United States Environmental Protection Agency

This document is one of the project summaries from the EPA's Targeted Watershed Grants 2005 Annual Report published in December 2005. The reference number is EPA 840-R-06-001. You can find the entire document at **http://www.epa.gov/twg**.

EPA'S TARGETED WATERSHED GRANTS 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

December 2005

Kenai River

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WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

One of the most important watersheds in Alaska, the Kenai River provides world-class salmon fishing and wilderness recreation. It drains more than 2,200 square miles and is home to 34 fish species. Its watershed supports a variety of multiuse recreational activities that include rafting, kayaking, motor boating, drift guiding, hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, and camping. Within a two-hour drive from Anchorage, the watershed is accessible to over 70 percent of the state's population and accounts for 19 percent of the state's sport fishing.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The most immediate concerns facing the Kenai are related to recreational impacts from in-river motorized boat use.

- Hydrocarbon levels exceed water quality standards established for fish and aquatic life in areas of heavy boat use.
- Habitat loss due to boat wakes, all-terrain-vehicle crossings of stream channels, and culverts are a primary source of accelerated erosion.

The Kenai River supports numerous recreational activities, including world class salmon fishing.

RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

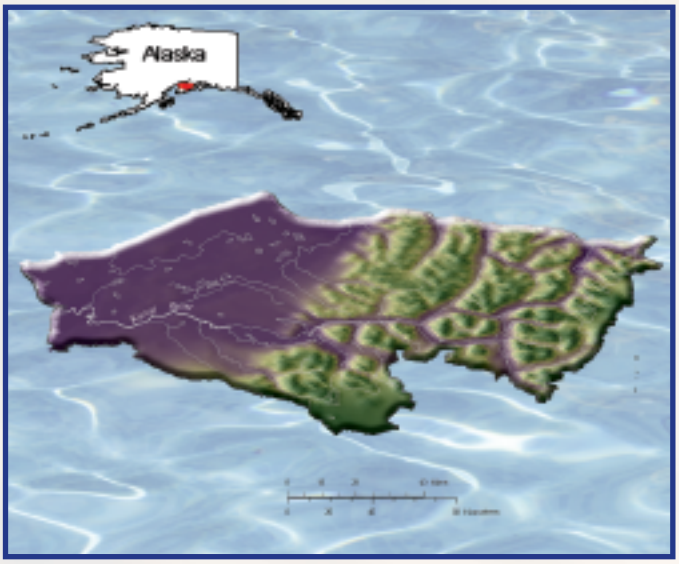
The Kenaitze Indian Tribe, I.R.A. will use its grant award to address these two watershed threats – hydrocarbon pollution caused by outboard motors and stream bank erosion caused by boat wakes. Project activities will protect and preserve the river by implementing market-based and stewardship incentives and by engaging community members.

- The Two-Stroke Boat Motor Buyback Incentive Program aims to reduce the effects of hydrocarbon emissions from two-stroke boat motors by providing cash vouchers to private consumers toward the purchase of a nonmotorized drift-boat or a 2006 manufacture emission compliant motor when the two-stroke motor is traded in.
- The Boat Wake Erosion Reduction Program will reduce the effects of boat wakes on stream bank erosion, through a "river-friendly guide" incentive program featuring permit fee reductions, a voucher program to encourage private consumers to select flat bottom or nonmotorized boats when purchasing a boat for use on the Kenai River, and continued monitoring and evaluation of boat wake effects on stream banks.
- Ongoing water quality monitoring by the Kenai Watershed Forum will help measure hydrocarbon concentrations from outboard motors. Weekly sampling will occur during peak recreation times.

A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Under the EPA Targeted Watershed Grant, the Kenaitze Indian Tribe I.R.A., the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the Kenai Watershed Forum will collaborate to implement project activities. Further support comes from:

- Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board
- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
- Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Kenai River Center
- Kenai Watershed Forum



Sunset over the Kenai.

The Kenai River

"This grant offers an excellent opportunity for the tribe to work with our community partners for the protection of a river which has been the lifeblood of Kenaitze people for generations."

– Brenda Trefon, Kenaitze Indian Tribe I.R.A