

“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

CAUSE TO CELEBRATE: THE HOMER DEMONSTRATION FOREST IS “GOOD TO GO” FOR ANOTHER 25 YEARS!

FALL ISSUE:

- Tall Tree Ave Fish Passage—pg. 2
- People’s Garden Grant Program—pg. 3
- Lower Kenai Peninsula Landowner’s Guide—pg. 4
- Invasive Plant Program Updates—pg. 5

Board of Supervisors

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

District Staff

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

In October, the Department of Natural Resources let us know that the Interagency Land Management Assignment (ILMA) establishing the Homer Demonstration Forest had been renewed for another 25 years! Homer Soil and Water, along with many individuals and groups in the community, spent



months working to ensure renewal of the original ILMA when it expired in May. Partners who worked with us—through meetings, HDF tours, and letters of support—include the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club, the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust, Kachemak Bay Campus of Kenai Peninsula College, and many local residents who live near or just appreciate the HDF.

Twenty-five years ago, the original ILMA transferred management of 360 state-owned acres from the Division of Mining, Land and Water to the Division of Forestry, creating the Homer Demonstration Forest through this “interagency land management assignment.” Division of Forestry then partnered with the Homer Demonstration Forest Steering Committee—chaired by Homer Soil and Water and including representatives from many community groups—to manage the HDF. The same organizational structure is reflected in the newly signed ILMA. In addition, the Homer Demonstration Forest Management Plan, written by the District with input from many members of the steering committee and community, is now officially recognized as the guiding document for what will happen in the HDF. You can download the HDF plan at: <http://www.homerswcd.org/forestry/prgms/hdf.htm>.

This means that residents and visitors alike can continue to visit this ecological treasure on the west edge of town to learn, explore, recreate, and enjoy ever-changing natural cycles. Trailheads for HDF trails are located on Rogers Loop (off the Sterling Highway) and on Rucksack Drive (off of Diamond Ridge Road). We look forward to seeing you in the Homer Demonstration Forest over the next 25 years!

TALL TREE CULVERT REPLACEMENT WORKING TOWARD FISH FRIENDLY PASSAGE

The Homer District is pleased to announce the successful completion of another salmon-friendly culvert project, located on Tall Tree Avenue, north of Anchor Point. As part of a collaborative effort between the US Fish & Wildlife Service and Kenai Watershed Forum to replace a culvert that blocked salmon passage, District staff provided project management and post-construction restoration of riparian areas. Engineering design for the new culvert was contracted to McLane Consulting Group, Inc. of Soldotna. Homer-based East Road Services, Inc. was awarded the contract for construction, which entailed removing the existing undersized culvert, installing a larger, properly-embedded culvert, and resurfacing the widened roadway. A healthy dose of favorable weather helped to make this project a resounding success, as HSWCD staff spent several sunny, warm days applying various bioengineering techniques to restore stream-bank and channel vegetation.



Above, inside the new culvert – the designs for this project called for a streambed simulation to address elements such as channel width and bedform. Bottom photos are examples of some of the bioengineering techniques used to stabilize the streambanks after the older culvert was replaced.

Undersized and poorly placed culverts can prevent migration of both juvenile and adult salmon. Tiny juvenile salmon are particularly vulnerable to blockages, and when they are prevented from reaching areas they need for rearing and overwintering, their survival is threatened. Through multi-agency collaboration, and with funding from the USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife program, many culverts identified on the Kenai Peninsula as fish-passage barriers are now being replaced. HSWCD is happy to participate in this vital process and will continue to seek opportunities to protect salmon habitats and ensure their accessibility to all salmon life stages, big and small.



PEOPLE'S GARDENS AIM TO PROVIDE HEALTHY FOOD AND EDUCATION

The Homer District, in partnership with Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP), has recently been awarded a People's Garden grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The People's Garden grant will allow Homer Soil and Water, working with a collaborative oversight committee, to award over \$80,000 in "micro-grants" of \$1000 to \$5000 to southern peninsula schools and other community organizations to help them develop People's Gardens (described below). A variety of community groups will develop gardens, ranging from schools to Native communities to mental/physical health organizations to public interest entities.



HSWCD board and staff receive a ceremonial check in honor of the People's Garden Grant program.

USDA Secretary Vilsack began the People's Garden Initiative— named to honor President Lincoln's description of USDA as the "People's Department"—

in 2009 in honor of Lincoln's 200th birthday. Over 600 local and national organizations have since worked together to establish community and school gardens across the country. People's Gardens vary in size and type, but all have three components in common. They benefit the community, in some cases by creating recreational spaces and in others by providing produce to food banks and other community groups. They are collaborative—created and maintained by a partnership of local individuals, groups, or organizations. And third, they incorporate sustainable practices. The gardens might use compost or mulch made by participants, contain native plants, or benefit insect pollinators. They also might exemplify water conservation, for instance, by incorporating a rain garden or other measures to capture water and prevent runoff. People's Gardens created through this grant will be registered with USDA and included on its interactive People's Garden map, which can be found at www.pubinfo.usda.gov/garden/Map_View.cfm.

One benefit of the People's Garden project will be to increase access to healthy, sustainable foods. Another will be to promote the "Eat Local" concept, which provides both health benefits and energy savings. In addition, with at least 95% of our food produced outside Alaska, we are particularly susceptible to disruptions in food supplies; and this project will increase local sources for the produce we eat. This project will also provide hands-on opportunities to learn about topics such as choosing plants best suited for different sites, what constitutes good nutrition, what makes soils most productive, how to control invasive plants, and the relationship between foods and cultures.

The Homer District will work with the People's Garden oversight committee to develop criteria for awarding micro-grants and a process that community groups can follow to submit micro-grant applications. We plan on hosting an informational meeting January 19th for anyone interested in participating.

QUESTION: WHAT'S WITH THE LIST ON THE LEFT?

ANSWER: KEEP READING TO FIND OUT...

Alevin
 All-terrain vehicle
 Alluvial
 Anadromous waters
 Aquifer
 Bankfull
 Buffer
 Caribou Hills
 Channel shape
 Climate
 Connectivity
 Culverts
 Dolly Varden
 Erosion control
 Estuary
 Fingerling
 Fish Passage Program
 Flooding
 GIS
 Glacial history
 Glacial till
 Groundwater
 Headwater streams
 Hydrographs
 Hyporheic flow
 Impervious surfaces
 Invasive species
 Kenai Area Plan
 Landforms
 Landscaping for salmon
 Low Impact Development
 Meander belt
 Moraine
 Ordinary high water
 Programs for private landowners
 Rain gardens
 Recharge areas
 Redd
 Reed canary grass
 Sea level rise
 Soils
 Streambank stabilization
 Stream channel processes
 Stream temperatures
 Turbidity
 Wetlands

The list to the left shows some of the 200-plus topics to be covered in a “watershedipedia” that Homer Soil and Water will put online (and also print) by the end of this year. The watershedipedia is one of two sections that make up landowner’s guides we’re developing (see our March 2011 newsletter at www.homerswcd.org for more background). Funding for these guides comes from a Sustainable Salmon Fund grant. One guide will cover Anchor River and Stariski Creek watersheds, the other, Ninilchik River and Deep Creek watersheds. These watersheds are shown on the map to the right.

Landowner’s Guides will have two sections: (1) Introductory articles

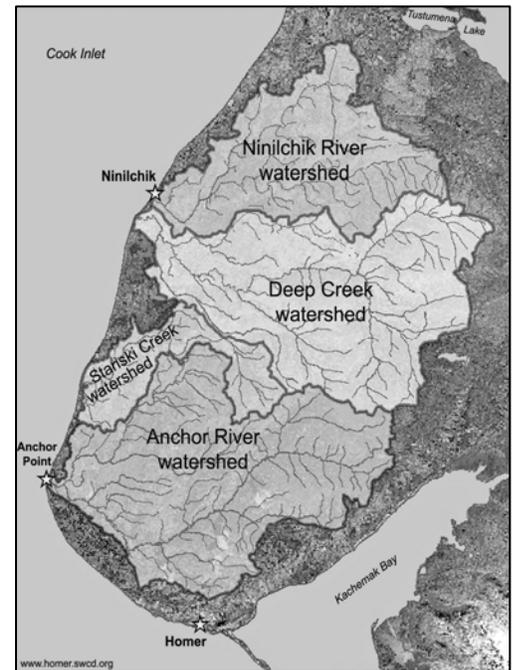
As mentioned, the landowner’s guides will contain two sections. The first will consist of five introductory articles covering basic information useful to all landowners. Topics include:

1. Salmon species found in the watersheds and their life histories and habitats;
2. The five S’s of land use success—or how to go about using your lands in ways that are suitable, safe, sustainable, satisfying, and salmon friendly;
3. What’s a SWAPA and why should you care (SWAPA stands for soils, water, air, plants, and animals—and we’ll describe how you can find SWAPA information for your land);
4. The best “best management practices” landowners can use to protect salmon habitats;
5. Who’s studying what in your watershed and how can you learn what they’re finding out.

(2) A watershedipedia (more on the list of topics)

The second section is what we’re calling a watershedipedia (think Wikipedia for your watershed). The topics listed on the left provide a sampling of what will be covered. On a computer, you’ll be able to jump to each topic (did we mention the guides will be in PDF format on our website?), and you’ll always have a link back to the topic list. That way you can go to a topic of interest, check it out, and then hop back to the topic list to look up something else. Each watershedipedia entry will be short and sweet (usually less than a page or two), tailored to local watersheds, and include lots of illustrations and maps, as well as links to related online information. The point is to make it quick and easy for landowners to find whatever information they’re looking for.

For more about this project, including some examples of watershedipedia entries, visit our website and click on “Projects” from our homepage. If there’s a topic of special interest to you, contact devony@homerswcd.org and let her know. There’s a good chance you can even become one of our volunteer reviewers if you’d like, but you’ll have to hurry, we’re scheduled to complete the guides by the end of December.



GETTING TO THE ROOT OF INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT

The Homer District's five-person weed crew spent 10 weeks this summer attacking a variety of invasive species across the Kenai Peninsula. Under the direction of crew leader, Doug Koester, and in collaboration with the Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area (KP-CWMA) the crew travelled from Seward to Seldovia whacking invasives encountered. The crew worked on projects with the Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance, the Cooperative Extension Service, Seldovia Village Tribe, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Forest Service. The crew visited 104 sites, removing 2 or more invasive weed species at many sites. Approximately 40 acres of weeds were hand pulled, an additional 25 acres were mowed. A total of 570 garbage bags of weeds were hauled away for disposal. Many sites were revisited throughout the summer to ensure successful control. An additional 114 areas that are highly susceptible to invasives (e.g. all-terrain trails, boat launches, or new construction sites) were surveyed, and a total of 167 new entries were made to the *AKIPEC* data base.



The photos above are before and after shots of the Homer District weed crew's efforts to hand pull a patch of bird vetch by the barge basin on the Homer Spit. In addition, white sweetclover, narrowleaf hawksbeard, yellow toadflax, and scentless fall mayweed were all pulled from the same site. The barge basin has the potential to serve as a vector via marine traffic for the spread of noxious and invasive species into pristine areas across Kachemak Bay.



The weed crew removes reed canary grass near Jakolof Creek.

KP-COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT AREA UPDATES STRATEGIC PLAN

In January 2011 the KP-CWMA's technical advisory committee met to update the strategic plan that has been in place for the past 5 years. A focus of this meeting was developing a way to prioritize watersheds for controlling reed canary grass (RCG). A model prioritizing areas by watersheds was adopted. Using this spatially explicit model, the Seldovia watershed ranked as a top priority due to RCG's potential threat to salmon habitat. The Homer District has developed a management plan for the Seldovia Native Association and hopes to continue working collaboratively with SNA in the future.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

December 14th -HSWCD Board Meeting @ 5:00 USDA Service Center

January 11th -HSWCD Board Meeting @ 5:00 USDA Service Center

January 19th -People's Garden Grant Program Informational Meeting

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
www.homerswcd.org

*Meeting the needs of the local
Land User*

