



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kenai dipnet fishery participants urged to dispose of fish waste properly

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA –More than 537,000 salmon were harvested from the Kenai River personal use dipnet salmon fishery in 2011. Many of those fish were cleaned at the river, leaving a substantial amount of fish waste on the river banks and beaches. Birds attracted by the fish waste contribute to bacteria in the river. This year fish waste continues to be a concern for residents, fishers, and local and state agencies.

“Ideally, all the fish waste should be put back where it came from—the river,” said Michelle Bonnet, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Director of the Division of Water. “The best action is for participants in the fishery to throw their fish waste in the main river channel at low tide, returning important nutrients to the system.”

DEC and the City of Kenai have been working on both interim and longer term options to reduce fish waste. DEC and the City produced informational flyers that the City hands out at fee stations during the personal use dipnet salmon fishery. The flyers educate dipnetters on proper fish waste disposal, sanitation, and local ordinances. The City is raking up and removing fish carcasses that don't make it into the river. DEC has continued to fund bacteria monitoring of the water again this summer to assess whether there are potential health concerns.

Longer term, DEC and the City have been working together with the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the Departments of Fish and Game and Natural Resources to identify and implement better ways to make fish waste disposal convenient and economical. This past year DEC funded a Kenai Fish Waste Management Plan that evaluates alternative ways to manage, reuse, and dispose of the fish waste. Feasible recommendations include landfilling, ocean dumping, composting, and grinding the waste at a seafood processing facility for discharge under a State permit.

DEC and the City are interested in pursuing additional fish waste management recommendations for the July 2013 fishery and will meet with the other agencies this fall to plan the next steps. In addition, the 2013 state fiscal year budget provides funding to the City for construction of fish cleaning stations that may improve fish waste collection and provide cleaner fish waste for some of the proposed re-use options. These stations will be in use for the July 2013 fishery.