Kasilof River Parcel (Lot 31)

Prepared by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

December 2, 2016

Property Name:	Kasilof River Parcel (Lot 31) No. KEN 4006
Parcel Size:	5.86 acres
Owner:	Private owner
Agency Sponsor	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Appraised Value	To be determined
Funding Request	To be determined upon completion of appraisal – Not to exceed $165,000 (total estimate including land cost, due diligence and closing costs)

Overview:

This project is comprised of one unimproved lot (parcel) containing 5.86 acres. The parcel is situated on the Kasilof River and can be accessed by boat. It is not on the road system. The parcel is adjacent to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Kenai NWR) and in the immediate vicinity of two other small parcels (KEN 4004 and 4005) approved for purchase by the Trustee Council on 11/03/2016 (see attached map) If acquired, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) can process a minor boundary adjustment for the inclusion of this property into the Kenai NWR and the parcel would be managed as national refuge lands. The parcel is currently listed for sale on the open real estate market. This proposed acquisition is fee simple (including both surface and subsurface estates). Although the mineral estate was reserved to the State of Alaska in the original conveyance out of the public domain, mineral development would not be commercially viable and is highly unlikely. The Kasilof River is outside the boundary of this small parcel and would remain outside the Kenai NWR and under the State of Alaska's ownership and control regardless of the purchase. The fair market value of the parcel will be determined by an appraisal prepared to EVOSTC, USPAP and UASFLA appraisal standards. The appraisal report will be reviewed and approved by an Office of Valuation Services (U.S. Department of Interior) review appraiser.

Property Description and Habitat:

This unimproved land contains valuable riverine and upland habitat, including kettle and riparian wetlands. The Kasilof River runs along the northwestern boundary of the parcel. In addition to the riverbank and wetland habitats, the upland habitat contains wooded areas with birch and spruce trees, blueberries, alders and other native plant species.

The Marbled murrelet is an EVOS-affected species designated as 'not recovering'[1]. The parcel and surrounding area contain Marbled murrelet nesting habitat, and the species does nest in the

[1] The recovery status was taken from the Injured Resources and Services, 2014 Update.

area. The parcel and surrounding area also contain habitat that supports Bald eagles, Dolly Varden, river otters and sockeye salmon, all of which are EVOS-affected species.

Some other notable wildlife species found in the area of the Kasilof River and estuary include sandhill cranes, Hudsonian godwits, various shorebirds, Bonaparte's gulls, mew gulls, herring gulls, Arctic terns and snow buntings.

The Kasilof River flows northeasterly from its headwaters at the outlet of Tustumena Lake, and the river is a significant contributor to Cook Inlet area commercial, recreation, subsistence and personal use salmon fisheries. The parcel includes riverbank vegetation important for sockeye salmon migration and is a part of the Kasilof River complex, which contains a spectacular, varying wetlands landscape. The parcel is ranked "high" on the habitat prioritization mapping report completed by Great Land Trust for the Trustee Council in 2014. The purchase of this parcel containing valuable riparian and wildlife habitat is also considered to be a high priority acquisition for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the national refuge system. This purchase would also extend the protection along the Kasilof River corridor that was funded by the Trustee Council's recent approval of the KEN 4004 and 4005 small parcels.

Restoration Benefits:

The conservation of the parcel would provide permanent habitat protection for Marbled murrelets (EVOS-affected species not recovering) and benefit several other EVOS-affected species, including Bald eagles, Dolly Varden, river otters and sockeye salmon, thereby assisting the EVOSTC in maintaining the protection of these species and their habitat. It would ensure conservation and protection of the land and its wildlife in perpetuity. It would significantly contribute to a larger effort and strategy of the *Kenai Mountains to Sea* partnership to ensure that a riparian corridor and connectivity is maintained along the Kasilof River, between its mouth and where refuge lands start near the mouth of the Tustumena Lake. Moreover, it would provide protection for an undeveloped riverine corridor for wildlife movement, including foraging flights by Marbled murrelets. In addition to the benefits afforded to wildlife and its habitat, this acquisition would also assist with the designated recovering human services affected by EVOS, including commercial fishing, recreation and tourism and subsistence.

Potential Threats:

The parcel is listed on the open market presently and will likely be purchased for development incompatible with habitat protection if it is not acquired through EVOSTC funding. The purchase and conservation of this parcel would eliminate a number of threats to birds, fish and wildlife and their habitat, including potential development causing habitat loss, blocking wildlife corridors and connectivity of the river system corridor, resulting in fragmentation of habitat and restriction of wildlife movement. These restrictions can result in decreased genetic diversity, decreased ability of the wildlife populations to adapt to changes in the environment, and can prevent access to required resources necessary for healthy populations.

Proposed Management:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kenai NWR

Funding Request:

The amount of the final purchase price required to acquire the parcel will be determined upon completion of an approved appraisal report, but it is expected that it will not exceed $165,000, including due diligence and closing costs. The Trustee Council is asked to approve up to $165,000 for the completion of this purchase.