

Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Jeopardy- Get Involved!

Last week the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) cut funding that will result in the closure of the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR), effective this July, 2014.

At the House Finance Fish and Game Subcommittee meeting on February 27 the General Funds (GF) for KBNERR were completely removed from ADF&G's budget. This cut constitutes the whole of the state funding match required for KBNERR to secure larger federal funding awards from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration. The impact will **close** (not just cut) KBNERR, which would in turn abolish access to more than \$750,000 of grant funds and result in the loss of jobs, research and education programs, and significantly impact operations at the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center in Homer.

Please get involved in protecting the integrity of Kachemak Bay. Contact your state senators and representatives and ask them to oppose these budget cuts. Get involved by:

1. Providing public testimony on the House Finance Fish and Game Subcommittee operating budget this **Wednesday March 5 from 4:30-5:45** at the Legislative Information Office, 270 W Pioneer Ave, Homer.
2. Sending an electronic letter to the House and Senate Finance Committee requesting their support for KBNERR in the Operating Budget HB266. Letters should be sent to the House and Senate Finance Committee membership and/or chairs listed at the following links. For headers, use the Legislator's name, Room no., State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801.

Link to House Finance committee:

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_com_info.asp?comm=HFIN&session=28

Link to Senate Finance committee:

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_com_info.asp?comm=SFIN&session=28

3. Attending Senator Micciche's Town Hall Meeting **Friday, March 7th from 5:00 -7:00 PM** at the Homer City Council Chambers, 491 E. Pioneer Ave., Homer and voicing your support for the continuation of KBNERR.

Overview

Kachemak Bay is a protected bay where freshwater streams, glacial meltwater, and tidally driven ocean waters merge. A unique ecosystem is formed within the Reserve's 372,000 acres where an abundance of marine plants, birds, fish, and other aquatic organisms thrive. The Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR) is a place-based center for integrated coastal and nearshore research and education. Founded in 1999, KBNERR conducts innovative and collaborative research and monitoring within and around Kachemak Bay's "living laboratory." This information is transferred to local communities to help address coastal resource issues. The

mission of KBNERR is to enhance understanding and appreciation of the Kachemak Bay estuary and adjacent waters to ensure that these ecosystems remain healthy and productive.

KBNERR is a state-federal partnership managed by ADF&G, Division of Sport Fish in conjunction with NOAA's Estuarine Reserve Division. KBNERR also has a Community Council, consisting of local residents appointed by the ADF&G and agency representatives, who foster dialogue on local coastal issues of concern. In 1999, ADF&G, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), and the Homer community worked collectively to designate KBNERR as Alaska's first and only Research Reserve. KBNERR became the 22nd Reserve within the NERRS system and is the only sub-arctic Reserve in the nation.

KBNERR staff conducts cutting-edge watershed and coastal science, studying coastal erosion, sea-level rise, ocean currents, water chemistry, and juvenile salmon habitat, and transfers this information to local communities, coastal decision-makers, stakeholders, and school groups through professional training and education programs. Using this approach, KBNERR contributes to the understanding of the coastal ecosystem and its response to change within Kachemak Bay. KBNERR is housed in the Alaska Islands and Ocean Visitor Center in Homer, and has facilities that include research laboratories, a state-of-the-art visitor center, teaching classroom, bunkhouse, and a research vessel.

More information about the National Estuarine Research Reserve System can be found here: <http://www.nerrs.noaa.gov/> More information about the KBNERR Community Council can be found here: <http://kbaycouncil.wordpress.com/> If you are discussing this issue, please feel free to utilize the hashtag #savekbr.

Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Facts for letter of support

- The Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR) based in Homer, Alaska is a state-federal-local partnership managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Sport Fish Division in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) - National Estuarine Research Reserve System.
- The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 28 reserves throughout the nation that are designated to study and protect vital coastal and estuarine resources.
- Founded in 1999, KBNERR conducts innovative and collaborative research and monitoring within and around Kachemak Bay. KBNERR was the 22nd reserve designated and, at 370,000 acres, is the largest and only sub-arctic reserve in the nation.
- KBNERR is an economic driver in the community and results in a significant number of local jobs, visiting professionals, and related expenditures within the community. KBNERR has diverse partnerships bridging local NGOs, universities, and state and federal agencies who contribute to research and education programs. These partnerships bring highly-skilled professionals to Homer, who contribute to our understanding of Kachemak Bay and the surrounding landscape and waters by sharing cutting-edge research methods.
- Research staff and visiting scientists conduct research and monitoring within the Kachemak Bay watershed which has proved vital to understanding fisheries, infrastructure maintenance, and public safety.
- The education program at KBNERR is important to our youth and school systems, and reaches 3,500 people per year through highly successful public and K-12 programming. The Coastal Training Program provides targeted, needs-based trainings on topics of concern to hundreds of coastal management professionals annually.
- KBNERR's partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge was critical when constructing the Alaska Islands and Ocean Visitor Center. The shared responsibility for this the facility, which is a great asset to the community and hosts 75,000 visitors each year, is crucial for its continued operation.
- The fiscal cornerstone for KBNERR is the General Fund (GF) appropriation it receives from the State of Alaska. The proposed \$175,000 budget cut adopted by the House Fish and Game Subcommittee serves as a match for a significantly larger amount of NOAA funding. These funds have a multiplier effect for additional program funding with diverse economic benefits served locally.
- Without these State funds, KBRR will be facing closure and associated loss of jobs, research and education programs, and impact to the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center.
- The House and Senate Finance Committee is strongly urged to reconsider the KBRR cut included in the House Fish and Game Subcommittee, and to maintain these services for the sustained benefit of our community and its coastal resources.

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