

Subject:NOAA Announces next Habitat Focus Area in Alaska

Date:Wed, 19 Nov 2014 12:13:39 -0500

From:Eileen Sobeck - NOAA Federal <eileen.sobeck@noaa.gov>

To:_NMFS MAFAC <nmfs.mafac@noaa.gov>, _NMFS FMC Exec Directors <nmfs.rfmc@noaa.gov>

Good Morning:

Today, NOAA announces the selection of Alaska's Kachemak Bay as the next Habitat Focus Area under [NOAA's HabitatBlueprint](#) (see attached fact sheet). Kachemak Bay, located in southern Cook Inlet, has been identified as a uniquely rich natural area where NOAA can maximize our habitat conservation investments to benefit marine resources and coastal communities.

The value of Kachemak Bay habitats has been recognized by the bay's designation as a State of Alaska Critical Habitat Area, and as a National Estuarine Research Reserve. Yet, this ecological richness is vulnerable to impacts associated with development activities, changes in ocean acidity and changes in water conditions due to melting glaciers.

Kachemak Bay supports important recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishing, marine transportation, tourism, and threatened and endangered species. Due to low population levels, the State of Alaska has put in place regulations to close the fishery for king crab, Dungeness crab and shrimp.

Selection of Kachemak Bay as Alaska's habitat focus area signals NOAA's commitment to strengthening existing partnerships and forging new relationships to focus collaboratively on better understanding, protecting, and restoring habitat for the benefit of our living marine resources and coastal communities.

The [Habitat Blueprint](#) is NOAA's strategy to integrate habitat conservation throughout the agency, focus efforts in priority areas, and leverage internal and external collaborations to achieve measurable benefits within key habitats such as bays, rivers, coral reefs, and wetlands. Under the Habitat Blueprint, NOAA selects certain [HabitatFocus Areas](#) to prioritize long-term habitat science and conservation efforts.

The goals in all Habitat Focus Areas include:

- Sustainable and abundant fish populations
- Recovered threatened and endangered species
- Protected coastal and marine areas and habitats at risk
- Resilient coastal communities
- Increased coastal/marine tourism, access, and recreation

NOAA's first Habitat Focus Area was [California's Russian River watershed](#), where we are already making progress toward the focus area's objectives of recovering threatened and endangered species, improving rainfall, flooding, and frost forecasts, and increasing community resiliency to flood damage.

Next steps in Alaska include development of implementation plans and reaching out to existing and potential new partners and to capitalize on funding opportunities.

Thanks,

Eileen

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Eileen Sobeck
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service/NOAA
U.S. Department of Commerce
[301-427-8000](tel:301-427-8000)