CONNECTING ACROSS TIKAHTNU: A JOINT FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Mat-Su salmon PARTNERSHIP

KENAI PENINSULA FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY & TUESDAY - APRIL 21 & 22

BP Energy Center
1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, AK 99508

PRESENTED BY UAA ALASKA CENTER FOR CONSERVATION SCIENCE & KACHEMAK BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

CONNECTING ACROSS TIKAHTNU

DAY 1

Monday, April 21, 9:00 – 5:00pm

TIME	DESCRIPTION
9:00	Welcome: Introductions & Intentions
9:30	Keynote Speaker Presentation
10:45	Break
11:00 - 12:10	**Session 1: Fish Habitat & Restoration**
12:10 - 1:10	**Lunch, Resource Sharing Activity, & Project Tidbit Updates**
1:10 - 2:35	Session 2: Supporting Salmon Fisheries
2:35 - 3:35	Session 3: Invasive Species
3:35	Break
3:50 - 4:55	Session 4: Outreach & Education
4:55	**Wrap Up & Day 2 Overview**

CONNECTING ACROSS TIKAHTNU

DAY 1

Welcomes & Introductions

ERIN LARSON

UAA Alaska Center for Conservation Science/ Assistant Director & Lead Aquatic Ecologist

Erin earned her B.A. in Biology with a focus in Ecology at Dartmouth College and her Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University. She served as an Assistant Professor of Environmental Science at Alaska Pacific University before joining the Aquatic Ecology team at ACCS as Research Faculty.

JESSICA SPEED

Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership / Coordinator

Jessica Speed is the Mat-Su Basin Project Manager with Trout Unlimited Alaska and has served as the Coordinator of the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership since 2012. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Geography, with a focus on Natural Resource Management, from the University of Victoria, with additional coursework from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Jessica has worked as an environmental educator and science technician, and previously served as Executive Director of the Wrangell Mountains Center—an institute dedicated to promoting land stewardship through the arts, scientific research, and environmental education. In 2012, she completed a Nonprofit Management course with The Foraker Group.

TRENT DODSON

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership/ Coordinator

Dodson has been an engaged community member and professional in the field since 2001, making significant contributions to various organizations in Alaska like Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, Cook Inlet Regional Citizen Advisory Council, and the Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association.

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DAY 1

Keynote Presentation

WILSON JUSTIN

Alaska Native Elders Council / Alaska Pacific University

Wilson Justin was born in Midcentury at Nabesna Alaska. A village later abandoned to comply with the educational requests of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Wilson has advised federal agencies such as US EPA, on issues around environmental program capacity building.

In the early 1990's, US EPA began writing the Indian Environmental General Assistance Program statute (IGAP Act of 1992). Wilson played a critical role in the initial structuring of this program, and in its evolution over the years, as it grew from just a handful of grants to Tribal Governments, to what it is today, with over $27 million dollars in Region 10, Alaska and over 125 Tribes statewide choosing to partner on this program. He has Directed GAP programs, including Mount Sanford's environmental program, overseeing the development of a successful regional recycling program.

Wilson has professionally attended conferences for decades. He has led numerous discussions on climate change as an acclaimed speaker during interdisciplinary conferences such as the Alaska Forum on the Environment. The publication titled: Alaska Forum on the Environment: Climate Change: Our Voices, Sharing our Ways Forward, became a component to the US Department of the Interior, US Geological Survey, United States National Climate Assessment, Alaska Technical Regional Report (Circular 1379).

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DAY 1

Session 1: Fish Habitat & Restoration

FROM BARRIERS TO SOLUTIONS: TRIBAL CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FISH PASSAGE RESTORATION

Andrea James / Chickaloon Village Traditional Council

Chickaloon Native Village is restoring salmon habitats in Southcentral Alaska through a Tribal Fish Passage Program funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The program offers training, hosts virtual meetings, and implements culvert replacements and stream restorations to support salmon resilience, while fostering collaboration with other agencies and NGOs.

VARYING ROLES OF GROUNDWATER SUPPORT TO STREAMFLOW AND TEMPERATURE MODULATION IN NON-GLACIAL SALMON STREAMS IN SOUTH CENTRAL ALALSKA

Tyelyn Brigino / University of South Florida & Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Groundwater discharge plays a critical role in the proper functioning of salmon-bearing streams in the Kenai Peninsula Lowlands, Alaska

A LOW-COST SONAR INDEX OF SUSITNA RIVER EULACHON RUN TIMING AND STRENGTH TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE COOK INLET ECOSYSTEM

Nicole Schmitt / Alaska Wildlife Alliance

Our proposed 3-year project seeks to produce a relatively low-cost, sonar-based index of eulachon abundance and run timing for more informed fishery management decisions and ecosystem considerations.

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Session 1: Fish Habitat & Restoration

MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF BEAVER-INSPIRED ACTIVITY IN THREE HEADWATER WETLANDS

Spencer Johnson / UAA Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Peatlands on the Kenai Peninsula are drying. This trend threatens the many ecosystem services these wetlands provide, such as delivering temperature-modulated groundwater to salmon streams, storing carbon, and mitigating fire risk. Beavers are a potential solution: beaver dams retain more water on the landscape, recharge groundwater, and often create excellent rearing habitat for juvenile Coho salmon.

PREY OF ENDANGERED COOK INLET BELUGA WHALES

William Bechtol / Bechtol Research

During 2008–2018, the population of endangered Cook Inlet beluga whales declined at 2.3%/yr, with a 0.9%/yr increase to 2022. Concerns remain over what is inhibiting recovery. The CIBW Recovery Plan identified a reduction in prey as a threat. This presentation discusses data on CIBW prey and possible research options.

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Session 2: Supporting Salmon Fisheries

STATUS OF COOK INLET SALMON STOCKS

Nick DeCovich / Alaska Department of Fish and Game

The Cook Inlet region of Alaska is home to all five species of Pacific salmon and supports both commercial and recreational fisheries targeting local wild stocks. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages these fisheries by monitoring escapements (spawning abundance) for targeted populations and reducing or increasing harvest opportunities to keep escapements within established goal ranges.

IT TAKES FISH TO MAKE FISH / MAT-SU BASIN SALMON HABITAT AND POPULATION MAINTENANCE

Andy Couch / Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission

It Takes Fish to Make Fish -- has been the name of the Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission's (FWC) informational booklet for several years, and one of the key reasons the FWC was formed. This presentation will provide some history of the Commission and Mat-Su salmon runs, as well as current habitat issues within the Borough, including invasive species, and the challenges presented by increased development near Mat-Su water bodies. There is more information than can be thoroughly covered, so public questions after the presentation will provide an opportunity to go into more depth on specific issues. Sustainable salmon populations are one measurement of healthy salmon habitat.

DESHKA RIVER TEMPERATURE MONITORING AND SALMON STUDIES

Daniel Rinella / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

We will present some results from our ongoing Deshka River temperature monitoring and from a related set of studies into changing habitat suitability for Chinook and Coho salmon.

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DAY 1

Session 1: Fish Habitat & Restoration

SCIENCE TO CONSERVATION OUTCOMES: USING DATA PORTALS TO IMPLEMENT CONSERVATION ACTIONS

Anjanette Steer / UAA Alaska Center for Conservation Science

As a member of the Science and Data Committee of the Mat-Su Salmon Habitat Partnership, Anjanette will discuss the challenges of transferring salmon science, like thermal imagery to local decision makers as a follow up to work started by Sue Mauger (Cook Inletkeeper). Anjanette will highlight how key statewide databases can be and have been used to support Mat-Su Salmon Habitat Partnership Priorities e.g. Anadromous Waters Catalog , Fish Passage, Exotic Plants (AKEPIC 2.0) including Elodea specific database, and off-highway vehicle mapper for trails in the Mat-Su.

SALMON FROM SOIL: CHICKALOON NATIVE VILLAGE SALMON RESEARCH

Benjamin Americus / Chickaloon Village Traditional Council

This will be a 5 minute tidbit presentation by Chickaloon Village Traditional Council describing a project using DNA and marine nitrogen to detect historic salmon populations.

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Session 3: Invasive Species

THE RACE IS ON: COMMUNITY MONITORING FOR INVASIVE EUROPEAN GREEN CRAB IN ALASKA

Jasmine Maurer / Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

The Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve has been monitoring for the early detection of invasive European green crabs in the greater Kachemak Bay for over 20 years. A recent project worked with partners in Washington State and those monitoring in Alaska to help transfer knowledge on how to deal with this expanding invader.

OUTMUSCLING INVASIVE DREISSENIDS WITH A PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP

Marcus Geist / UAA Alaska Center for Conservation Science

Multiple organizations are partnering to counter the threat of invasive dreissenid (Quagga and Zebra) mussels to Alaska's freshwater systems through a coordinated prioritization of monitoring vulnerable waterbodies.

NORTHERN PIKE MANAGEMENT

Parker Bradley / Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Northern pike, a species not native to southcentral Alaska, was initially introduced to this region in the 1950's. As one of the most popular sport fish in North America, this top-level predator is commonly and illegally moved around by people, often with dire consequences. In Southcentral Alaska, northern pike are now known to occupy over 150 waterbodies, and they are continuing to spread.

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Session 4: Outreach & Education

WHAT'S FOR LUNCH: SALMON EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Ingrid Harrald / UAA Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR) has developed a successful watershed-focused education and outreach program, including internships, teacher trainings, classroom activates and field trips. They will share their model for communicating local science and developing a sense of place using methods of engagement to reach communities at every learning level.

KINGMAKERS: RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATION THE ACTIONS LANDOWNERS TAKE TO SUPPORT SALMON HABITAT

Libby Kugel / Great Land Trust
Carson Chambers / Kachemak Heritage Land Trust

When land comes under the care of a land trust, it is protected in perpetuity. Much of the land that Great Land Trust and Kachemak Heritage Land Trust protect is vital salmon habitat. Since 2016, the King Maker program has celebrated Alaskans working to protect that important salmon habitat.

FISH NEED LAND TOO: A NON-PROFIT, ACADEMIC AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT SCIENCE TO CONSERVATION ACTION

Carson Chambers / Kachemak Heritage Land Trust
Syverine Bentz / UAA Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

"Fish Need Land Too" field trips on the Kenai Peninsula hosted by KHLT and KBNERR with industry and local partners serve fisherman, local government leaders, policy makers, scientists, citizens, and children's school groups to bring awareness about salmon lifecycles, local ecosystems, and the role of conservation in protecting salmon and people.

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Session 4: Outreach & Education

COMMUNITY ACTIONKIT: AN INNOVATIVE MODEL FOR CONFRONTING THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE TO SALMON HABITAT

David Knight / Cook Inlet Keeper

Protecting salmon habitat for current and future generations was the top aspiration determined in a survey and community conversations hosted from 2021-2023 across 27 communities throughout the Tikahtnu|Cook Inlet watershed.

Session Wrap Up

PROJECT UPDATES

Sign Up Available at Registration Table

Attendees who have tid-bit updates, 5 minutes or less, will be able to sign up and share updates at the end of the day.

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DAY 2

Tuesday, April 22, 9:00 – 5:00pm

TIME	DESCRIPTION
9:00	Pre-session Check-In & Coffee
9:15	Welcome
9:30	Meet the Fish Habitat Partnerships
10:30	Making Connections Across Tikahtnu: Get to Know Your Fish Habitat Partnership Neighbors
10:45	Break
11:00	Kenai Peninsula Borough Mayor Micciche Presentation & Q&A
11:30	Priority Pods & Challenge Wall
12:30	Catered Lunch & Project Tidbit Updates
1:30	Reciprocity and Resources
2:00	Supporting the Region: Overlap in Priorities and Challenges between Fish Habitat Partnerships
3:15	Break
3:30	Leveraging the Fish Habitat Partnerships Conservation Action Plan Process
4:30	Wrap Up & Thank You

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DAY 2

MAYOR PETER MICCICHE

Kenai Peninsula Borough & the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board

Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) Mayor Peter Micciche was elected in February of 2023. Prior to serving the KPB, he served in Juneau representing the Kenai in the Alaska State Senate for three terms, finishing as the Senate President during Alaska's 32nd Legislature. He served as Soldotna's Mayor and on City Council beginning in 2007.

Peter is a 30-year commercial salmon fisherman in Cook Inlet and retired after 35 years as the Superintendent of the ConocoPhillips LNG Facility. He's been a small business owner on the Kenai since 1983, operating a restaurant, a commercial painting business, rental property, and a snow removal service. Peter received his Associate's degree from Kenai Peninsula College and graduated summa cum laude from Alaska Pacific University with a Bachelor's degree in business.

Peter serves on various boards, including the Boys and Girls Club of the Kenai Peninsula, the Triumvirate Theatre, the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, the National Fish Habitat Partnership, and the Alaska SeaLife Center. He and his family have been active in supporting disadvantaged youth and the senior and veteran communities for many years.

Peter is married to Erin and they have four daughters—Madi, Sophia, Luci and Stella—whose ages range from 30 to 11. The Micciche family resides in Soldotna enjoying all that is wonderful about Alaska.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Salmon Watershed Stewardship

The Salmon Watershed Stewardship project originated from earmark funding secured by Coowe Walker at the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve through the late Rep. Don Young's office. In honor of her commitment to juvenile salmon and her service to the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, we are excited to support this joint meeting between the MatSu and Kenai FHP's. In addition to this meeting, the Salmon Watershed Stewardship project at KBNERR/ACCS is focused on weaving together existing knowledge and outreach and educational efforts on salmon-bearing watersheds across Cook Inlet, leveraging and building on existing research and stewardship partnerships, and providing platforms for information sharing about protocols, activities, and science occurring across the region related to salmon watershed science and stewardship.

The Joint Fish Habitat Partnership meeting was supported by a planning committee made up of representatives from both the Mat-Su Basin and Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnerships. A big thank you to all who worked to help shape this meeting and to all of our presenters!

Alaska Center for Conservation Science
University of Alaska Anchorage

Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Mat-Su salmon PARTNERSHIP

KENAI PENINSULA FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP