Pacific Coast Joint Venture
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Developing partnerships to protect and restore habitat for birds and other wildlife

Alaska partners protect important shoreline

More than 1300 acres—including eight miles of coastline—have gained long-term protection for the use of wildlife and people, thanks to two conservation easements recently crafted by conservation partners in Alaska's upper Cook Inlet.

Both parcels of land will remain under the ownership of Eklutna Inc., the Alaska Native Village Corporation for Anchorage, and will continue to be available for traditional uses such as hunting and fishing by Alaska Native shareholders. The easements will be held by the Great Land Trust, which has been working with willing landowners and other partners to conserve lands and waterways in Southcentral Alaska since 1995.

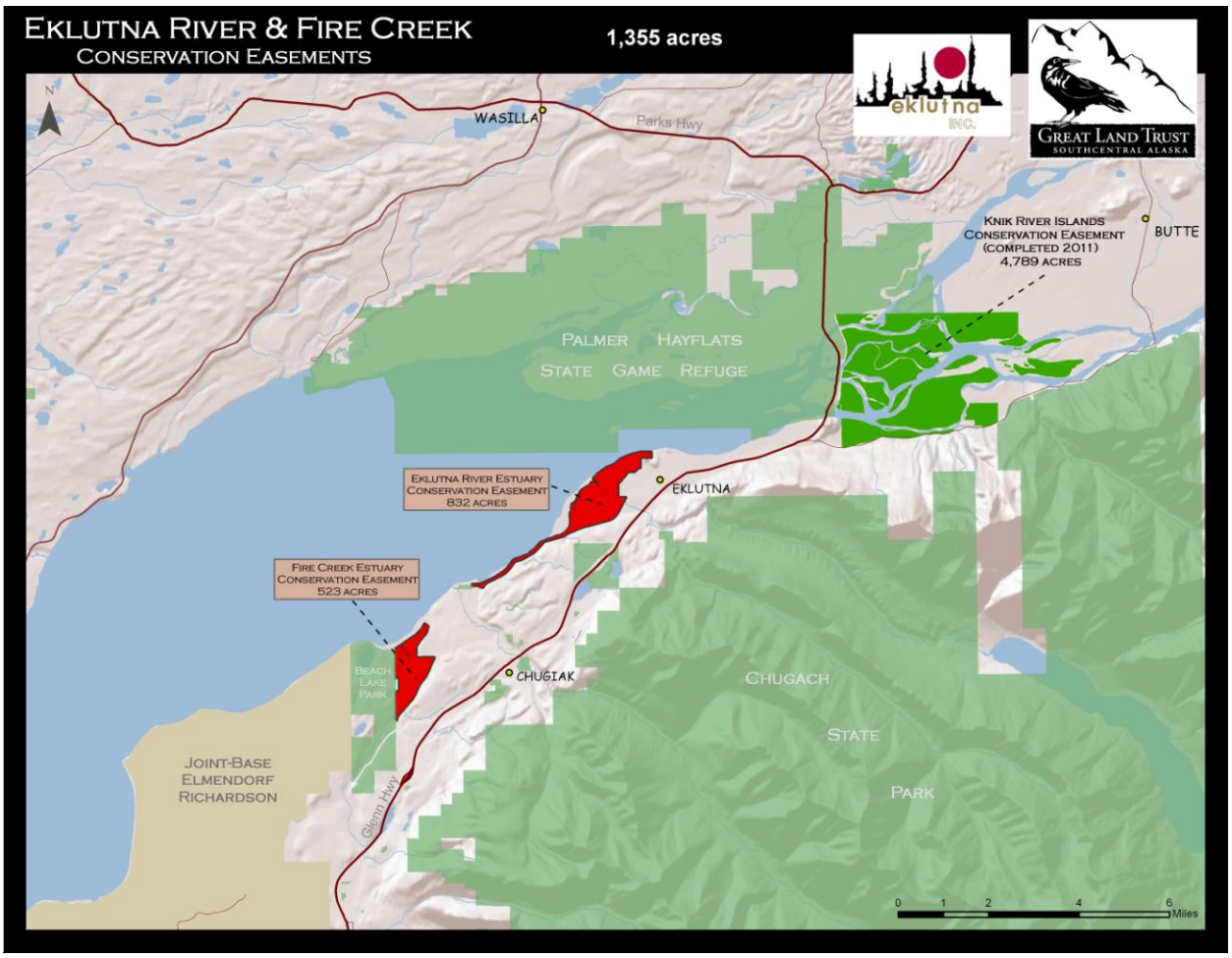
Easement site in upper Cook Inlet / Carl Johnson

The easements spell out protections for habitat for all five species of salmon as well birds and other wildlife. According to Lynn Fuller, Alaska's Pacific Coast Joint Venture Coordinator, the coastal areas of upper Cook Inlet are a priority area for the joint venture due to the extensive breeding and stopover habitats for migratory birds. Two-thirds of the state's human population resides in the Cook Inlet ecoregion, and the pace of urbanization, oil and gas development, transportation infrastructure and other activities will likely increase in the near future. This type of proactive habitat protection is important to maintaining bird and other wildlife populations.

"The bird use in this area is quite impressive—the properties are only ¼ mile away from Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, which hosts 168 species of migratory birds, including tens of thousands of ducks and geese and an astounding 5000 trumpeter swans. This spring there were lots of sandhill cranes, snow geese, and trumpeter swans, as well as many others," says Phil Shephard, executive director of the land trust.

The project was made possible through a collaborative effort with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and CIRI (an Alaska Regional Native Corporation). Funding for the easements was

made possible through resources set aside to offset habitat losses associated with the expansion of the Port of Anchorage.

The conservation easements follow the successful completion of the 4,789 acre Knik River Islands Conservation Easement between Eklutna Inc, and Great Land Trust in November 2011. Eklutna, Inc. President and Chair, Michael Curry, recognized the importance of this conservation work by noting, “As important as business development is for our corporation, we place a high priority on protecting habitat.”

More information:
Great Land Trust http://www.greatlandtrust.org/
Eklutna, Inc. http://eklutnainc.com/