Kenai Watershed Forum: Kenai Peninsula Coastal Stream Watch Proposal

Summary

Kenai Watershed Forum proposes to expand its highly successful Stream Watch program, with initial eighteen-month funding from EVOSTC to support additional stream protection activities in the intense summer public use centers on the southern Kenai Peninsula, around the stream and river mouths of the Kasilof, Ninilchik and Anchor Rivers and Deep Creek for the 2018 and 2019 summer field seasons. The combined 2018-19 proposed budget is $91,282.

Organizational History and Collaborating Organizations

Founded in 1997 by a group of concerned citizens, the Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) has grown from a small grassroots collective focusing on the Kenai River Watershed (2,200 square miles) to a regionally respected 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission now encompasses the entire Kenai Peninsula (16,000 square miles).

With seven permanent employees, KWF utilizes a non-adversarial approach, focusing on solutions through high quality research, education, and restoration programs to meet the evolving needs of the region. This can be seen on the water and at the conference table. KWF facilitates hard conversations on natural resource issues, as evidenced by its role in facilitating the formation of the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, which has brought varying entities to the table and has received national recognition through the National Fish Habitat Partnership. KWF is proud of its nationally recognized programs including the Stream Watch program. With an annual budget of $1M, with more than 23 active grants and contracts from a variety of sources including local, state, and federal governments, the organization's mission is working together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula, and it is a recognized leader among watershed organizations in Alaska and beyond.

Stream Watch, one of the KWF's longest running programs, is a national award-winning volunteer program that promotes river stewardship on the Kenai Peninsula. Founded in 1994 by the U.S. Forest Service, the Stream Watch program was formed in collaboration with a small group of enthusiastic river users looking to share river protection information on the Russian and Kenai Rivers. In 2011 the KWF began jointly administering the program and expanded it to encompass sites on the Kenai, Kasilof and Russian Rivers. To date, Stream Watch has been supported by many agencies and organizations including but not limited to: the **Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund, Alaska Conservation Foundation, Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, Alaska Department of Natural Resources (Alaska State Parks and Department of Mining, Land and Water), Alaska Recreation Management, City of Soldotna, Chugach National Forest, ConocoPhillips, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Sportsman's Warehouse, Trout Unlimited (Kenai Peninsula Chapter**), and private donations. With the generous support from those organizations, Stream Watch has grown to assist the following land management agencies in hands-on river restoration projects and peer-to-peer education on the Kenai Peninsula:

- USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest (Russian River Recreation Site)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Kenai-Russian River Ferry, Moose Range Meadows)
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources: Alaska State Parks (Bings Landing) & Division of Mining, Land and Water (Kasilof River Special Use Area)
- City of Soldotna (Centennial Park)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Support

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has existing cooperative agreements with the Kenai Watershed Forum and can efficiently administer the funds on behalf of the Trustee Council. The Service's Habitat Restoration and Conservation Partnerships Program has supported Stream Watch in past years through sponsorship of the Kenai National Fish Habitat Partnership. The Stream Watch scope of work presented in the proposal also has a strong nexus with the Service's Coastal Program.

Stream Watch Program Goals

With over 300,000 visitors to the peninsula each summer, Stream Watch provides much needed assistance in protecting world-class fisheries and outdoor recreation areas with the following goals:

- Recruit, train and coordinate 60 active volunteers per summer to promote salmon habitat protection and complete conservation projects on salmon-bearing rivers on the Kenai Peninsula.
- Protect salmon habitat through the installation, maintenance and seasonal removal of 3+ miles of habitat protection fencing per summer.
- Coordinate river restoration projects with agency partners that are volunteer appropriate.
- Remove 1000+ pounds of wildlife endangering litter from salmon-bearing waterways and beaches per summer
- Share information with 300+ people on how to conserve salmon habitat along salmon-bearing waterways on the Kenai Peninsula through peer-to-peer education.

Stream Watch Accomplishments

The Stream Watch program has celebrated a number of successes over the course of its existence including the following:

- 23 years of program stability as of 2017
- Program and volunteer recognition through the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust and United States Senator Dan Sullivan in 2017
- Program recognition through the National Outdoors Initiative in 2012 as a national example for community partnerships and effective on-the-ground volunteer-based environmental protection
- Facilitating over 13,000 volunteer hours over the life of the program
- Sharing river protection information with over 45,000 people
- Removing over 13,000 pounds of litter over the life of the program
- Removing and recycling over 300 pounds of fishing line over the life of the program
- Removing 4 fish passage barriers
- Completing an erosion control project by installing 300 feet of spruce tree revetments

Coastal Program Provisions and Objectives

Stream Watch has several resources at its disposal to ensure the funds requested from the *Exxon-Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) are effective at cleaning up our waterways and coast lines. These include its:

- Growing volunteer base (Last year, volunteers donated over 1280 hours, which equates to $35,584 in match.)
- Growing brand recognition across the Kenai Peninsula
- Strong relations with land management agencies and community groups
- Access to vehicles and equipment from the Kenai Watershed Forum
- Existing supplies (i.e. hand sanitizer, bear spray, educational materials, etc.)

Kenai Watershed Forum proposes a multi-year program, with an initial eighteen-month funding cycle to provide for the 2018 and 2019 summer field seasons. This funding would expand Stream Watch services in the spill area communities of Kasilof, Ninilchik and Anchor Point. Following this initial 2018-2019 program, KWF proposes a third summer field season with funding for 2020 that would be reviewed by the Council in fall 2019. With EVOSTC funding, Stream Watch would expand and leverage its existing resources and beach cleaning by: 1) training, supporting, and equipping its volunteer base to patrol for and remove litter and fishing debris from seven designated waterways and coast line sites, and 2) meeting the additional goals during summer field seasons as noted below for 2018-2019:

- Hire one 5-month south peninsula volunteer coordinator
- Recruit one 3-month student intern
- Conduct 10 beach litter patrol and debris removal "events" per summer (an expansion of five events in 2017)
- Conduct daily volunteer patrols of three major coastal fishing areas of the Kenai Peninsula-Kasilof River, Deep Creek/Ninilchik River and the Anchor River.
- Triple our geographical reach by conducting beach litter patrols and debris removal at new locations
- Remove 3000 pounds of trash from our beaches per summer (1500 lbs. more than 2017)
- Enlist over 400 volunteer hours specifically related to beach litter patrols and camp site cleaning per summer (almost double that of 2017)
- Secure matching grant funds up to $25,000

Additional Partners under this Program:

Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership (31 members)
Kenai Mountains-to-Sea Conservation Strategy working group
Cook Inletkeeper
Kachemak Heritage Land Trust
Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
City of Homer
Anchor Point Chamber of Commerce

Kenai Watershed Forum Stream Watch Program Budget

Summer Field Seasons 2018-2019-2020
EVOSTC Fiscal Year (EFY) = February 1 – January 31

The EFY18-19 Stream Watch (SW) budget is for 18 months to accommodate the 2018-2019 summer field seasons.

The EFY20 budget is for the typical 12 months and funds the 2020 summer field season.

EFY18 & 19 Budget - Coastal SW Program (5 months/yr.)				
Budget Item	**Wage**	**Weeks**	**2018 Field Season Totals**	**2019 Field Season Totals** (assuming 2.5% COLA)
Coastal Coordinator	$19.89	21	16,708	17,125
Benefits	$7.79	21	6,544	6,707
Summer Intern	$10.00	13	5,200	5,200
Benefits	$0.87	13	450	450
Vehicle (by month)	$1,500	4	6,000	6,000
Gas	$40	20	800	800
Supplies			8,000	3,000
Total Direct			43,702	39,282
Indirect	10.00%		4,370	3,928
Fiscal Year Total			**48,072**	**43,210**
TOTAL 2018-2019 PROGRAM				**$91,282**

EFY20 Budget - Coastal SW Program (5 months/yr.)			
Budget Item	**Wage**	**Weeks**	**2020 Field Season Total** (assuming 2.5% COLA)
Coastal Coordinator	$20.90	21	17,556
Benefits	$8.18	21	6,871
Summer Intern	$10.00	13	5,200
Benefits	$0.87	13	450
Vehicle (by month)	$1,500	4	6,000
Gas	$40	20	800
Supplies	$3,000		3,000
Total Direct			39,877
Indirect	10.00%		3,988
Fiscal Year Total			**43,865**
TOTAL 2020 PROGRAM			**43,865**