



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Region 7 - Alaska

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News

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Joint FWS/NMFS news release

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Ambassador James Pipkin Presents Kenai River Resource Protection and Education Team with National Award

Soldotna, Alaska - The Kenai River Resource Protection and Education Team will be recognized by Coastal America for their outstanding partnership efforts to restore and protect Kenai Riverbanks at a September 14, 2000, ceremony from 2:00-4:00 pm at the Kenai River Center. This will be part of the Center's grand opening ceremony, to which the public is invited. The event is expected to draw federal, state and local leaders.

Federal officials expected to attend the event include: Ambassador James Pipkin, Director of the Secretary of the Interior's Policy Office; Marilyn Heiman, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Interior for Alaska; David B. Allen, Alaska Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service; and, Jim Balsiger, Regional Administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. They will be joined by the award recipients (listed below), federal representatives of the Coastal America Partnership, and state, local and private interests.

Vice President Gore stated in his letter of congratulations, "Your success demonstrates that in government, partnership can often be better than the sum of its parts. I commend you for your leadership and personal commitment."

Ambassador Pipkin, known for his leading role in negotiations for the Pacific Salmon Treaty, also commended the team for its outstanding efforts. "This partnership, with the assistance of many dedicated agency staff and volunteers, has shown us what good can be accomplished when we all work together."

"It would be impossible to accomplish as much as this team has without the energy and cooperation they've shown," added Fish and Wildlife Service Alaska Regional Director David B. Allen, "The Kenai River Resource Protection and Education Team is a model for others to follow."

"This project is a hands-on demonstration of restoration technology," National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Regional Administrator Jim Balsiger said, "It's a great way to show the benefits of community and interagency cooperation in protecting resources and habitat."

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As part of the award ceremony, each team member will receive a commemorative plaque. A letter of congratulations from Vice President Gore and a certificate of appreciation will also be presented to each member by Ambassador James Pipkin and Regional Director Dave Allen.

List of Awardees on the Kenai River Resource Protection and Education Team

Gary Sonnevil, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Tony DeGange, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Gary Liepitz, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Dean Hughes, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Gay Muhlberg, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Kuwada, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Barbara Mahoney, National Marine Fisheries Service
Peter Jones, National Marine Fisheries Service
Suzanne Fisler, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks
Steve Bonebrake, City of Soldotna
Dale Bagley, Mayor, Kenai Peninsula Borough
Brett Huber, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Inc.
Ken Lancaster, Mayor, City of Soldotna

--Background--

The Coastal America Partnership was established in 1992 to protect, preserve and restore coastal watersheds by integrating federal actions with state and local government and non-governmental efforts. The federal partners include the Departments of Agriculture, Air Force, Army, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Navy, Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Executive Office of the President. Through multi-agency teams the partnership process enables national policy issues to be identified and resolved, regional plans and strategies to be developed, and local projects to be implemented.

To recognize outstanding partnership efforts, Coastal America established a national awards program in 1997. Seven partnership initiatives were selected to receive the 1999 award. The Kenai River Resource Protection and Education Team was recognized for their efforts to restore the Kenai River. The initial restoration project at the City of Soldotna's Soldotna Creek Park was designed to demonstrate a number of innovative techniques for preventing erosion and damage from development that has occurred along 80 miles of the river. These include a vegetated cribwall as a protective structure, streambank restoration by revegetation of denuded areas with grasses and willows, and an elevated light-penetrating boardwalk that provides anglers access to the river while protecting the revegetated riverbank. The initial restoration project, completed in 1995, has provided a model for ongoing efforts along the entire Kenai watershed. Other 1999 award recipients include: the Duck Creek Advisory Group in Alaska, the Penobscot Watershed Anadromous Fish Restoration Team in Maine, the Galilee Saltmarsh Restoration Team in Rhode Island, The Shamrock Island Restoration and

Protection Team in Texas, and the Clear Creek Wetland Restoration Team in Texas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 520 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service administers programs which support the domestic and international conservation and management of living marine resources. NMFS provides support of domestic and international fisheries management operations, fisheries development, trade and industry assistance activities, enforcement, protected species and habitat conservation operations, and the scientific and technical aspects of NOAA's marine fisheries program

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