

# Natural Currents

“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.”



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## Board of Supervisors

- Chris Rainwater, Chair
- Emily Garrity
- Otto Kilcher
- Pete Roberts
- Paul Castelloni

## District Staff

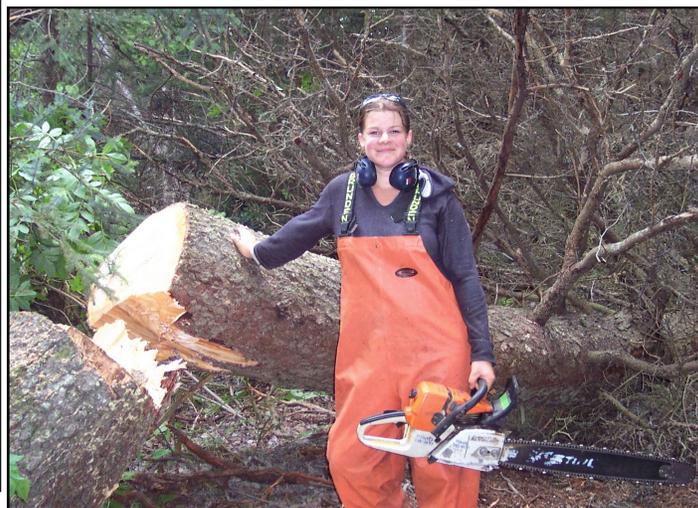
- Tara Schmidt, District Manager
- Todd Schroeder, Trails Coordinator
- Brian Maupin, Invasive Plant Program
- Devony Lehner, Special Projects Coordinator
- Karyn Noyes, Ecologist/GIS

## CALVIN AND COYLE TRAIL READY FOR ACTION

After nearly two seasons of work, the Calvin and Coyle Nature Trail is now complete and ready for hikers, bird watchers, and others who enjoy nature and are looking for an opportunity to step into a quiet heaven near downtown Homer. The trail winds through 29 acres of conservation land, named the Calvin and Coyle Woodland Park, that was donated to Kachemak Heritage Land Trust (KHLT) and is now dedicated to environmental education and habitat protection. The property supports a mix of mature spruce forest, thick alder patches, and open meadows, which slope gently to the south. Calvin and Coyle Woodland Park is frequented by moose, porcupines, snowshoes hares, and red squirrels—and on occasion black bears and coyotes. The south end of the trail is bordered by the Beluga wetland complex and the state-owned Homer Airport Critical Habitat Area, providing an ideal location for bird viewing.

The Homer District, partnering with KHLT, was awarded grant funds through the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Recreational Trails Program, to improve the old trail, which had fallen out of use. Trail upgrades include a re-route of the upper portions of the trail onto drier ground, installation of foot bridges over the creek, installation of two-plank boardwalks where the ground is wet, and a tremendous amount of chainsaw work to clear out wind-thrown spruce killed by the spruce bark beetle infestation. A huge improvement to this trail system is the addition of new interpretive signs. These signs are located along the trail and highlight such aspects as forest succession, wildlife use, and local flora and fauna.

The trailhead is located at the end of Mariner Drive, off East End Road. It is an easy hike to the viewing platform and appropriate for just about everyone.



Former HSWCD trail coordinator Alder Seaman clearing out some of the beetle-killed spruce trees on the Calvin and Coyle Trail. Alder was instrumental in seeing this project through—she had a personal connection to this project as she had worked on the original trail as a KHLT volunteer growing up in Homer. Alder’s dedication to this project is reflected in the many improvements trail users can now enjoy.

# STATE REVIEWS FUTURE OF HOMER DEMONSTRATION FOREST PUBLIC COMMENTS SOUGHT

In our last newsletter, we explained that the “Interagency Land Management Assignment” (ILMA) creating the Homer Demonstration Forest (HDF) 25 years ago ran out in May. In that assignment, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water (the land owner), assigned to the state Division of Forestry the authority to manage the 360 acres of state land that make up the HDF. Division of Forestry partnered with Homer Soil and Water and other members of the community through a Demonstration Forest Steering Committee. That Committee developed a framework plan and then a management plan for the HDF and continues to oversee forest management.



Since last year, the District has been working diligently with others on the Steering Committee to prepare for the momentous event of getting the ILMA that created the Homer Demonstration Forest renewed for another 25 years. Hans Rinke, a Forester with the Division of Forestry in Soldotna, has been shepherding ILMA renewal through state channels.

On June 17, the Division of Mining, Land and Water sent out a formal REVIEW NOTICE for the Demonstration Forest ILMA. That notice explains that “the Southcentral Region Land Office is considering the reissuance of an Interagency Land Management Assignment (ILMA) in accordance with AS 38.05.027,” and that “if issued... the ILMA will authorize the Homer Demonstration Forest for educational purposes.” The term of the ILMA will be for 25 years.

## HOMER SOIL AND WATER ENCOURAGES LETTERS AND EMAILS OF SUPPORT FOR HDF RENEWAL



Dave Brann makes sure we know where we're going.

Jusdi McDonald, Natural Resource Specialist with the Southcentral Region Land Office, has made it clear how valuable letters of support from the community are in renewing the HDF ILMA. Not only will letters or emails received by July 20 at 5 pm help the Land Office justify THIS renewal, all comments will go into the permanent file for the HDF. That means that letters will continue to help support future renewals. Homer Soil and Water encourages you to send support letters to Jusdi at her email address: [jusdi.mcdonald@alaska.gov](mailto:jusdi.mcdonald@alaska.gov) or mail them to her at 5550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 900C, Anchorage, AK 99501-3577. You can also call her at 269-5032. And if you have questions for Homer Soil and Water, feel free to call 235-8177, ext 5, or email [info@homerswcd.org](mailto:info@homerswcd.org).

## DNR VISITS THE HOMER DEMONSTRATION FOREST



Dave, Chris, Tara, Jusdi, and Hans look over a bridge on Diamond Creek in the HDF

As part of the process of renewing the ILMA—described above—Homer Soil and Water was pleased to host DNR Forester Hans Rinke and Natural Resource Specialists Jusdi McDonald and Christine Nahorney for a hike in the HDF on June 7. District Manager Tara Schmidt, with District staff Devony Lehner, enlisted long-time HDF Steering Committee member Dave Brann to act as guide. Dave, like Devony, owns land adjacent to the HDF, and he also represents the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club and the City of Homer Parks and Recreation Commission.

The group explored the HDF Nature Trail, checked out the arboretum, snow survey site, and soil temperature site, and then followed the Summer Trail loop up to Pitzman’s meadow and back. During the hike, Dave even enlisted the group to do a bit of HDF maintenance.

Everyone grabbed a few planks from an old boardwalk that had been replaced and carried them to a staging area where they were easier to access. Thank you DNR for coming down to explore the Homer Demonstration Forest with us.

## HUTLER RD STREAMBANK RESTORATION



Top photo—creating the soil lifts. A total of three lifts were installed at the site. Photo to the right shows the biodegradable fabric used to stabilize the slope, and the installation of live willow stakes.

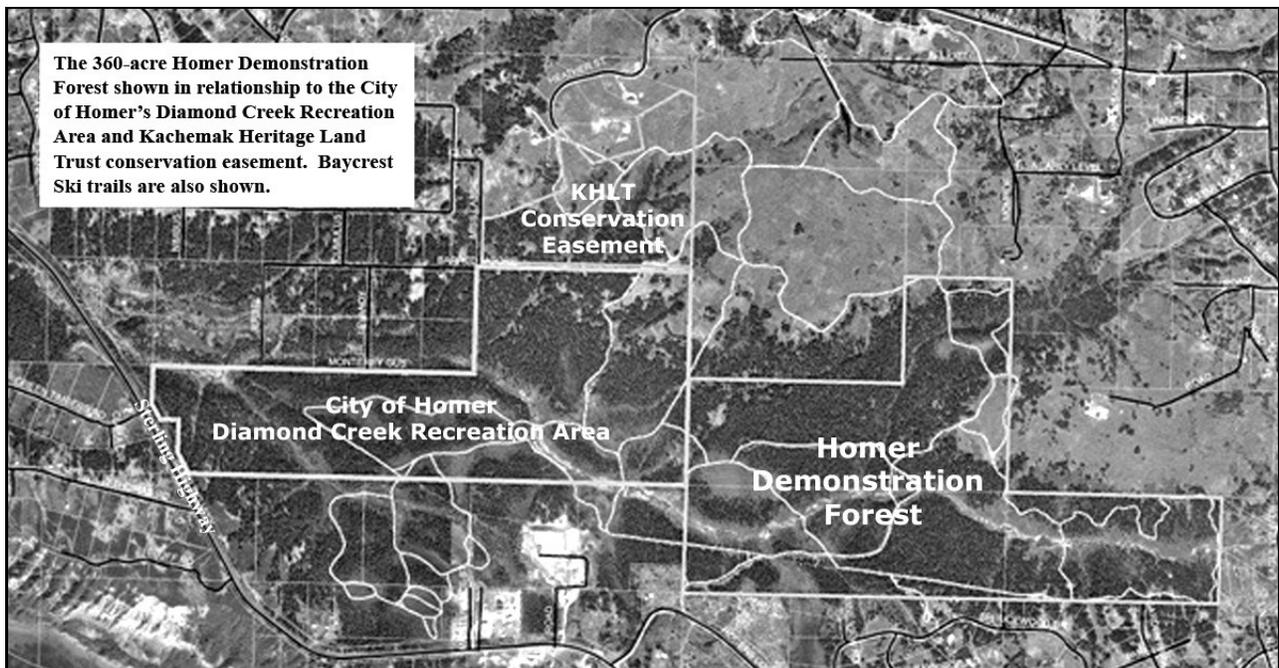
The Homer District has recently been working on a streambank restoration project along Beaver Creek, off of Hutler Rd. east of Homer. The District replaced a poorly installed culvert with a bridge at this location last summer and we are now following up with re-vegetating the slopes. District staff utilized a bioengineering technique referred to as brush layering. Basically a layer of willow cuttings is placed between “soil lifts”, the lifts are created by wrapping biodegradable cloth around a layer of top soil and then anchored down with wooden stakes.



## PLANNING FOR THE CITY-OWNED 270-ACRE DIAMOND CREEK RECREATION AREA— A “HEADS UP” FOR EVERYONE INTERESTED

As many of you know, a 275-acre parcel on the western edge of the Homer Demonstration Forest has now become the city-owned “Diamond Creek Recreation Area” (DCRA). Anyone who has skied on the Bay Crest ski trails—especially College Avenue or Raven’s Way—has probably skied across the DCRA. (A trail map can be downloaded at <http://kachemaknordicskiclub.org/trails/>.) This land was purchased by Kachemak Heritage Land Trust in 2007, which then transferred the parcel to the City of Homer. The city established that the land be used “for public purposes as park land in perpetuity” (City of Homer Ordinance 07-03). (More background is available at: <http://www.kachemaklandtrust.org/pages/Diamond-Creek.php>.)

Homer Soil and Water Conservation District has just begun working with the city to develop a plan for the DCRA. The District will bring to bear its expertise and partnerships to help the city compile and consider useful natural resources information. In addition, the District’s involvement ensures that the DCRA plan will complement the management plan for the neighboring Homer Demonstration Forest (HDF); Homer Soil and Water developed the HDF management plan in 2006 and leads the HDF Steering Committee, which oversees land uses in the forest. (See separate article about the HDF in this newsletter. You can download a copy of the Homer Demonstration Forest Management Plan at <http://www.homerswcd.org/forestry/prgms/hdf.htm>.)



Homer Soil and Water wants to make sure that anyone interested in offering input to the DCRA plan is aware of the process we’re now beginning and knows how to contact us. We’ll soon be putting regular updates on our website (under “Projects” on our homepage: <http://www.homerswcd.org/>). If you’d like receive updates directly, please email your address HSWCD Project Coordinator Devony Lehner at [devony@homerswcd.org](mailto:devony@homerswcd.org), or call District Manager Tara Schmidt at 235-8177, ext 106. We welcome your input and look forward to hearing from you.

## WHAT'S A "WATERSHED-IPEDIA" AND HOW CAN IT HELP LANDOWNERS BE "SALMON FRIENDLY"?

### WHAT WATERSHED DO YOU LIVE IN?

On the lower Kenai Peninsula north of Homer, most of us live in one of four watersheds: Anchor River, Stariski Creek, Deep Creek, or Ninilchik River. All of these provide important habitat for salmon spawning and rearing. In fact, salmon can occur in unexpected places in these watersheds. Recent research in the Anchor River watershed, for example, has shown that juvenile salmon—mostly coho and initially no bigger than a paper clip—swim upstream from the gravel streambeds in which they were spawned to reach the many tiny head-water streams found throughout the watershed. In these tiny streams, often unknown to nearby landowners, these small salmon can feed and grow safe from the stronger currents found in larger streams.

The importance to salmon of the Anchor River, Stariski Creek, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik River watersheds is the reason that Homer Soil and Water is developing two practical guides to help landowners keep their lands and waters "salmon friendly." In these guides is where you'll find a "watershed-ipedia."



Major Watersheds of the Lower Kenai Peninsula

### AN ONLINE LANDOWNER'S GUIDE ABOUT YOUR WATERSHED

The online, printable landowner's guides will include a number of articles providing useful background about managing lands and waters in salmon-friendly ways, but most of the information in each guide will be presented in an alphabetical watershed-ipedia covering over 200 topics useful to landowners. Many of these listings will be linked to other entries in the watershed-ipedia and to useful Web sites that provide more information. Alphabetical listings will make it easy for landowners to look up the information they need, whether it's which salmon species occur in their stream, how to stabilize a streambank, what kinds of wetlands occur where, which invasive plants should they look out for in their watershed, or what programs are available to help landowners keep their lands and waters salmon friendly. Much of this information will be presented using illustrations, maps, and other graphics. To get on a mailing list so you can follow the progress of these guides, email [devony@homerswcd.org](mailto:devony@homerswcd.org).

### SIGN-UP PERIOD FOR INVASIVE WEED COST SHARE PROGRAM NOW OPEN

The sign-up period for the Homer District 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.

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).

The HSWCD Board meets monthly, during the summer we will meet the second Monday of the month @ 5:00. We welcome all visitors!

## UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

On going- Sign –Up Period for Invasive Weed Cost Share Program

July 14 — HSWCD Board Meeting 5:00 @ USDA Service Center

August 10 — HSWCD Board Meeting 5:00 @ USDA Service Center

August 19th-21st — Kenai Peninsula State Fair, Ninilchik Fair Grounds

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: [hswcd@xyz.net](mailto:hswcd@xyz.net)  
[www.homerswcd.org](http://www.homerswcd.org)

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