

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.”



SPRING SSUE:

- Suitability Map and Developers Certification
- Kenai Peninsula - Cooperative Weed Management Area Update
- Data Logger Protocol for Cook Inlet Salmon Streams
- Speech and Poster Contest

Board of Supervisors

- Chris Rainwater, Chair
- Jim VanOss
- Devony Lehner
- Otto Kilcher
- Pete Roberts

Alternate:

- Steve Gibson

District Staff

- Tara Schmidt, District Manager
- Bill Steyer, Trails Coordinator
- Sarah Eastin, Invasive Weeds
- Al Poindexter, Education Coordinator

INCENTIVES FOR GOOD STEWARDSHIP

Developers Certification Program

The Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, in partnership with DnA Design, is well into the second phase of a suitability map project, and is now planning a training workshop to introduce these suitability maps to potential users. Using documented and mapped criteria, suitability maps identify both highly suitable development lands and lands that provide “green infrastructure” benefits such as slope stabilization, stormwater reduction, and landscape “connectivity.” For lands that are both highly developable and that also provide important green infrastructure functions, low impact development (LID) techniques are being identified that can be used during development to protect valuable natural functions and larger landscape systems, thus maximizing both economic and ecological values.

By using low impact development techniques, and thereby protecting natural green infrastructure functions, developers can reduce both their own costs and costs that are ultimately borne by municipalities—that is, tax payers—when the city must replace degraded natural functions with structural solutions, such as stormwater drains and retaining walls. In addition, using LID techniques can help a community retain environmental qualities that make the local area desirable in terms of natural aesthetics, quality of life amenities, and long-term economic viability.

To achieve these goals, much effort has been spent this winter researching incentives that could be used to encourage development projects of any scale to integrate LID techniques. These incentives will eventually be available on lands mapped both as highly suitable for development and as important in terms of green (*continued on pg 2*)

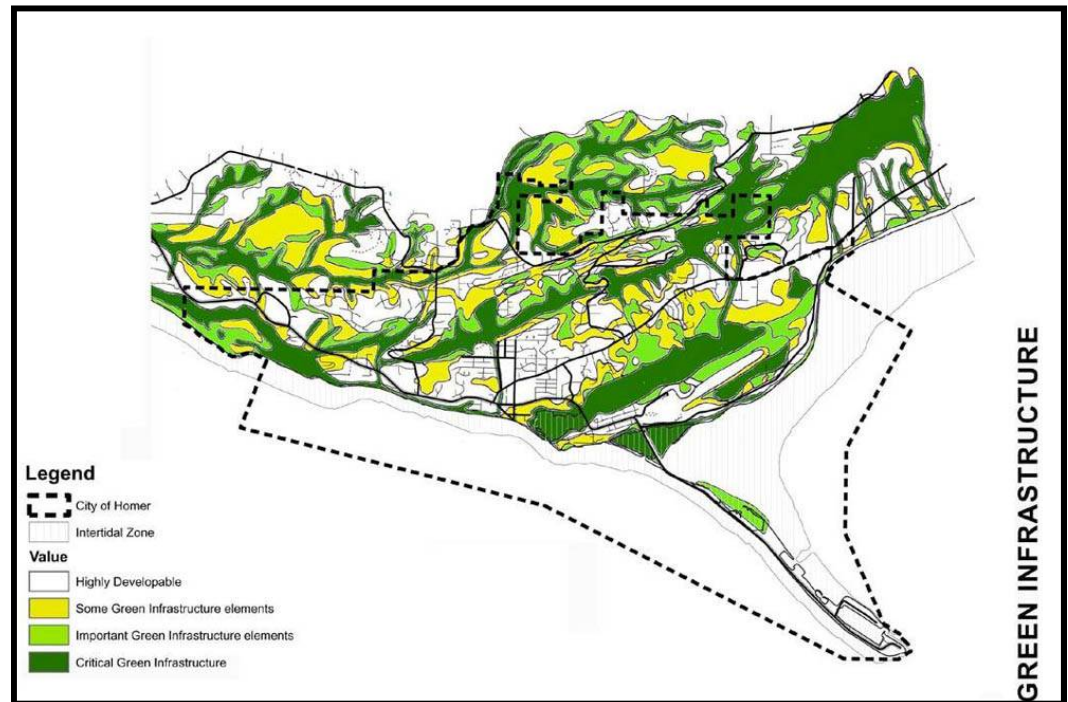
KP- CWMA Strategic Plan

The Kenai Area Cooperative Weed Management Area (KP-CWMA) has finalized a comprehensive strategic plan for integrated weed management. This plan is based on a landscape approach emphasizing prevention/Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) to new invaders, and a coordination of common management objectives of invasive species efforts by multiple land managers on the Kenai Pen-

insula. To facilitate the cooperation among landowners the CWMA is divided into logical management units based on Federal land management boundaries and Soil and Water Conservation District boundaries which include Borough, State, tribal and private lands. In essence this is a partnership among the various entities to strengthen individual efforts by working together (*continued on pg 3*)

(continued from -pg 1) infrastructure functions. In most cases, areas that are mapped as highly suitable for development but that do not also contribute significantly to green infrastructure will not be eligible for incentives.

Incentives identified thus far can be subdivided into two categories, *passive* and *active*. Passive incentives encompass economic benefits that can be realized by developers simply by incorporating design and construction techniques that respect and take advantage of green infrastructure functions and larger landscape systems. Such benefits include reduced construction costs, increased real estate values, accelerated appreciation, and/or avoidance of certain regulatory requirements, in other words, benefits produced by good business decisions that lead to increased profitability.



Suitability Map developed by DnA Design identifying lands in Homer that would benefit by incorporating natural landscape systems into development designs. Areas that are colored are the lands that would be eligible for incentives, whereas the lands in white are the prime development lands as these lands would have minimal impact on existing green infrastructure.

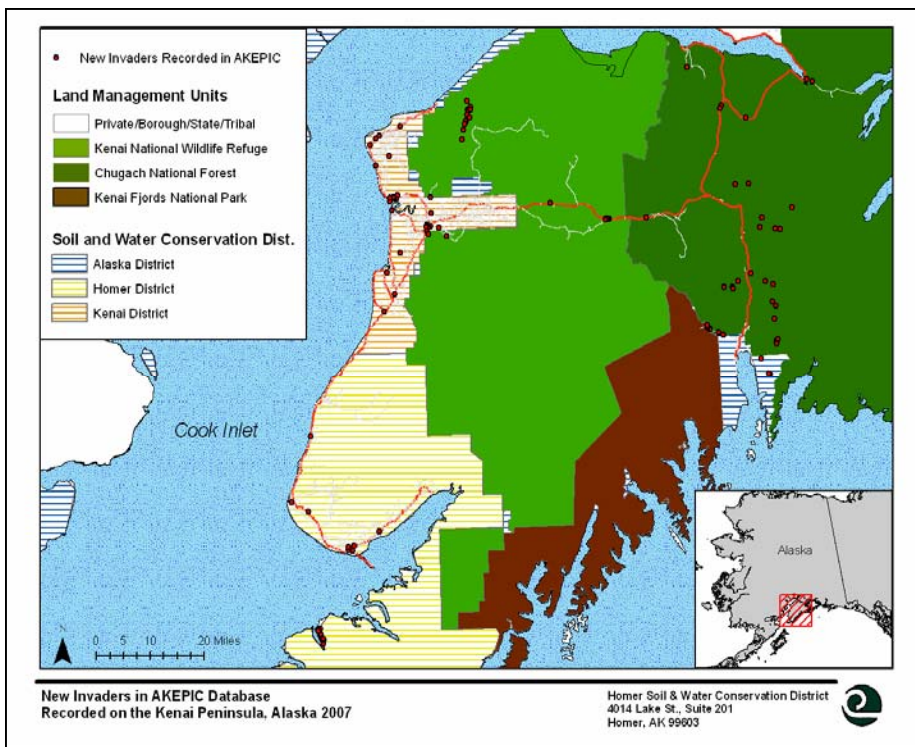
Active incentives encompass economic or procedural “payments” to reimburse property owners for developing their property in ways that protect green infrastructure functions and larger landscape systems. These incentives would typically be administered and distributed by a third party, and may include expedited permitting, low interest rate loans, tax benefits, or even cash payments. In the Homer area, many of the typical permit-based incentives may not be as valuable as in locales with stricter development restrictions, but as the city develops, these types of incentives may play a larger role. In the meantime, the HSWCD is investigating low interest rate loans that would be available to qualifying development projects.

So how can passive and active incentives encourage future development in Homer to consider green infrastructure functions and larger landscape systems? That question is now at the forefront of the suitability map project. The HSWCD and DnA Design are developing a pilot workshop that will lead to a “Developers Certification Program” whereby participants will receive training in identifying appropriate LID techniques for their projects. Three training modules are being developed: one on steep slope development, one on development in drainageways and wetlands, and one emphasizing “connectivity” in larger landscape systems (for example, to maintain recreational trails and wildlife habitat corridors). The plan is that in order for developers to receive incentives in eligible mapped areas, they would need to receive certification by attending one or more workshops covering low impact development techniques appropriate for their projects.

The HSWCD, DnA Design, and the National Parks Service-Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance agency are developing LID workshops, scheduled for the last week in May. We hope to attract a wide variety of land developers, landuse managers, regulatory agencies, realtors, and other interested citizens to participate and to provide feedback on incentives and the certification program.

and combining resources. KP-CWMA goals are to:

- Prevent the introduction, reproduction, and spread of designated noxious weed and other invasive plants within the area
- Reduce the extent and density of newly established invasive plants to minimize spread and damage to natural resources
- Implement the most economic, effective and safe control methods for priority species
- Facilitate cooperation among those working to manage invasive plants on the Kenai Peninsula



Kenai Peninsula cooperative Weed Management Boundaries

The CWMA technical advisory committee has worked to consolidate existing inventories of invasive species and at risk sites to provide a baseline in which to prioritize regional management activities. Management objectives are principally the prevention, early detection and eradication of new invaders (EDRR), and control the spread of established invaders to prevent loss of valued resources.

Education and increased awareness through public outreach is a large component of the strategic plan. By taking opportunities to increase the awareness through informational brochures, interpretative signs, presentations to special interest groups and demonstrations of management techniques the KP-CWMA hope to build a strong foundation for early detection

and rapid response of invasive weeds.

May 1st the KP-CWMA will hold their annual weed workshop at the Kenai River center in Soldotna, everyone is invited to attend. Slated for this workshop is a series of guest speakers who will address invasive species on the Kenai and their impacts on natural systems, evaluate the threats of invasive species, and review some management efforts that are scheduled to be implemented this year. The workshop will end with a plant identification session instructed by the Alaska Natural Heritage Program. Please contact the Homer Soil and Water office if you have any questions about this workshop.

And the Winners Are.... Speech and Poster Contest Results

Homer Soil and Water Conservation District was pleased with the number of participants in this years Speech and Poster contest, thanks to the teachers at West Homer Elementary School. This year's theme was *Water is Life*

2nd - 3rd Grade Finalist

- 1st Lawren Evarts
- 2nd Kira Hamilton
- 3rd Abby Beck

4th-6th Grade Finalist

- 1st Marissa Lind
- 2nd Chelsea Lind
- 3rd Crystal Campbell

High School Speech Finalist

- 1st Corinne Ogle
- 2nd Tyler Haas
- 3rd Ben Blue

April D'Water (tie)

Natural Resources Technology Class

The “Magic School Bus” is our Natural Resources Technologies class, and Al Poindexter is the driver. We have gone to the end of roads, the edge of our minds, and beyond. The magic of this bus is in the learning and the dedication of the Homer High School students that ride it. Taking chances, and learning from the world around us is the way things are done in this class.

I am senior taking this class for the third time. This class grows on us because it builds who we are. We take our learning to the next level; we give it context. When we face the rest of our lives we have something to base a future career on. Leadership, technical experience and the guts to do what most interest us.

The Natural Resources Technology class attended the Career and Technical Student Organization Conference (CTSO) last month. We competed in floriculture, keyboarding, prepared public speech, extemporaneous speech, job interview, design, make and sell, and culinary arts. Everyone in our class who attended placed in at least one event. The awards we brought home on the magic school bus will remind us how important it is to perform well in all areas of life. We learned how to hand cuff each other, how to put on a suit of fire-fighting gear and what it take to be a pipe welder. The things we have learned will stay with us much longer than the glory of an award. This is the whole idea behind the way this class works.

What we are taught now is influencing our future trajectory. We are being taught to give up our fears of public speaking. We are being taught to achieve our greatest potential. The magic school bus can take us anywhere we want but we will not know it is a magic bus unless we know how to take advantage of the learning opportunities it presents.

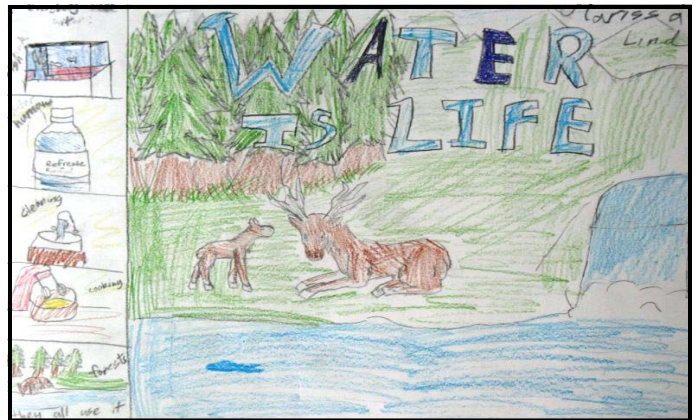
We –as students- are a natural resource, and this class is a way of managing natural resources for the future. This is one of the most worthwhile classes I have ever taken. As I prepare for my last Alaska State Envirothon I know that the trip to Fairbanks and back will be my last ride on Al Poindexter’s magic school bus. I am grateful for the opportunities placed in front of me, and seizing them is a choice I will never regret.

Katie Conner is a home schooled student from the Homer area. She has been enrolled in the Natural Resources Class for 3 years and is a member of the Homer FFA chapter.

FARM BILL EXTENDED

A short term extension of the 2002 Farm Bill has been signed by the current administration. The Farm Bill, scheduled to expire on March 15, was extended to April 18, 2008. This is the second short-term extension of the 2002 bill. The House and Senate will continue to negotiate an overall funding level and offsets in hopes of completing a new bill before the April 18 deadline.

President Bush issued a statement prior to signing the temporary extension. In the statement, he indicated that he would recommend that Congress pass a one-year extension of the 2002 Farm Bill should an agreement on a new Farm Bill not be reached by April 18.



First place entry in the HSWCD poster contest 4-6 grade—By Marissa Lind.

Save the Date: National Trails Day June 7

HSWCD will host a Trails Day activity June 7th in the Homer Demonstration Forest. Join us for a morning in the outdoors preparing our trails for the summer season. More information will posted be in the next issue of *Natural Currents*.

Sustainable Trail Design & Construction

Alaska Trails has scheduled a trail building workshop here in Homer May 16-17. This course will outline the fundamentals of sustainable trail design and layout. This training is geared toward any one who is interested in developing or maintaining quality trails in their community, from professional land use planners to volunteer trail crews. This training will be two full days of a mix of classroom and hands on field work. For more information go the Alaska Trails website at www.alaska-trails.org.

Data Logger Protocol for Cook Inlet Salmon Streams

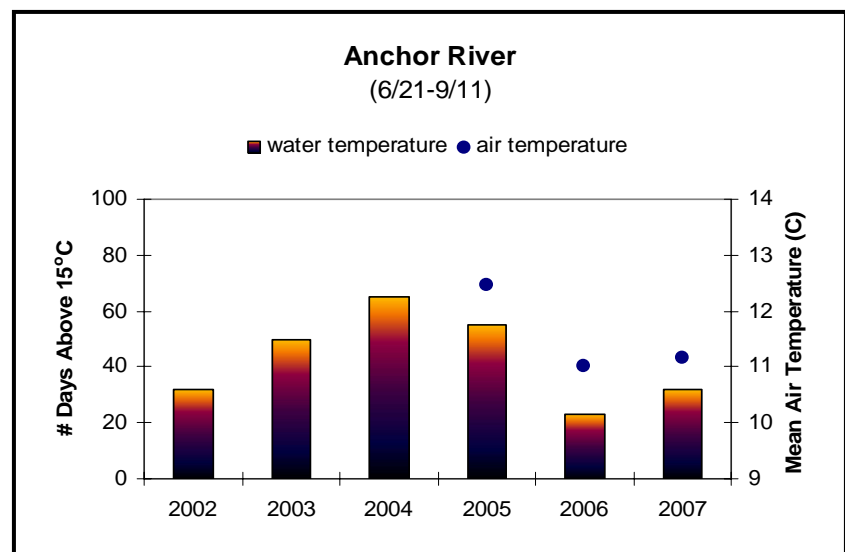
Over the last 10 years, the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, with support from the Alaska Clean Water Action (ACWA) program, has collected baseline data and monitored water quality on four lower Kenai Peninsula salmon streams: Anchor and Ninilchik Rivers, Stariski and Deep Creeks. Data collection has been focused primarily on stream water temperature, turbidity, and discharge. These data help resource managers track changes within local watersheds and respond with appropriate management actions.

Wild, healthy salmon populations support vital sport, commercial, subsistence, and personal use fisheries on the Kenai peninsula. Water temperature plays a critical role in all phases of the salmon lifecycle. As a result, monitoring local stream temperatures—and other instream conditions—is of great importance in managing salmon habitats and populations. Of particular importance are indications that salmon streams are failing to meet state water quality standards. For example as early as 2002, the District's stream monitoring program recorded stream temperatures above 15°C (50°F), the temperature at which the Alaska Department of Fish and Game raises concerns related to salmon egg incubation and fry survival. During the summers of 2004 and 2005, water temperatures as high as 21°C (70°F) were measured in the Anchor River. Unusual recordings such as these highlight the need to collect consistent, long-term data on Alaskan salmon streams.

Data collection on the four streams monitored by the District's program has inspired similar programs elsewhere in the region. For example, Cook Inletkeeper is now spearheading efforts to monitor water temperatures and trends on additional Cook Inlet salmon streams, along with an assessment of how these trends may correlate with larger climate patterns. As part of this task, Cook Inletkeeper has developed a standardized field protocol: *Water Temperature Data Logger Protocol for Cook Inlet Salmon Streams*. Following this protocol ensures that water temperature data will be collected in a standardized, accurate

way, which enables local communities to establish their own temperature monitoring programs to assess salmon habitats and watershed health in their areas.

In the summer of 2008, Cook Inletkeeper will begin implementing a Stream Temperature Monitoring Network to collect consistent, comparable temperature data throughout Cook Inlet. (In the future, this work is expected to expand beyond Cook Inlet to salmon streams across Alaska.) Standardized water temperature data will allow fisheries managers and landuse planners to identify watershed characteristics that can help buffer salmon habitats from rising air temperatures, increasing development, and other environmental changes. Such information will also provide knowledge needed to prioritize sites for future research, protection, and restoration. This important work builds on the Homer District's successful 10-year stream monitoring program and illustrates the value of such long-term efforts.



The chart illustrates the numbers of days that water temperatures were above 15°C on the Anchor River in the summers of 2002-2007. Mean summer air temperatures are noted for 2005 - 2007. Alaska's upper limit for water temperature in rearing areas and fish migration routes is 15°C.

To find out more about the various programs the Homer District is involved with visit our website at www.homerswcd.org

UPCOMING EVENTS & DATES

- April 24 Alaska State Envirothon
- May 1, 2008 KP-CWMA Annual Weed Workshop @ Kenai River Center, Soldotna
- May 7 HSWCD Board Meeting 5:00
- May 16-17 Alaska Trails Workshop @ the Annahata Center, Homer
- May 28th, 29th, 31st Landscape Suitability Map & Developers Certification Program
- June 7 National Trails Day— Work Party @ HDF



First Place entry for the 2-3 grade HSWCD poster contest—By Lawren Evarts



4014 Lake Street, Suite 201
Homer, Alaska 99603

Phone: 907-235-8177 x 5
Fax: 907-235-2364
Email: hswcd@xyz.net
www.homerswcd.org

*Meeting the needs of the local
Land User*