N E W S R E L E A S E

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More than $650,000 awarded for cleaner water projects

High priority waterbodies throughout Alaska will benefit from ACWA grants

June 13, 2007–Local governments, nonprofit organizations, a Native corporation, and citizen watershed groups are the recipients of more than $600,000 in water quality, quantity and aquatic habitat grants and newly added BEACH Grant funds awarded today. The Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA) partnership between the Departments of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Fish and Game, and Natural Resources awarded 16 grants to assist the State in its clean water objectives and focus work efforts on waters in greatest need of protection and restoration.

"Clean water is important to Alaskans," said Lynn Kent, director of DEC's water division. "These projects will help monitor or restore the quality of some waters and protect others where water quality is threatened. The ACWA process has been very successful in identifying water quality priorities and focusing our efforts where they are most needed."

ACWA grants are balanced to protect water quality and restore waters that are considered polluted or impaired. Applicants can apply for multiple funding sources from the State resource agencies with a single grant application. Through the ACWA process, priority waters and actions are identified, and groups that can implement these actions can compete for the available grants.

For more information about ACWA and the list of priority waters and actions, log onto our website at www.dec.state.ak.us/water/acwa/acwa.htm.

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Alaska Clean Water Actions Grants - FY08

Below are summaries of the Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA) Grants for projects starting in July 2007 and finishing in June 2008. The summaries are arranged by region of the state and include the contact information for the group conducting the project.

Southeast Region

Granite Creek Recovery & TMDL Implementation, City and Borough of Sitka, $22,250

Granite Creek is an ACWA high priority water for recovery actions due to turbidity and suspended sediment resulting from gravel mining operations. The Granite Creek Watershed Recovery Strategy and TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) were approved in September 2002. This project implements unfinished tasks in the Recovery Strategy's multi-year Action Plan and TMDL that will result in consistently meeting water quality standards in Granite Creek. The project will monitor turbidity and total suspended solids concentrations to verify the effectiveness of installed sediment control Best Management Practices (BMPs) in meeting TMDL load reduction and water quality standards. New data collected will also help evaluate TMDL assumptions and calculate sediment loads. Among other tasks, the project will conduct environmental audits of existing developments in the watershed to verify compliance with installed BMPs designed to protect water quality and meet TMDL sediment loads. Additionally, the City and Borough of Sitka will use the data collected to-date to review and make recommendations for updating the TMDL, Recovery Strategy and Action Plan. Contact: Mark Buggins, 907- 966-2256.

Jordan Creek Watershed Recovery, (Juneau) Juneau Watershed Partnership, $78,582

Jordan Creek is currently impaired from trash, sediment, and low dissolved oxygen, resulting in declining salmon runs. This project will implement actions identified in the 2006 Jordan Creek Recovery & Management Plan including debris cleanup and activities aimed at preventing additional inputs of nonpoint source pollutants. Efforts to reduce sediment within the stream include working with the City and Borough of Juneau to develop design work to minimize sediment inputs to Jordan Creek from a tributary that was rerouted when the water tank was built on the north side of Thunder Mountain, and to rehabilitate the tributary and mainstem of Jordan Creek. The Juneau Watershed Partnership (JWP) will also work with commercial businesses to manage snow disposal away from Jordan Creek to protect water quality and to revegetate the stream bank in critical areas to minimize sediment inputs. In order to assess the effectiveness of restoration efforts, JWP will collaborate with the University of Alaska Southeast to monitor water quality for sediment and dissolved oxygen, and macroinvertebrates indicators of stream condition, comparing against reference conditions established in Southeast Alaska by the University of Alaska. Contact: Deb Spicer, 907-586-6853.

Onemile (Holgate) Creek Discharge Project (Haines), Takshanuk Watershed Council, $6,985

Onemile (Holgate) Creek is in the waterbody Protection track with habitat and water quality being primary concerns and water quantity a secondary concern. This project will protect and maintain anadromous fish and wildlife habitat through conducting stream gauging to establish an instream flow reservation with the Department of Fish and Game. The project will assess aquatic habitat and identify potential habitat impairments and needs for rehabilitation or additional protections. Contact: Emily Seward, 907-766-3542.

Portage Cove Water Quality Monitoring Program, (Haines) Haines Borough Water and Sewer Department $21,520

The beach at Portage Cove is extensively used for recreation including sun bathing, swimming, beach combing and fishing. Adjacent to the beach is a sewage treatment plant and outfall. Haines Borough staff will develop a beach monitoring and water quality program and report data and findings to DEC. The project will also determine if more testing is appropriate and if public notification and advisories are necessary. Contact: Scott Bradford, 907-766-2200.

Sawmill Creek Discharge Project (Haines), Takshanuk Watershed Council, $5,390

Sawmill Creek has water quality, quantity and habitat concerns and was placed on Alaska's Impaired Waterbodies list in 1996 for debris. Through an ACWA 2007 grant, the Takshanuk Watershed Council is conducting initial debris removal work to begin to address the impairment issues and restore the creek so it can be removed from impaired status. This project will assess aquatic habitat, identify potential habitat impairments and needs for rehabilitation and form a working partnership with the Department of Fish and Game to conduct stream gauging to establish an instream flow reservation. Contact: Emily Seward, 907-766-3542.

Status & Trends of Fish Habitat on Private Timberlands in SE Alaska, Sealaska Corp., $37,625

This ongoing project will aid in determining how well forestry practices protect fish habitat in Southeast Alaska timberlands. This project's objectives are to: 1) continue the status and trend monitoring of fish habitat conditions that the forest industry initiated during the 1990s and which was jointly reestablished with the State and the forest industry through the ACWA program during 2003-2006; 2) expand the database for the long-term monitoring program on private timberlands in Southeast Alaska, and 3) provide data for a continued evaluation of the effectiveness of the Forest Resources and Practices Act buffer zones to protect aquatic habitat. Results will facilitate a state resource agency evaluation of forestry Best Management Practices effectiveness. Contact: Ronald Wolfe, 907-586-9277.

Vanderbilt Creek Monitoring and Sediment/Debris Removal, (Juneau) Juneau Watershed Partnership, $28,232

In 1995 a TMDL and associated recovery plan were developed for Vanderbilt Creek to address and improve sediment, turbidity, debris and habitat modification impairments and concerns. This project will complete major cleanup and reduce or eliminate sources of debris and sediment on Vanderbilt Creek which occurred this spring. Through an outreach and education campaign, the Juneau Watershed Partnership (JWP) will involve the community in creek restoration and clean-up through a variety of actions. JWP will also work with private landowners to address snow management practices to protect water quality. In addition, JWP will collaborate with the University of Alaska Southeast to implement the water quality monitoring strategy developed in 2007 for Vanderbilt

Creek to gain a better understanding of the creek's current health, focusing on sediment issues and to allow JWP to assess the effectiveness of the restoration efforts. Contact: Deb Spicer, 907-586-6853.

Water Quality Monitoring Sandy Beach, (Juneau) City and Borough of Juneau, $26,500

Sandy Beach, a popular recreation area, is located in Douglas, across the Gastineau Channel from Juneau. Sandy Beach is the site of many passive and active recreational activities, including dog walking, Frisbee, sun bathing and swimming during warm, sunny weather. The City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) will monitor the water at Sandy Beach for indicators of fecal contamination. CBJ and DEC will cooperate in collecting samples and will meet periodically to review data and discuss opportunities for controlling potential fecal contamination that may be detected during water quality monitoring. Contact: Scott Van Hoozer and Marc Matsil, 907-364-2800.

Northern/Interior Regions

Gulkana River Water Quality & Habitat Assessment and Eyak Lake Stormwater Actions, Copper River Watershed Project, $61,538

The Gulkana River, in the waterbody protection track, is used for anadromous fish spawning and rearing, subsistence, and recreation. On the Gulkana River, this project will document boat traffic, make detailed habitat observations at known high use recreation areas and collect water quality samples for measuring petroleum hydrocarbons during low, normal and high use periods on the river. Eyak Lake is a high priority water with stormwater runoff being a primary concern. Through working with the City of Cordova, the Copper River Watershed Project (CRWP) will develop alternative stormwater treatment options before discharging to Eyak Lake. The CRWP will also conduct an intensive public outreach campaign for reducing stormwater runoff and protecting the long term water quality of Eyak Lake. Contact: Kristin Smith, 907-424-3334.

Anchorage Region

Little Rabbit Creek Assessment, Anchorage Waterways Council, $26,730

Little Rabbit Creek was listed as an impaired water in 1994 for non-attainment of the fecal coliform bacteria standard with the suspected source being urban runoff pollution. A TMDL for the waterbody was completed and approved in 2004. This project will develop and implement a water quality sampling plan to collect fecal coliform bacteria, turbidity and discharge data. A focus of the sampling effort is to determine potential sources, timing and levels of fecal coliform bacteria in order to evaluate the efficiency of stormwater best management practices for protecting water quality and also to measure the progress towards restoring the water quality.
Contact: Holly Kent, 907-272-7335.

Little Survival Creek Assessment, Anchorage Waterways Council, $26,730

Little Survival Creek was listed as an impaired water in 1994 for non-attainment of the fecal coliform bacteria standard with the suspected source being urban runoff pollution.

A TMDL for the waterbody was completed and approved in 2004. This project will develop and implement a water quality sampling plan to collect fecal coliform bacteria, turbidity and discharge data. A focus of the sampling effort is to determine potential sources, timing and levels of fecal coliform bacteria in order to evaluate the efficiency of stormwater best management practices for protecting water quality and also to measure the progress towards restoring the water quality.
Contact: Holly Kent, 907-272-7335.

Mat-Su Region

Cottonwood Creek Temperature & Fecal Coliform Bacteria Evaluation, Aquatic Restoration & Research Institute, $26,658
Cottonwood Creek is in Category 5 on Alaska's 2006 Integrated Report for non-attainment of Residues standard for foam. Sampling in 2004 – 2005 indicated foam is likely naturally occurring but anthropogenic sources are possible. Recent monitoring indicates summer water temperatures and fecal coliform bacteria counts along certain stretches may exceed standards. This project will collect hourly stream temperatures from multiple locations along the creek to determine whether high water temperatures are persistent and correlated to increased urban development within the watershed. Stream temperature will also be collected in Meadow Creek, a nearby high priority water. Water samples will be collected in Cottonwood Creek for fecal coliform bacteria analysis to try and determine if high bacteria counts are persistent, to further isolate the longitudinal extent of the bacteria in the creek and to attempt to isolate potential sources. Result evaluation will include comparing with nutrient data collected in previous sampling efforts. Contact: Jeff Davis, 907-733-5432.

Water Quality Evaluation of the Lower Little Susitna River, Aquatic Restoration & Research Institute, $55,830
The Little Susitna River is high priority ACWA water and is one of the most popular recreation sites in the Mat-Su Borough. The river supports a popular Chinook and coho salmon fishery and receives intensive recreational non-motorized and motorized boating uses. Increased residential development and recreational use create the potential to impact water quality and fish habitat. This project will evaluate water chemistry in the lower Little Susitna River downstream of the Parks Highway with a focus on potential impacts from motor boats by sampling petroleum hydrocarbons during low, normal and high use periods. These results will be compared against the State Water Quality Standards. This project will provide the information to evaluate risks to the aquatic system in order to assist resource management decisions. Contact: Jeff Davis, 907-733-5432.

Kenai Region

Action Steps Toward Greater Protection of Lower Kenai Peninsula Salmon Streams, **Homer Soil & Water Conservation District, $51,800**
Streams of the lower Kenai Peninsula support healthy sport and commercial fisheries, and provide important subsistence resources for Alaska Natives and other groups. Several years of water quality monitoring show stream temperatures are at levels which may negatively impact fish populations. This project addresses ACWA priority actions

for Anchor River, Deep Creek, and Ninilchik Rivers. The project will: 1) conduct watershed-wide air and water temperature monitoring to support completion of water temperature fish refugia work being performed by Department of Fish and Game graduate student; and 2) implement watershed management strategies that, to the extent practical, provide adequate protection from high stream water temperatures and reductions in anthropogenic sediment sources. Evaluation of stream characteristics that help buffer temperatures will provide insight into the extent of thermal refugia for rearing and spawning areas in all three salmon streams and help identify the highest priority reaches for management and protection actions. Contact: Shirley Schollenberg, 907-235-8177.

Hydrocarbon Monitoring of the Kenai River Watershed, Kenai Watershed Forum, $28,488

The Kenai River is one of the premier commercial and sportfish rivers in southcentral Alaska. It is in Category 5 of Alaska's 2006 Integrated Report and listed as an impaired waterbody due to petroleum hydrocarbon pollution from outboard motor boat activity. Through this project, the Kenai Watershed Forum will monitor and test for petroleum hydrocarbons to complement Agency sampling. The information collected in this project will assist resource managers in making management decisions for protecting water quality in the Kenai River. Contact: Robert Ruffner, 907-260-5449.

Lower Kenai Peninsula Public Beaches Bacteria Study, Cook Inlet Keeper, $4,726

Several beaches in the Homer area receive high recreational use. These beaches are well known in Alaska for their recreational value to both tourists and Alaskans. Water-based recreational activities include fishing, wildlife viewing, sea kayaking, scuba diving, and tide pooling. These beaches also serve an important role in coastal educational programs. Although water quality is generally acceptable, there are a number of areas on the Lower Kenai Peninsula experiencing water quality problems. Septic tanks have caused water quality problems in a number of high density residential areas where drainage is not adequate for on site sewage disposal, and public sewers are not yet available. Additionally the sewage system serving the City of Homer and Kachemak City has a secondary treatment plant for sewage, with an outfall located 2200 feet offshore of Beluga Slough at Bishops Beach. This grant will fund the development of a monitoring plan, standard operating procedures, and quality assurance plan for monitoring and assessing bacteria at Kachemak Bay Priority Beaches. Notification and advisory plans will also be developed as part of the grant. Contact: Ingrid Harrald, 907-235-4069.

Septic System Education for Homeowners, University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, $49,000

Nitrogen and coliform bacteria are pollution components of failing septic systems and can have an adverse impact to drinking water, local waterbodies and human health. This project will develop and implement an educational campaign on proper septic system maintenance for select communities on the Kenai Peninsula. The target audiences will be landowners with on-site waste systems and especially those that are new to septic systems. Realtors will be another audience as they assist in the buying and selling of these properties with septic systems. The education campaign will incorporate a variety of activities including workshops, flyers and TV and radio spots. This project works in partnership with the City & Borough of Kenai and the DEC. It is anticipated that the materials and methods used in this project could be applied to other areas of the state. Contact: Fred Sorensen, 907-786-6311.

Stormwater Mapping Partnership for the City of Kenai, Kenai Watershed Forum, $52,293

Untreated storm water discharges can have negative impacts on the water quality of local waterbodies. There is currently no map of storm water flow in the City of Kenai and yet several outfalls discharge directly into salmon bearing streams. Through a partnership with the City of Kenai, the Kenai Watershed Forum will: 1) develop a GIS based map of storm water runoff and drainage basins in the core area of the City of Kenai; 2) conduct spring water quality monitoring for one or more priority outfalls/receiving waters; 3) work with the City of Kenai to develop an operations and maintenance schedule appropriate for the City; and 4) conduct an educational campaign with local youth to stencil priority storm drains. The storm water map will assist in dealing with emergency spills and future planning efforts. Contact: Robert Ruffner, 907-260-5449.

Western Alaska Region

Fecal Coliform and Water Quality Assessment of the Lower Nushagak River, Bristol Bay Native Association, $25,575

The Nushagak River is a large, productive salmon-producing system in Southwest Alaska that empties into Bristol Bay and is an ACWA priority water for protection. Resource agencies have identified water quality data as a primary need, as very little has been collected on this river system. This project will: 1) perform baseline water quality assessment to include five sampling trips (July, August, September 2007, May and June 2008) to the lower Nushagak River; and 2) analyze and evaluate results and prepare a report of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. Water quality parameters that will be measured include: fecal coliform bacteria, flow, temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, and turbidity. Contact: Sue Flensburg, 907-842-5257, ext 341.

Kanakanak Beach Bacteria Beach Monitoring Program, (Dillingham) City of Dillingham, $23,169

Kanakanak Beach is heavily used for salmon subsistence and general recreation including beach combing, picnics, and boat-launching. Nine subdivisions--with forty three on-site septic systems of less than one acre that are greater than twenty years old--drain into Squaw Creek, which is near Kanakanak Beach. This grant will fund a monitoring program for Kanakanak Beach, including a public notification and advisory program coordinated with the DEC Beach Grant Manager. Contact: Jody Seitz, 907-842-8666.