losing of riparian habitat. Maybe through permits from 50' setback to understand cumulative impacts? Trout Unlimited would provide field support. Lots of members across the Peninsula. Through temperature work or invasive species assessment they would be great volunteer help.

Comment: The local Trout Unlimited has the funds to install a real-time flow monitoring station on the Russian River.

A: The Anchor River has a real-time temperature monitoring site through KPFHP funding. The Russian came up through discussion as the next most important river for similar information. Russian temperature information does not exist. This would allow us to understand lake-river systems better in terms of climate impacts.

Q: To revisit comfort level of putting Partnership logo on something that might build on the CAP, can you see how this might go forward with some sort of review or input so the Partnership doesn't lose control?

Comment: Concerned separate project with few entities of the Partnership, but it's a Partnership document? Not comfortable with that.

Robert Ruffner – Is there a way to structure it so the Committee could have some thresholds in the process to review/discuss?

Comment: Better if data was presented, data sets and possibly some interpretations of that data. On the second page, "Guidance for each conservation target on the highest priority for the Partnership future actions, and importantly, which action: restoration,

protection, education or legislation, is the appropriate action", seems like you're stepping a little too far. If funding a project with a few members of the Partnership to provide data, fine. But to say it's a document of the KPFHP, too far. Needs to be separated somehow. Review process? Guidance for the Partnership? KPFHP can come to some conclusions.

A: Might have to go back and look at language more specifically. Intention was to have recommendations, based on assessments, about what kinds of projects for Partnership to pursue. Example: If through assessments it is determined Reed Canary Grass is systemic in a watershed, and project comes in to restore 50 feet of bank from RCG, there is a realistic vision of whether that is productive. Based on understanding the threats and current status of an index watershed, it will help us understand on the trajectory of "Can we still protect things?" "What can we restore?" At what point has it become a bigger issue that needs policy or education steps?

Q: Will provide a lot of useful information to make decisions. Unclear if decisions are part of document – not just information?

A: There would be recommendations. Decisions made all by one person wouldn't hold any value. Make recommendations on data collected.

Q: Anyone else with concern?

Robert Ruffner – Can understand the point. CAP had a lot of people involved. Need to aware and be careful how anything is formalized.

Q: Is this the first time a proposal is for a KPFHP document? Robert Ruffer – I think so.

Comment: Once past the thought of document, and more of baseline information for future decisions, not an overriding document, these index areas could benefit the partnership.

A: Not sure if this is an outreach project to the public, with a 16 page booklet? Or is that the format recommendations would come to Steering Committee? For 4 index watersheds, 4 threats will be assessed. 1 page fact sheet for each threat per watershed. Could be a product for the Steering Committee, only not written for the general public. Q: Are there future plans? This is labeled as Phase 1. Continue to populate index watersheds more thoroughly or to do different watersheds?

A: Concept of index watersheds is to stick with those as gauge for whole area. Worth discussion - do we have right index watersheds? Goal is recommendations from assessments will provide a roadmap over next 5 years to find partners to do those projects. Phase 2 would be implementation of recommendations committee wants to move forward with.

## Kenai Watershed Forum – Lisa Beranek (Out of State) \$8,646.24 requested \$8,082.50 match

## Stream Watch: Volunteers and Partners Protecting and Restoring Kenai Peninsula Salmon Habitat

Comment: Lisa is unavailable. Robert, Branden and Rhonda will field questions Q: Mentions removal and installation of fences. Lots of places already have fences that get left over winter. They would take responsibility to install and take out? A: Yes.

Q: Mentions removal of fish passage barriers. Is there an example of what this could do?

A: 2 projects completed - An abandoned bridge in Bishop Creek. Catching debris and was a barrier in flow and creating changes to system. Soldotna Creek had a chain link fence across channel catching debris. Also smashed culvert at Leaf Creek. When smaller streams have pallets and debris blocking flow/passage, volunteers are able to pull out. The 2 mile figure is consistent with what they have been doing at Moose Range Meadows (east and west) and Russian River.

Q: Part of Forest Service program helps with that with McGlaughlin Youth Center. Works very well. Is that detail assumed?

A: KWF co-manages with the Forest Service. Bobbi Jo typically contacts the McGlaughlin group and KWF provides support. We primarily take care of the Moose Range Meadows area. Sometimes KWF staff helps with Forest Service at Russian, sometimes Forest Service helps with KWF site, dependant on who needs additional hands.

A: During season maintenance of the fencing is important too.

Robert Ruffner - We're learning that some might be able to do with ropes only – no fencing. Less problems with bears. It's easier to remove too.

Q: The non-native/invasive plant status – a bit vague. How does the program work to fend off non-native/invasive plant establishment other than preventing bank erosion/trampling.?

Robert Ruffenr - Can ask for elaboration on - the invasive species component.

### Kenai Watershed Forum – Branden Bornemann \$47,778.80 requested \$83,798 match Kenai River Watershed Water Quality Monitoring

Robert Ruffner – Conversation with David Wigglesworth revealed concern USFWS can't be spent for monitoring just for monitoring's sake. Make sure there are ties back to key species or key processes that were trying to answer questions on. If this goes forward, this has to be spelled out better.

Q: Very useful program. Hate to see it end. This is going to pay for the lab work for 2 years?

A: Correct

Q: Is something we are going to have to fund forever? Is it normal to ask around for different funding from different entities to keep it going?

A: The last 4 years have been kind of piecemeal. Some years have been strongly supported by DEC. They have since kind of backed out of the project, yet still provide volunteers. Their major funding isn't there anymore. It's a constant fight to keep it dynamic and keep the partner base involved. The MOU is expiring this year and through another grant with DEC by KWF, we have money to 1) produce a second water quality report. The first was done in 2007 and the second one will fill from 2007 to the present as well as go all the way back to the beginning of the program and do a trend analysis from 2000 to present. 2) Revisit partners and reestablish MOU. It doesn't bind anyone financially. More of a "handshake" agreement between organizations agreeing to support the concept and provide volunteers. Some, like the US Forest Service and the

City of Kenai, are committed to giving small amounts of money each year. \$3500 - \$5000. Cook Inlet Aquaculture support varies depending on fish sales.

Q: I imagine you're at all times looking for something with more longevity?

A: Yes. I have a couple bigger proposals in that have not gone through - one to Western Trout Initiative and one to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation a few years ago.

Q: With the lateness in finding out how much funding is available through KPFHP, that's getting really close to securing other money. I hate to see it jeopardize the project.

A: The funding won't jeopardize the project as a whole. KWF has funding to continue this project for the near future. We're committed to doing that, while in the background, seeking out more funding sources. Trying to strengthen that diversity.

Robert Ruffner – We've been able to maintain pretty well. There are times when we cut out sites or change parameters based on availability to raise money.

Q: That's what I'm getting at. If you have the components you can do more. You still have the volunteer base to collect samples. Depending on how much analysis you can conduct depends on how much money you are able to secure.

A: Right. The biggest one we've cut out is about ¾ of the hydrocarbon sampling. Because it's the most expensive part of the analysis and we've started to see a consistent meeting of state standards. We're still monitoring the lower river, which is recommended in the QAPP as it's the highest activity of boat traffic.

Q: You're going to continue turbidity, right?

A: Correct. Total suspended solids is the indicator of this. We do take turbidity measurements when the samples come back to the lab. It's a quick instantaneous "what are they".

Robert Ruffner – We're not doing the round year turbidity. We know what the answer is.

A: That was something that came out when DEC was heavily funding the project.

Q: And that's what you could do with additional money? You could expand the work?

Q: Did David give any guidance on how to adapt the proposal to fit "within the box?" Robert Ruffner – He did, but don't recall exactly. It was pretty clear to both of us that we will be "squeezing it into a box". It really is a monitoring program. Almost every source of funding out there says, "We don't do long term monitoring." That's a reality of what's out there. He did have some ideas. We have downturn in Chinook. We're trying to compliment the understanding of the freshwater environment. It really is putting the right "spin" on the project. Most people want to see the data. The question is, how do

A: I've had other proposals not go through, so it's clearly not being communicated. It's difficult because the program is not set up to target anything specifically. It's to monitor for those kinds of trends. Without the data, it's impossible to know if there's any non-point source affecting some of this water quality trend. If we see something, then we can start to specifically target, say, incompatible road development.

Q: The Steering Committee reviewed something similar a few years ago. One thing you might able to do is orient it toward protection of habitat?

A: Yes, that's great. Thanks.

we generate it?

Q: I'm agreeing with everything. The piece that is missing that will strengthen it is to explain how for each parameter, how a change in that parameter would indicate a cause

of that change. If you don't create those links, it's hard to understand how another year of data would ever kick in some change in action. Need to understand what turbidity ties to. What are the threats that would be driving a change in turbidity? If you're doing hydrocarbons and they don't come up in our CAP, how do you tie it to the overall habitat concerns across the whole landscape? Do a better job of tying it into habitat threats specifically.

A: OK. In the CAP plan we do talk about the nutrient dynamics. Speaking back to that would be a good idea.

#### ~~~ PROJECT QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION ENDED ~~~

Summarize what to do that this point:

Several proposals need small changes, adding to or beefing up

Coowe – in the 2 page document, cut the jargon down, more layperson

USFWS will ask for an investigation plan

\*Robert to check with Heather before contacting Coowe

May consult with Peter regarding language

EDNA – some clarifying questions

What it would cost to add genetic markers for salmon? Would they be open to including that?

Water Quality – couple small changes

Index – small changes

Stream Watch – question regarding invasive species

Robert will communicate the subtle changes in language

Give 2 weeks for revision– reasonable, no major rewrites, just tweak a bit Will distribute the proposals with the ranking chart Next month's meeting will rank proposals based on modified proposals

**Next Meeting: November 3, 2pm**