



COOK INLETKEEPER®

Protecting Alaska's Cook Inlet watershed and the life it sustains

PRESS RELEASE

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“CITIZEN SCIENTISTS” TRACK WATER QUALITY IN LOCAL WATERWAYS
Annual Monitoring Report Continues to Show Warming Trends

HOMER, AK – Since 1996, Cook Inletkeeper has trained volunteers to collect scientifically-defensible water quality data in local stream and estuary sites. Today, Cook Inletkeeper released its annual water quality report, which adds new data to Inletkeeper’s growing water quality inventory.

The purpose of the Kachemak Bay Citizens’ Environmental Monitoring Program (CEMP) is to gather baseline water quality data in the Anchor River and Kachemak Bay watersheds, make comparisons to state water quality standards when possible, plot data over time to show natural conditions and trends, provide timely and accurate data to help resource managers make more informed decisions, and build stewardship by involving local citizens directly in water quality science.

Inletkeeper trains volunteers using state and federally-approved monitoring protocols to ensure collected data is accurate and reliable. The volunteers collect water quality data on monitoring sites throughout the lower Kenai Peninsula once a month in the winter and twice per month during the summer. In 2005, a total of 214 observations were collected at 25 sites, with 37 volunteers contributing 571 hours of time to the program. At prevailing federal rates for volunteer services, this effort equates to over \$10,000 in services to the local community.

Citizen-collected data have detected high turbidity in Homer area streams, most notably at Miller Creek on East End Road. Bacteria screening tests also have shown elevated levels in Miller Creek, and nearby Palmer Creek. Importantly, data collected by volunteers within the Anchor River Watershed in the summer of 2005 revealed high temperatures that exceed state water quality standards, which may pose a risk to migrating salmon as well as egg and fry survival. This trend is

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consistent with data collected by Cook Inletkeeper's more intensive salmon stream monitoring program.

Cook Inletkeeper's monitoring work strives to collect five years of baseline data at each monitoring site to determine natural variability over time for each water quality parameter measured. To date, the Kachemak Bay Citizens' Environmental Monitoring Program achieved this goal at ten sites along seven different streams.

These streams include Woodard Creek, Diamond Creek, Fritz Creek, Twitter Creek, Bridge Creek, Rice Creek, and Mud Bay. With this baseline data in place, Inletkeeper volunteers can now monitor for changes that may indicate water quality impacts, helping resource managers better understand and manage the public water resources. Future goals of the CEMP program include increasing temperature monitoring and beginning to measure flow on select streams.

Data collected by Cook Inletkeeper volunteers have been utilized by the City of Homer, Kenai Peninsula Borough, State of Alaska, and the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Cook Inletkeeper's 2005 Citizens' Environmental Monitoring Report is available at www.inletkeeper.org.

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