

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.”



FALL ISSUE:

- Forest Stewardship Plans
- HSWCD Board Elections
- USFWS Weed Crew
- Beaver Creek Culvert Project

Board of Supervisors

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

Alternate:

- Steve Gibson

District Staff

- Tara Schmidt,
District Manager
- Blaine Spellman
Invasive Plant Specialist
- Alder Seaman, Trails
Coordinator
- Al Poindexter,
Education Coordinator

FORESTRY OPPORTUNITES AVAILABLE TO LANDOWNERS

The Homer District will be offering technical assistance to private landowners interested in improving the management of their forest lands. Upon request District staff will be available for site visits to complete a resource inventory and assessment of existing private forest stands, including areas previously cleared of beetle- killed trees. This inventory will include measurements of average tree size, forest density, and overall site characteristics. Based on the goals of the landowner this information will be used to develop a forestry stewardship plan. In developing stewardship plans the District will work in partnership with the Alaska Division of Forestry or the NRCS State Forester to recommend conservation practices that promote productive and healthy forests. This program will be offered to individuals with forested or cut over areas of 7 acres or more. Properly managed forests can provide economic as well as environmental benefits to the public by contributing to watershed health, air quality, improved wildlife habitat, aesthetics, and recreational opportunities.

Once landowners have in place a Forest Stewardship Plan they may be eligible for financial incentives to implement recommended conservation practices. The NRCS is working closely with the Kenai Peninsula Borough to augment available funding up to 90% of the cost to the landowner can be reimbursed. KPB is also stepping up their efforts to provide landowner support with both supplying and planting tree seedlings to improve successful implementation of these plans.

A variety of forestry practices are eligible for NRCS sharing. The NRCS is introducing a new practice for hazardous fuel reduction to encourage removal of beetle killed trees and to ensure tree regeneration.

BOARD ELECTIONS COMING UP

The Homer District Board of Supervisors will be calling for nominations and holding the annual election for Board of Supervisors this fall. We have two seats up for re-election. To be eligible to serve on the Homer Board of Supervisors, individuals must be signed up as a cooperator of the District and be nominated by at least 3 other District cooperators. Board members must be willing to attend monthly District meetings. The Board provides a local voice in identifying and addressing natural resources related issues. Homer District activities include cooperator assistance such as conservation planning for landowners, landuse planning projects, and resource education and informational programs to promote land stewardship. Nomination forms must be submitted by **November 6, 2009**. For more information on HSWCD programs check out our website at www.homerswcd.org. If you are interested and would like more information please feel free to contact our office at any time.

MANAGING NON-NATIVE PLANTS MEMOIR OF A WEED WARRIOR



2009 Kenai Peninsula Weed Crew working on removing white sweet clover from the Resurrection River in Seward. White sweet clover threatens the ecosystem by altering the natural succession of native species. One seed can sprout 20,000 plants.

It's raining, in fact it's a torrential downpour. We are cold and wet which happens to be the same condition as our lunch, which we were eating huddled under a bunch of Alders. I looked around and wondered if these guys still had enough core heat to last a little longer. We were in the middle of the Resurrection river on a small island. This would have been an ideal place if it were not for the fact that it was covered with white sweetclover. We knew that white sweetclover posed a threat to the entire ecosystem of this river and we were going to remove it!

I was lucky enough this summer to be part of a team of dedicated individuals working to remove invasive weeds throughout the Kenai peninsula. Tyler Haas, Dillon, and Darren Brady were hardy young men willing to put up with being away from home, sleeping outside and long days of hard work. Officially we were the Early Detection/Rapid Response invasive weed crew but we liked to call ourselves the Weed Warriors.

Our job was pretty simple really. We would arrive in a town on a Monday morning and await instructions from the invasive weed specialist of the area. They would direct us to the areas where invasive plants were, and we would remove them. Our tools included hoes, shovels, fire rakes, and our own will power. Often we would just use our own hands and brute force to pull plants from the ground.

So far we have removed plants from over 50 sites some of which filled over 40 garbage bags full of plants and dirt! Although our hearts were really in the simple and pure satisfaction of removing plants we were also responsible for filling out site surveys and doing some mapping of invasive plants. For example we performed 64 site surveys of places where we found invasive plants. This is being uploaded in a statewide database. This does not include the many sites we monitored and did not find any plants.

Besides for the pure labor aspect of our work we were responsible for doing educational outreach in the communities as well. Often people would come up to us and ask what we were doing. Actually the comments ranged from an angry "why are you tearing up those flowers" to, "are you boys smoking those plants?" Luckily Darren and Dillon used to be door to door salesman and their charm and enthusiasm would win over anyone. We basically would talk to anyone remotely interested about invasive plants and why they should be concerned about them. In addition we also passed out literature at the farmers markets in Homer and Soldotna.



Weed Warrior Tyler Haas celebrating success in Kodiak by removing orange hawkweed from a otherwise pristine alpine meadow.

**The Kenai Peninsula Weed Crew is supported by the US Fish & Wildlife Service through funding allocated by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.*

WATERMELON TRAIL ATV BRIDGE IN PLACE!

The Homer District is a recipient of an Alaska Clean Waters Action (ACWA) grant, awarded from the Department of Environmental Conservation, to relocate the ATV trail crossing at Beaver Creek, about 3 miles down the Watermelon Trail north of Homer.

Beaver Creek is a catalogued anadromous fish stream, and this portion of the trail is located within the Anchor River/Fritz Creek Critical Habitat Area. Beaver Creek, a tributary to the Anchor River, supports important sport and commercial fish populations. By installing a bridge and rehabilitating the old in-water crossing, we hope to improve the habitat within Beaver Creek.

This July and August, the District's trail crew completed the construction of the ramps to the bridge and mounted guard rails. The ramps were built using gabion baskets lined with tyar for structural integrity. Gravelly sandy soil from nearby was used to fill and cap the ramps. The District contracted with Bobcat Services to help with the fill work for the ramps and to do some trail smoothing and drainage improvements. The bridge was ready for use on Aug. 20th, just in time for moose hunting season to begin. The District trail crew then did some drainage and tread improvement on the south side of the bridge.

With the rerouting of ATV traffic completed, the District's next step is to rehabilitate the streambanks where the old crossing had been. The plan calls for reestablishing riparian vegetation which will improve instream habitats the fish populations. Vegetation will also provide some erosion control and reduce much of the sediment runoff entering the stream. The plan is to complete the streambank work next spring.



Bridge installation on the Watermelon Trail, this ATV trail has been directing traffic through Beaver Creek. With this new bridge we expect traffic to stay out of the stream, improving the water quality.

Alaskan Coastal Freight donated to the Homer District a flat bed trailer to convert into a suitable bridge. With support from the Homer Snomads this 40-foot long, 8-foot wide heavy-duty trailer was re-decked and staged on concrete abutments across the creek. The weight limit of the bridge was certified at 4,000 lbs.

FARM SERVICE AGENCY TO HOST OPEN HOUSE

The Alaska Farm Service Agency County Offices will be holding three "open houses" during October for producers to meet the newly appointed Alaska FSA State Executive Director, Danny Consenstein. The staff encourages all local producers to come and meet with SED Consenstein. This will be a time to get to know him and discuss topics of interest and concerns with him.

The Kenai Peninsula producers will have an opportunity to meet SED Consenstein at an open house in the Homer NRCS Field Office conference room, located at 4014 Lake Street in Homer, on Tuesday, October 20, 2009, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 pm.

BEAVER CREEK PROJECT COMPLETED



The diversion channel, lined with plastic sheeting, is the cleanest way to allow the contractor to work within a streambed, eliminating the risk of increased siltation into the stream.

The project was completed over a 2- week period in early July. Several steps were involved in successfully removing the original culvert and replacing it with a new pipe. First a diversion channel had to be constructed to divert the stream around the existing culvert and to allow the contractor to work in the existing streambed. Then the original culvert had to be removed; this culvert was 5 ft. in diameter and was replaced with one that measured 11.5 ft in diameter. The larger culvert was put in place and then nearly 40% of it's diameter and interior was buried. The new culvert allows for increased flood flows.

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Inside the new culvert, the designs for this project included a streambed simulation to include elements such as channel width and bedform.

The Homer District has successfully completed the culvert replacement off Hutter Road, and preliminary indications are that this will improve the upstream and downstream movement of juvenile salmonids and other aquatic organisms, improving salmon habitat connectivity. This project was completed in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Kenai Watershed Forum.



Original culvert in of Beaver Creek. On the upstream side of Hutter Rd. This pipe was removed, and a larger culvert was embedded 3 feet below the streambed to emulate a natural stream system, eliminating the pooling effect seen in this photo.



This is the same view as in the photo above. This photo shows where the original streambed and the reconstructed streambed merge. The engineered design called for incorporation of some stream meanders to create as natural a stream system as possible.

TEACHERS TRAINING WORKSHOP



1st grader pulling bird vetch in Fairbanks. A weed pull is a lesson plan from the invasive plant curricula and will be a subject in the course we will offer.

AVAILABLE TO AREA EDUCATORS

The Homer Soil and Water Conservation District and Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies will be offering an invasive plant curriculum training workshop on November 8th and 9th. This workshop will focus on key concepts of invasive plant science and management and provide hands on experience with lesson plans from two Alaskan-based curricula. The curricula are *Weed Wackers!: a K-6 educators guide to invasive plants of Alaska* and *Invasive Plants Taking Root in Alaska: a 9-12 curricula*.

This workshop provides a **professional development credit** through UAA Kenai Peninsula College and is relevant for K-12 educators. While we are targeting teachers, everyone is welcome to attend and participate!. For more information contact Blaine, 235-8177 ext. 111 or Katie, 235-6714.

This is a Kenai Peninsula –Cooperative Weed Management Area project, supported by the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts and the US Forest Service –State and Private Forestry.



After the reconstruction of the streambed live willow stakes were placed along the banks help with reestablishment of the vegetation.

(continued from pg 4) Once the culvert was installed, the contractor brought in material to re-create the streambed within the culvert to replicate natural geomorphology.

With streambed work completed, the next step was to re-build the road across the new culvert. The road slopes needed to be stabilized with gravel, riprap, and vegetation. As a result of construction work some streambanks needed to be re-vegetated. Following the specifications in *Streambank Revegetation and Protection: A Guide for Alaska*, a restoration plan was prepared and implemented to ensure a healthy riparian system.

The next phase of this project will be to replace a second culvert downstream of this crossing with a bridge. The District will have the engineering designs for this project available shortly. We hope see the installation of the bridge completed in the spring of 2010.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

- October 14 HSWCD Board Meeting 5:00 pm @ USDA Service Center
- October 20 Farm Service Agency Open House 1:30-3:30 @ USDA Service Center
- October 22-23 Alaska Association of Conservation Districts Fall Conference - Anchorage
- October 26-29 Alaska Invasive Species Conference—Ketchikan
- November 6 Nominations For Board Supervisors due to the NRCDB
- November 8-9 (tentative) Invasive Plant Curriculum Training Workshop @ Kenai Peninsula College
- November 11 HSWCD Board Meeting 5:00 @ USDA Service Center

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



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Land User*

