



KENAI PENINSULA COOPERATIVE
**INVASIVE SPECIES
MANAGEMENT AREA**

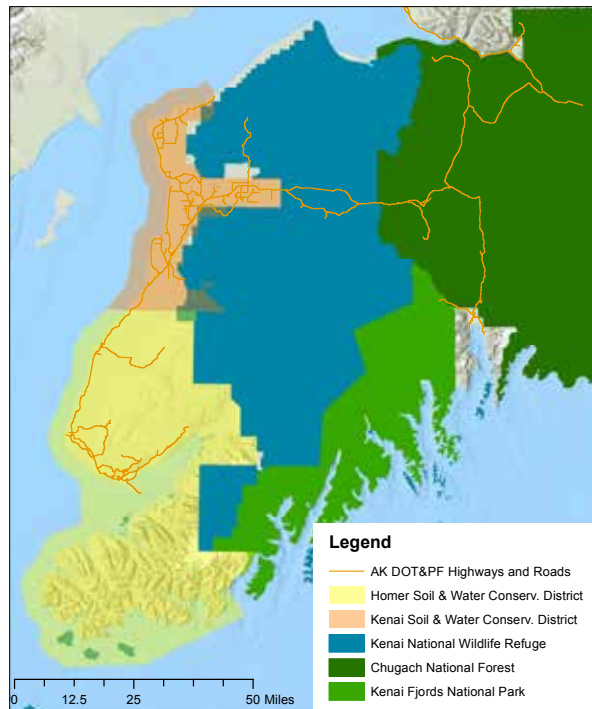
2023

ANNUAL REPORT
and PARTNERSHIP
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Introduction



GEOGRAPHIC EXTENT OF THE Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area



The KP-CISMA celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2023!

An idea planted in 2003 as a Cooperative Weed Management Area, the partnership has flourished into the Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (KP-CISMA) of today: a highly engaged collaborative of dedicated partners from federal and state agencies, local municipalities, nonprofits, tribes, private landowners, business owners, and many passionate community members working together across the six-million-acre Kenai Peninsula to protect our most vital natural and cultural resources.

A huge thank you to all who have come together to create priority invasive plant lists, offer expertise, report new infestations, get their hands dirty at weed pulls, engage with all sorts of audiences through outreach events, write strategic management plans, and put in countless hours in the field. You have made a huge difference in preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species on the Kenai Peninsula.

This Annual Report highlights just a few of the KP-CISMA partners' projects from 2023. The variety, from aquatic and terrestrial invasive plant work to northern pike, marine invasives, and public engagement, exemplifies our dedication to growth and diversification over the last two decades.

Perhaps more than anything, it illustrates the power of partnership. Whether surveying for Elodea in a remote lake or invasive plants along the highway, implementing invasive plant management (IPM) techniques, inspecting gravel pits, visiting a classroom, or coming up with the next best project, our work is always about connection.

Who Is the KP-CISMA?

Coordinated by Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, the KP-CISMA is a voluntary partnership dedicated to preventing the introduction and managing the spread of invasive species. Learn more about our work at kenaiinvasives.org.



Primary Goals

Prevent

the introduction and spread of invasive species

Reduce

the extent and density of newly established infestations, minimizing spread and damage

Implement the most **economic, effective, and safe control methods** for priority invasives

Facilitate cooperation among those working to manage invasive species on the Kenai Peninsula

OUR PARTNERS

Homer Soil and Water Conservation District

KP-CISMA Coordinator

Kenai Watershed Forum

KP-CISMA Field Coordinator

Kenai Soil and Water Conservation District

Cooperative Extension Service

University of Alaska Fairbanks

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

State, Private, and Tribal Forestry, Alaska Region

U.S. Forest Service

Chugach National Forest

U.S. Forest Service

Kenai Fjords National Park

National Park Service

Seldovia Village Tribe

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association

Kenai Peninsula Borough

Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

University of Alaska Anchorage

Cities of Homer, Soldotna, Kenai, Seldovia, and Seward

Alaska Invasive Species Partnership

Copper River Watershed Project

Alien Species Control LLC

Chugach Regional Resources Commission

* Includes the Kenai and Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuges, Kenai Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, and the Alaska Regional Invasive Species Program

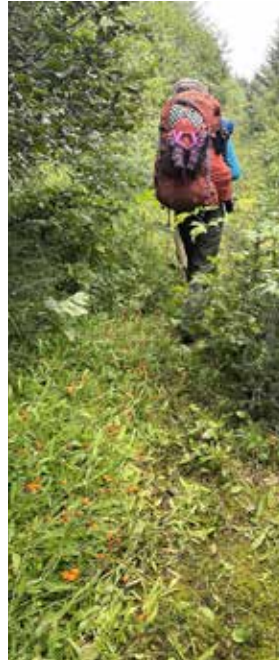
Project Highlights

Port Graham Invasive Plant Surveys and Community Workshop

In June, Homer SWCD and Chugach Regional Resources Commission visited Port Graham for invasive plant surveys, a workshop, and a weed pull.

Over 20 people showed up for lunch and the workshop, including a community conversation about invasive plant priorities and an impromptu tour of invasive plant sites around the village.

Homer SWCD worked with the Port Graham Village Council to create an Invasive Plant Management Plan to guide decision-making as the community works to address invasive plants that threaten to spread into the surrounding Native Allotment Lands. Thank you to the community of Port Graham for the warm hospitality!



USFWS



N. Davis / USFWS



Jen Chauvet/HSWCD

Elodea and Northern Pike Surveys

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service crews surveyed 16 lakes for northern pike and 23 lakes for Elodea in 2023. Luckily, they did not find any evidence of either of these invasive species.

They surveyed for northern pike by filtering water samples in the field and submitting the 119 samples for a mix of two kinds of eDNA analyses: a northern pike-specific qPCR eDNA assay and a fish metabarcoding method that detects all fish species.

For Elodea surveys, they used throw rakes, performing 908 rake throws at 454 points.

By the Numbers

Surveyed

Treated

Weed-Free Gravel Certification Program

Terrestrial

1,411 acres

287 acres

304 acres inspected
284 acres certified

Aquatic

37 waterbodies (Elodea)
16 waterbodies (northern pike)

Project Highlights



USFS

Elodea Found in Crescent Lake

In late September 2023, staff from the Chugach National Forest found Elodea in Crescent Lake during a scheduled survey. After surveying the entire 1,345-acre lake, they identified four discrete infestations in the western lobe of the lake, covering a surface area of roughly 11 acres.

Most concerning is the infestation located in the shallow, slow moving water at the lake's outlet. Surveys downstream from the outlet along Quartz Creek and into Kenai Lake did not identify any additional populations of Elodea.

The Forest Service is working to develop a management plan to address this new infestation.



KWF

Terrestrial Invasive Plant Surveys and Treatments

The KP-CISMA currently maintains over 500 terrestrial invasive plant survey and treatment sites, prioritizing species based on aggressiveness of spread, severity of harm caused to native ecosystems, and feasibility of eradication.

In 2023, we treated the following priority invasive plants by manual, mechanical, and/or chemical techniques: orange hawkweed, white sweetclover, bird vetch, yellow hawkweeds, creeping thistle, chokecherry (a.k.a., European bird cherry or mayday) trees, common tansy, and reed canarygrass.



Success Story! Russian River Powerline Corridor Reed Canarygrass Treatments

After four years of work on one of the largest terrestrial invasive plant treatments on the Kenai Peninsula, we finally have some efficacy results.

In 2019, the discovery of a 15-acre infestation

of reed canarygrass within a powerline corridor adjacent to the Russian River sparked an all-hands-on-deck response, with Chugach NF, Kenai NWR, Homer Electric Association, the Kenai Watershed Forum, and Homer SWCD pooling their expertise and resources to initiate treatments in 2020.

Since then, the population has been reduced by an estimated 60%. This preliminary success is a testament to our partners' dedication and willingness to assist when called upon.

KWF

Project Highlights

Invasive Chokecherry Tree Removal

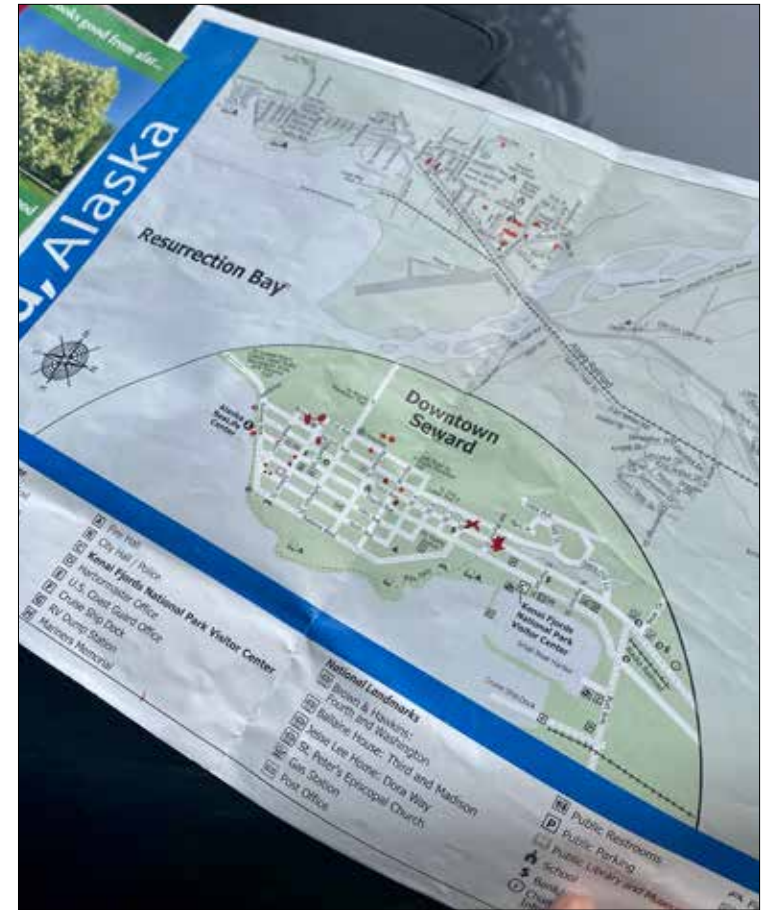
KP-CISMA partners continued to remove invasive chokecherry trees (*Prunus padus* and *P. virginiana*) across the peninsula.

The Kenai Watershed Forum and Homer SWCD manually and chemically removed at least 125 mature *Prunus* trees, plus many hundreds of smaller flowering and immature trees, saplings, seedlings, and thickets from the communities of Seldovia, Cooper Landing, Seward, Moose Pass, Hope, and the Homer and Soldotna/Kenai areas.

Removal efforts have been particularly successful in Seward, where community members and the city have enthusiastically supported and assisted with reporting, mapping, outreach, and removal of *Prunus* trees from multiple city and private properties.



Jen Chauvet/HSWCD



Jen Chauvet/HSWCD



S. Conlin/NPS

Outer Coast Marine Debris Clean-up

Partners from the National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service, along with a crew from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance, Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, and the Student Conservation Association collected 3,876 pounds of trash during a marine debris (a.k.a. trash in the ocean) clean-up along the

outer coast of Kenai Fjords National Park and Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge.

Attached to marine debris, invasive species can easily float from one distant shoreline to another. The team also conducted molt walk surveys to look for European green crabs – luckily, none were found!

Outreach

1,600

Adults, kids, and youths reached through 15 public programs, weed pulls, and other community events

335

Facebook followers
(up from 208 in 2021)

482

Facebook engagements

127

Students reached through school programs hosted by the Kenai Watershed Forum.



Casey Greenstein/HSWCD

Community Events

KP-CISMA partners from multiple agencies and organizations hosted informational and interactive booths at several community events across the peninsula, including Alaska Department of Fish & Game's annual Salmon Celebration, the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival, the Kenai River Festival, and the Kenai Peninsula Sport, Rec & Trade Show. These events continue to be a rewarding way to engage with community members of all ages.



KWF

Spring Training and Science Symposium

The KP-CISMA's spring training continues to grow, with more than 40 people attending in 2023. Over two half-days, attendees participated in hands-on training in plant identification, herbicide safety, and data collection. In April, we co-hosted the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership's annual science symposium. The two-day event featured a keynote talk by Dr. Peter Westley, plus presentations and panel discussions focused on habitat restoration, water quality, proactive conservation, invasive species, and more.

Weed Pulls

We always look forward to weed pulls. This year KP-CISMA partners organized weed pulls in Cooper Landing, Seward, Port Graham, and Kenai. In Port Graham, hardy community members, including a dozen enthusiastic youths, showed up in the rain to pluck orange hawkweed flower heads. And at the 23rd Annual Seward Weed Pull, a group from the Boys and Girls Club played reed canarygrass tag, while volunteers and KP-CISMA partners pulled over 400 pounds of bird vetch!

HSWCD



Partner Collaboration



Homer Soil & Water
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- KP-CISMA Coordinator and Outreach Coordinator
- Acquires and maintains permits; Implements surveys and control of priority infestations
- Seeks funding on behalf of KP-CISMA

Jen Chauvet/HSWCD



Russian River Reed Canarygrass Site Visit

The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Kenai Watershed Forum, Homer SWCD, and Chugach National Forest visited a handful of known reed canarygrass infestations along the Russian River to help inform management actions moving forward.



- KP-CISMA Field Coordinator
- Implements monitoring and control of high priority infestations across the Kenai Peninsula



Ashley Lutto/USFWS

European Green Crab Rapid Response Exercise

In August, several KP-CISMA partners joined land managers, educators, and invasive species professionals from across the state for a European green crab rapid response exercise in Homer. Over two and a half days, the group walked through possible scenarios and response actions and practiced monitoring techniques like crab trapping and molt surveys.

KP-CISMA
projects are
funded by



COPPER RIVER
WATERSHED PROJECT

THANK YOU!