

Story last updated at 1:56 p.m. Thursday, July 18, 2002

Homer to benefit from federal grants

By Hal Spence

Morris News Service-Alaska

Twenty-two Alaska coastal communities and nonprofit organizations, including some in Homer, are to receive \$3 million in federal funds designed to protect salmon streams, fund educational programs and accomplish other environmental enhancements.

Gov. Tony Knowles announced the federally funded, state-managed Coastal Impact Assistance Grants this week. The \$3 million in grants was set aside from a \$7.9 million one-time federal grant given the state to address a variety of coastal issues. The state solicited ideas from the public for use of the \$3 million.

The Alaska Coastal Policy Council decided which applications were to be awarded grants, and the list of conservation, restoration, enhancement, protection and education projects released this week is the result.

"Because of these grant awards, there will be many small but beneficial projects for Alaska's coastal communities that will enhance our use of state coastal areas," said Pat Galvin, director of the Division of Governmental Coordination, in a press release this week.

Here are the projects and grant amounts for communities and organizations in the Kenai Peninsula Borough. They total \$673,770.

The descriptions are taken from project outlines provided by the Coastal Impact Assistance Program.

Cook Inlet Keeper, a Homer-based environmental watchdog group, will receive \$100,000 to establish a community-based water quality laboratory to do long-term water quality monitoring. The lab will be established by Keeper and the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District.

The Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies will get \$42,000 to support its Alaska Coastal Ecology Traveling Education Program. The traveling program will reach an estimated 700 students and their teachers in 15 peninsula schools.

The borough will get \$28,000 for a Caribou Hills stream bank protection project. One large bridge and four small bridges will be built over drainages in the Ninilchik River watershed that have sustained damage from off-road vehicles.

The Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation along with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game will use \$100,000 to do off-road vehicle impact assessments at Deep Creek and the Anchor River and develop a mitigation strategy. Among other things, the study will determine where off-road vehicle trails should be located.

Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council will get \$40,000 to map the near-shore environment in **Cook Inlet** and the outer Kenai Peninsula coasts using a ShoreZone Inventory System. Among other things, the grant will produce a Web-based or CD-ROM tool that will allow access to the shoreline digital images for all shorelines covered by the survey.

The Department of Fish and Game and the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve will get \$50,000 to assess the current state of environmental education in the Kachemak Bay region and develop a long-range plan for collaborating with environmental educators, improving curricula and making other educational enhancements.

Fish and Game and the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve also will get \$90,000 for mapping intertidal habitats in Kachemak Bay and the Fox River Flats.

The City of Homer will use a \$75,000 grant to implement its beach protection policy, which is based on recommendations of its Beach Policy Task Force, including improving beach access points, providing informative and advisory signs and reporting on beach topography and habits.

Hal Spence is a reporter for the Peninsula Clarion.