



## Kenai Watershed Forum

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November 5, 2012

Mayor Mike Navarre and Kenai Peninsula Assembly Members,

The Kenai Watershed Forum and undersigned ten entities represent diverse interests that share common concern over fish habitat on the Kenai Peninsula. We support KPB 21.18 that enhanced pre-existing language to include a 50' riparian habitat buffers for all salmon waters in the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Collectively we also support the task force approach to review this regulation as it relates to salmon bearing lakes.

The fisheries of Cook Inlet are the envy of the world, especially in the many places from the west coast of Europe to the Pacific Northwest where challenged or extirpated salmon runs once played a significant role in local cultures and economies. Cook Inlet communities are incredibly fortunate to still have viable salmon populations that account for hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity each year, and create thousands of jobs.

Equally important, Cook Inlet salmon are woven deeply into our culture. Regardless of politics, religion or socioeconomic position, Alaskans across the spectrum cherish their wild salmon and support wild salmon habitat protection.

Among many other factors, salmon populations require healthy intact stream and lakeside habitat. As the population grows on the Peninsula, we're increasingly converting land to accommodate our growth. Our present day growth rate now is approximately 3 people per day. Not surprisingly, many cite opportunities for outdoor activities that revolve around salmon as a primary reason for moving here.

As a signatory to this letter, we are expressing our strong support for the 50' buffers around all water bodies that support wild salmon. We understand there are strong prior existing use rights in the regulations (KPB 21.18) and the general intent is to keep non-water dependent structures out of this buffer, for the benefit of salmon habitat.

Fifty feet of natural vegetation along waters that support any stage of the salmon life cycle is the best option for providing natural filters from runoff, essential nutrients and altered rates of erosion. We also understand that 50' is a compromise that the Assembly has made to balance the needs of salmon habitat with private property

land use. We support the current administrations approach to working through lake issues and delaying implementation of the regulation, and think it would be best to have some date certain recommendation from that process.

Riparian habitat protection is but one essential element to ensure our wild salmon stocks remain healthy. Wild salmon need habitat to survive, and it is a critical role of the KPB to provide these basic protections. Other actions and elements of protection are also necessary to protect stocks, most of which are outside the purview of the KPB. To be clear, we in no way support the repeal or substantial modification of KPB 21.18.



Signature - Jim Butler - President, Kenai Watershed Forum

On behalf of .....

Alaska Salmon Alliance  
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association  
Cook Inletkeeper  
Kenai Area Fisherman's Coalition  
Kenai Peninsula Fishermans Association  
Kenai River Professional Guides Association  
Kenai River Sportfishing Association  
Kenai Watershed Forum  
North Pacific Fisherman's Association  
Trout Unlimited  
United Cook Inlet Drifters Association