



“To provide education and leadership in the conservation and sustainable use of soil and water – related resources through cooperative programs that protect, restore, and improve our environment.”



# Natural Currents

## People’s Garden Micro-Grants Awarded

The People’s Garden initiative has been an exciting endeavor for the Homer District, and interest in the USDA National Food and Agriculture – sponsored program was tremendous! As highlighted in our Fall 2011 edition of *Natural Currents*, local schools, non-profits, and other community organizations were eligible to receive funding to promote healthy food, people, and communities by establishing or refurbishing People’s Gardens for the Southern Kenai Peninsula.

Beginning in early March, the People’s Garden Oversight Committee began evaluating applications from around the Lower Peninsula in an effort to provide funding for projects which best represented the spirit and intent of the program. Twenty-one “micro-grants” of up to \$5,000 were awarded, based upon applications which displayed the strongest combination of organizational strength, benefit to the community, collaboration, innovation, and sustainable practices. Proposals varied in size, scope, and location, but each selected project shared the ultimate objective of educating community members in regard to healthy lifestyles, healthy plants and soils, and environmental stewardship.

The District would like to thank our partner for the People’s Garden program, MAPP of the Southern Kenai Peninsula (<http://www.mappofskp.net/index.php>), the dedicated members of the Oversight Committee, and all those who submitted proposals. We look forward to seeing the results of the various People’s Garden projects on the Southern Kenai Peninsula in the near future, and for many years to come!

### Spring Issue:

- People’s Garden Grants
- Pratt Museum Trails
- Wetlands Assessment
- Snow Surveys
- Weed Workshop
- Rain Garden Cost Share

### Board of Supervisors

- Chris Rainwater, Chair
- Pete Roberts
- Emily Garrity
- Paul Castelloni
- Steve Gibson (Alternate)

### District Staff

- Tara Schmidt  
District Manager
- Devony Lehner  
Special Projects Coordinator
- Karyn Noyes  
Ecologist / GIS Technician
- Todd Schroeder  
Natural Resources Technician / Trails Coordinator
- Wendy Wayne  
Administrative Assistant

### 2012 People’s Garden Micro-Grant Award Recipients

Anchor Point Girl Scout Troop 515  
 Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies  
 Fireweed Academy  
 Flex High School  
 Friends of Homer Library  
 Haven House  
 Homer Chamber of Commerce  
 Homer Farmers’ Market  
 Homer High School  
 Homer Senior Citizens  
 Homer United Methodist Church  
 Kachemak Heritage Land Trust



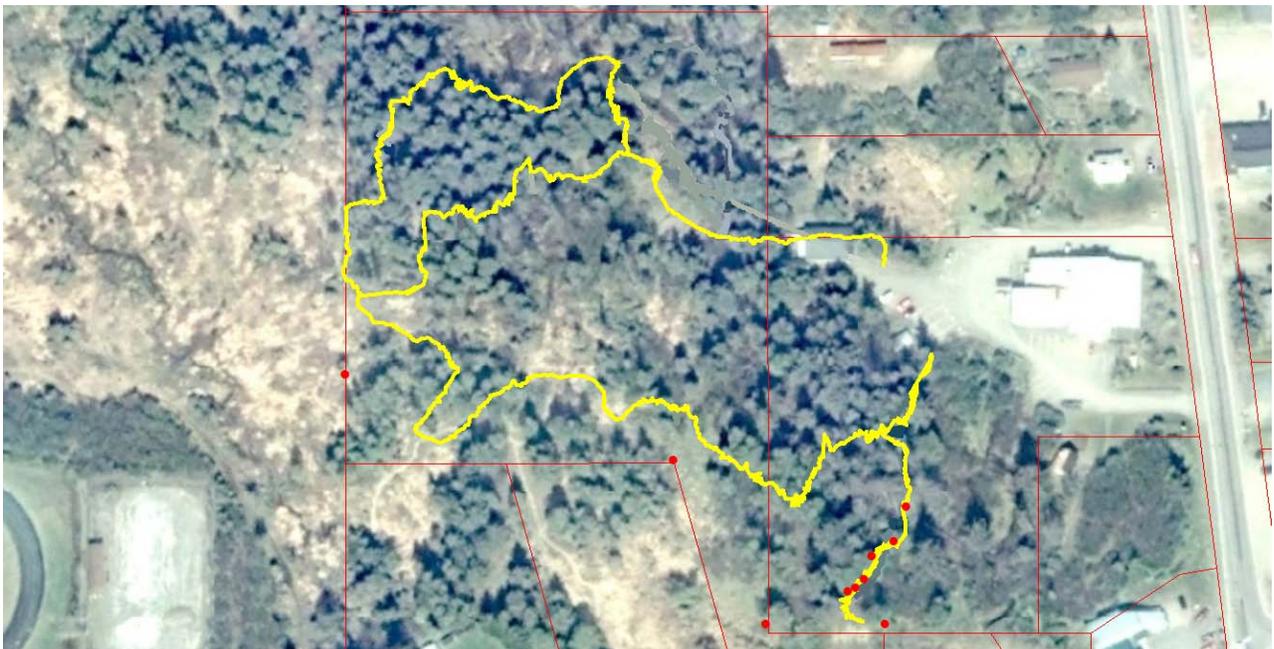
Nanwalek Summer Youth Worker Prgm  
 Niniichik Fairground  
 Niniichik Traditional Council  
 Old Town Neighborhood Association  
 The R.E.C. Room  
 Seldovia Village Tribe  
 South Peninsula Hospital Long-Term Care  
 South Peninsula Behavioral Health Services  
 St. Augustine’s Church  
 West Homer Elementary

## Support Community Trails June 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Pratt Museum

The Homer District is pleased to announce that we will be constructing the new and updated trails system for the Pratt Museum. Join us for a National Trails Day® celebration event on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10:00a.m. to take part in an exciting project benefitting community outdoor recreation, and enjoy free refreshments while having fun with family and friends!

The Homer District continues to actively pursue partnerships with local organizations in the development and construction of environmentally sustainable public-access trails, which enhance both recreational and educational opportunities within the community. The Pratt Museum's 9.3-acre forested "backyard" features a variety of landscapes, plants, and wildlife, which will soon be accessible to visitors of all ages and abilities. The project will also add to the ever-growing trails infrastructure around downtown Homer, ultimately providing a fun and interesting detour between West Homer neighborhoods and the Pioneer Ave. - downtown area.

National Trails Day® is a nationwide celebration of trails sponsored by the American Hiking Society, which began in 1993 after former President Ronald Reagan's Commission on American Outdoors submitted the Trails for All Americans concept in 1987. For more information on Alaska National Trails Day events and sponsors, visit the American Hiking Society's website: <http://www.americanhiking.org/NTDSearchResultOrganisationDetails.aspx?NTDId=3407>.

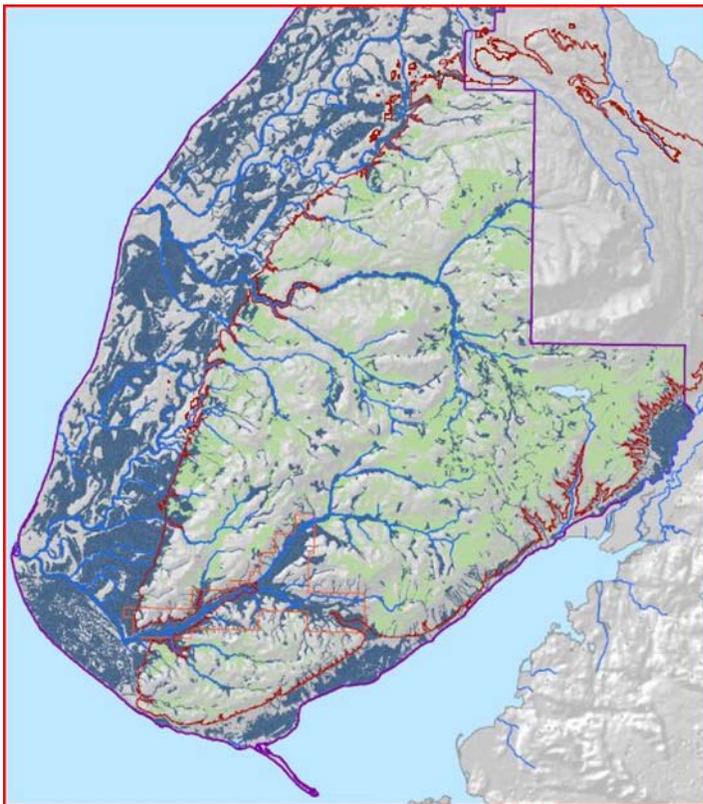


Pratt Museum Community Trails Plan

*HSWCD will begin construction on June 2<sup>nd</sup> with a National Trails Day® event sponsored by the Pratt Museum!*

## Peninsula Wetlands Assessment Project Update

Homer Soil and Water continues working on a project to assess the functions and values of wetlands on the Kenai Peninsula. Functions are the things wetlands do, like storing floodwaters, filtering stormwater runoff, and supporting wildlife habitats. Values are things society enjoys because of wetlands, like reduced flood heights, clean water, salmon fishing, and recreation. (In many cases, functions and values overlap.) Wetland functions and values are being assessed in terms of three main categories: (1) biology, (2) hydrology, and (3) social/community/cultural. Maps like the one below will show assessment results. This map shows in blue the wetlands on the southern peninsula that received the highest score for winter moose habitat.



A write-up about the project and its results is being developed. This write-up will summarize some of the extensive wetland information collected when wetlands were classified and mapped a few years ago. (Most of this information is available at [www.kenaiwetlands.net/](http://www.kenaiwetlands.net/) and <http://cookinletwetlands.info/>, and from the wetland layer and links on the borough's interactive parcel viewer, <http://mapserver.borough.kenai.ak.us/kpbmapviewer/>.) Information collected while mapping and classifying peninsula wetlands provides the basis for the current “landscape-level” assessments.

During mapping, ten broad landform categories (“geomorphic components”) were distinguished as the basis for naming peninsula wetland ecosystems. Geomorphic components reflect the dominant geological processes (mostly glacial) that created peninsula wetlands. As a

result, wetland ecosystem names tell us some key things about how wetland types formed and how they function. Over 75 different wetland “map unit codes” were mapped by subdividing wetland ecosystems on the basis of hydrology, plant community, or stream channel data.

An example of a wetland ecosystem is “Relict Glacial Lakebed” (LB) wetlands. Different kinds of LB wetlands are among the most common wetlands on the peninsula. Lakebed wetlands formed as glaciers receded thousands of years ago, causing lakes filled up by glacial meltwater—or dammed by adjacent glaciers—to dry up. Some examples of mapped LB wetlands are shown in the photographs on the next page, with the water table getting deeper from left to right.

(Continued on pg. 4)

(Wetlands Assessment Update - Continued from pg. 3)

			
<p>A wetland polygon mapped as LB1-3 in the large fen complex east of Anchor Point (polygon 48). <a href="http://www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB1-3.htm">www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB1-3.htm</a></p>	<p>LB26 in the large fen complex east of Anchor Point (polygon 70). Foreground is dominated by very wet sweetgale/dwarf birch/water sedge/water horsetail community; a stunted Lutz spruce woodland is in background. <a href="http://www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB26.htm">www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB26.htm</a></p>	<p>LB3: An ericaceous shrub layer covers a sphagnum carpet. <a href="http://www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB3.htm">www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB3.htm</a></p>	<p>A sparse open woodland with a shrubby understory, mapped as LB64, near Clam Creek (polygon 2118). <a href="http://www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB46.htm">www.kenaiwetlands.net/MapUnitDescriptions/LB46.htm</a></p>

## District Assists with NRCS Snow Surveys

Are you curious what this winter's near-record snowfall means for local streamflows, available water supplies, and flooding possibilities? For agricultural producers, the NRCS Snow Survey program provides valuable forecasting and real-time data in an effort to provide baseline consideration of water supply management and flood control. Outdoor enthusiasts and those interested in climactic forecasting can also gain insight for what to expect in the upcoming months, with specific survey site descriptions, maps, and corresponding data also available on the NRCS Alaska Snow Survey website at <http://www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov/Snow/index.html>. (Additional information can be found on the NRCS – Alaska Snow, Water and Climate Services website at <http://www.ambcs.org/>).

The Homer District has proudly continued its partnership with the NRCS Homer Field Office to assist with snow surveys on the Lower Peninsula and across Kachemak Bay in order to provide this outstanding resource to our Cooperators. In February, several members of the District's staff attended the Alaska Snow Survey



*NRCS Resource Conservationist Craig Sanders (left) and HSWCD staff member Todd Schroeder performing snow survey measurements near Bradley Lake last March.*

trict's staff attended the Alaska Snow Survey Survival and Training School in Wasilla, which provided expert presentations and training on snow survey techniques, outdoor survival, and avalanche awareness.

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## HSWCD's Rain Garden Cost – Share Program Continues Demonstration Gardens Coming Soon!

Interested in promoting a healthy watershed, reducing pollution, and controlling stormwater runoff on your property? Installing a rain garden is a fun, highly effective, and beautiful way to naturally filter out the “bad stuff” washing off your driveway, roof, and lawn! In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Kenai Field Office, the District will be once again offering its cost-share program to help you design and construct your very own bio-filtration device! Homer residents in particular should consider taking advantage of this great opportunity, as a large percentage of the contaminants coming from our local streets, industrial sites, parking lots, and pesticide-laden lawns eventually find their way into Kachemak Bay. As an added bonus, having more rain gardens around town equates to lower future expenditures for municipalities due to the reduction in surface runoff. This necessitates fewer (and smaller) storm drains. It's a win-win-win scenario, having a beautiful garden, less polluted water, and lower taxes to boot!

This summer District staff will put the finishing touches on several new demonstration rain gardens behind the Homer City Hall building, and at the Kenai Peninsula Fairgrounds in Ninilchik. Be sure to stop by and see for yourself how beautiful these bio-filtration devices can be! For more information about our cost-share program, or ideas on where and how to install your own rain garden, contact the District office at 235-8177 ext. 5.



*Demonstration rain garden installed by HSWCD – Aug, 2011*

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### Soil Testing: We're Here to Help!

The Homer District is continuing its Soil and Forage Testing Program for cooperators and land-owners that will allow producers to test their soil fertility, forage quality, and receive fertilizer application recommendations from the UAF - Cooperative Extension Service. Soil testing is an essential tool for any agricultural endeavor, large or small, and we'll gladly provide assistance! Lab results and subsequent recommendations typically take 2-3 weeks, and spring has sprung, so don't delay!

*Current fees (includes shipping costs) are \$30/sample for soil, \$24/sample for forage, and \$48/sample for compost.*



## **Kenai Peninsula CWMA Weed Workshop Held in Seward**

Homer District staff recently attended the annual Kenai Peninsula - Cooperative Weed Management Area (KP-CWMA) spring conference, held May 4 at the University of Alaska – Fairbanks Marine Science Center. The “Weed Workshop” public meeting covered a wide range of topics relevant to invasive weed management issues on the Peninsula. Representatives from various organizations and agencies gave presentations meant to enhance collaboration between KP-CWMA Partners, present new research and management strategies, provide updates on current eradication efforts, and to help the local land-user gain knowledge in identification and eradication techniques.

The KP-CWMA was organized in 2003 by the Homer and Kenai Soil and Water Conservation Districts in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service – State and Private Forestry. A detailed strategic plan was introduced in 2007 (and updated in 2011) which emphasizes the organization's goals and objectives, management approaches, and invasives of highest management concern. However, the primary goals of the KP-CWMA remain unchanged: to prevent the introduction and spread of non-native, invasive plants; to reduce the extent and density of newly established invasive plants to minimize spread and damage to natural resources; to implement the most economic, effective, and safe control methods for priority invasive species; and to facilitate cooperation among those working to manage invasive plants on the Kenai Peninsula.

The agenda for the Weed Workshop-2012 included presentations on railroad vegetation management, current control projects from Homer to Seward, freshwater invasive plant identification and control, understanding herbicide labels, cost estimates for invasive species prevention and control statewide, integrated pest management practices for gardeners, and responsible landscaping choices. Reviews of this year’s presentations were very positive, and landowners are encouraged to attend future meetings for hands-on learning and commentary provided by a variety of insightful presenters.

To date, 21 (and counting) non-native invasive plant species have been identified on the Kenai Peninsula, and through the diligent efforts of KP-CWMA Partners many infestations have either been completely controlled or eradicated. For information on how you can get involved in the fight against invasive weeds in your backyard, visit the KP-CWMA website at: <http://www.kenaiweeds.org>.

## Sign Up for HSWCD Invasive Weed Cost Share Now Open

The sign-up period for the Homer District's Invasive Weed Cost Share Program is currently open. We are looking for local private landowners interested in controlling non-native plants. The program, funded through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program will provide financial assistance to landowners to control invasive plants that have the potential to impact wildlife habitat. Interested landowners who qualify will work with a district employee to develop an integrated management plan for control of these non-native plant(s). The program will provide the landowners with funds for non-chemical control methods such as hand pulling, mowing, and tarping. Some invasive plants that are good candidates for the program are Canadian thistle, reed canary grass, bird vetch, common tansy, sweet clover, and fall Dandelion. For more information on how to sign-up for the cost share program please call the District at 235-8177 ext. 5.



*In April HSWCD Board members and staff were treated to a visit from U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski at the USDA Service Center offices in Homer. Pictured from left are: Senator Murkowski, Board Member Pete Roberts, Board Chair Chris Rainwater, District Manager Tara Schmidt, Board Member Otto Kilcher, Charlotte Kilcher, Rita Jo Shoultz, NRCS District Conservationist Mark Kinney, Eve Matkin, Beth Van Zant, and Kenai Peninsula Farm Bureau Chapter President Jan Flora.*

\*To find out more about the various programs the Homer District is involved with visit our website at [www.homerswcd.org](http://www.homerswcd.org) \*

### Upcoming Events & Deadlines

- June 2 - National Trails Day - Pratt Museum Community Trails Kick-Off Event, 10:00a.m. Pratt Museum 3779 Bartlett St. – Homer.
- June 13- HSWCD Board Meeting 5:00p.m. at USDA Service Center.
- June 15 - USDA Farm Service Contract(s) Deadline for 2013 Funding.
- June 30 - KP-CWMA Weed Smackdown 11:00a.m. – 2:00p.m. in Seward. (For info call HSWCD at 235-8177 ext. 5)
- July 11 - HSWCD Board Meeting 5:00p.m. at USDA Service Center.

*In partnership with USDA-NRCS the HSWCD is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer*



**4014 Lake Street, Suite 201  
Homer, Alaska 99603**

**Phone: 907-235-8177 x 5  
Fax: 907-235-2364  
Email: [info@homerswcd.org](mailto:info@homerswcd.org)  
[www.homerswcd.org](http://www.homerswcd.org)**



*Meeting the needs of the local  
Land User*