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Governor

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STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 5, 2010

Mr. Robert Ruffner
Executive Director
Kenai Watershed Forum
44539 Sterling Highway, Suite 202
Soldotna, AK 99669

Dear Mr. Ruffner,

Thank you for your letter regarding the need for water quality and habitat protection near the mouths of the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. The Governor has asked that I respond on his behalf.

In your letter, you focus on issues involving the personal use fisheries located at the mouths of the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. In particular, while recognizing that both river systems have similar issues, you have identified the impacts at the mouth of the Kasilof River as needing immediate attention. Although these issues and possible means to resolve them involve several State agencies, we have asked the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to take the lead in addressing these concerns.

Of primary concern in the short term are restroom facilities and proper trash disposal at the mouth of Kasilof River. I understand that DNR and the Kenai Peninsula Borough have discussed funding needs and that the Borough has been in contact with legislators regarding these needs. Although the Legislature's consideration of appropriation bills is not yet finalized, it appears the Legislature is considering funding for restroom and trash facilities under the supplemental budget request. I understand also that DNR is discussing this situation with other State agencies and seeking a potential solution for this season.

Additionally, as you note, other long-term issues need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner that involves State, local, and federal governments as well as stakeholders and a public process. We have asked that DNR, and the Departments of Fish and Game, Environmental Conservation, and Transportation and Public Facilities initiate a process to identify the long-term issues and develop an appropriate plan that addresses these issues for both rivers to facilitate sustainable use. DNR will take the lead in initiating this process.

In the meantime, in response to your request for a single point of contact for these issues, we have designated Wyn Menefee at DNR as that contact and ask that you and those organizations on whose behalf you sent your letter work with the department on this effort. You have also asked that a meeting be convened on these issues. Again, Mr. Menefee can assist you in coordinating a meeting to begin the process. He can be reached at 907-269-8600.

We very much appreciate the cooperative approach your organizations have taken to bring these issues to our attention and look forward to working with you on both short-term and long-term solutions that protect water quality and habitat on these rivers, while allowing Alaskans to continue to benefit from personal use fisheries.

Sincerely,

Cora Campbell

Cora Campbell
Special Assistant

cc: The Honorable Larry Hartig, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation
The Honorable Tom Irwin, Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources
The Honorable Denby Lloyd, Commissioner, Department of Fish and Game
The Honorable Leo von Scheben, Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Wyn Menefee, Operations Manager, Division of Mining, Land, and Water, Department of Natural Resources