DEC *News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State agencies award Alaska's Clean Water (ACWA) funds to restore Alaska's rivers, streams, and lakes.

July 02, 2003-- Funds totaling over $375,000 are making their way to regions throughout Alaska to clean up polluted waters. These grants are provided through the unified efforts of the Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA); a partnership of state agencies focused on protecting Alaska's most impaired waterbodies. They will be matched by approximately $260,000 from the grantees.

Over the past 10 years Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and its ACWA partners, the Departments of Fish and Game, Natural Resources, and Community and Economic Development, have awarded millions of dollars in grants to support work to restore the health of Alaska's waters. This year grant funds will be provided for projects that directly result in improvements to polluted waters – those waters identified as "impaired" under the federal Clean Water Act. The projects include development and implementation of waterbody recovery plans called Total Maximum Daily Load Plans or TMDLs, which EPA requires for waterbodies to be removed from the list of impaired waters.

"This year's funds are going to groups that are working on impaired waterbodies that are failing to support the needs of Alaskans," said DEC Commissioner Ernesta Ballard. "I conducted a careful review of our priorities and determined that these projects are on target with our statutory mandate, and they also help us identify and restore Alaska's most threatened waterbodies."

These projects are funded with federal pass through grants. In addition to these grant projects, DEC is working to develop and implement waterbody recovery efforts on impaired waters where no initial grant applications were received. DEC will also complete a waterbody data management system and statewide monitoring strategy.

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Ballard said, "It is most important for DEC to reconcile the state's highest priorities for water monitoring projects. Developing a formal water quality monitoring strategy and completing the data system that reflects the State's priorities for monitoring needs and assessing the health of Alaska's waters must be accomplished. This valuable information will be used by all state resource agencies to set annual priorities and to make informed decisions about Alaska's waters."

Ballard noted that many high quality projects were submitted for funding and she encourages those groups to continue their efforts to keep Alaska's waters swimmable, fishable, drinkable and workable.

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Programs receiving funding this year are:

Southeast Region

Granite Creek Recovery, City and Borough of Sitka, $19,575
Sitka will continue the restoration of Granite Creek, for which long-term pollution problems have been identified. In 2001 and 2002, with the help of ACWA Grants, the City of Sitka developed the Granite Creek Restoration Strategy and began cleaning up the creek. This year, the City of Sitka continues to implement a watershed recovery strategy by: 1) improving stormwater and road construction drainage, 2) establishing functional stream buffers, 3) verifying the effectiveness of sediment controls through water quality monitoring, and 4) auditing operator compliance with lease terms. Contact Mark Buggins, (907) 966-2256

Swan Lake Watershed Recovery, City and Borough of Sitka, $38,080
Sitka will continue to rehabilitate Swan Lake by implementing its Watershed Recovery Strategy, TMDL, and Stormwater Control Strategy. Sitka developed and began this work with the help of previous grants. This project includes dredging of debris, preparing and distributing a brochure of best management practices for stormwater control for local contractors, stenciling storm drains, and water quality and stormwater monitoring to determine how well the best management practices are working. Contact Mark Buggins, (907) 966-2256

Vanderbilt Creek Stream Restoration, SAGA $24,554
Using youths, this project will remove debris from Vanderbilt Creek, identified as impaired due to debris. The project will also improve public education and stream stewardship through promotion and implementation of a Stream Cleanup Day. Contact Joe Parrish, 907-789- 6172

Lemon Creek Natural Sediment Assessment, University of Alaska Southeast, $20,784
This assessment will continue a project begun last year to define natural non-point source sediment concentrations within Lemon Creek, where active glacial processes contribute to sediment problems. With this information, more realistic expectations and best management practices can be used for evaluating human-caused sediment in Lemon Creek. This project's results will also assist with flood control and bank stabilization projects proposed for Lemon Creek. Contact Cathy Connor, 907-465-6283

Recovery of Mendenhall Watershed Streams, Mendenhall Watershed Partnership $86,445

This project will develop a plan to restore Jordan Creek and continue restoration of several other polluted streams in Mendenhall Valley through remediation, public education and involvement, and water quality- monitoring. The Mendenhall Valley has several creeks with degraded habitat, lower fish runs, and impaired water quality due to Juneau's urban growth.
Contact David Hanna, 907-586-6856.

Assessment of Mendenhall River and Tributaries, University of Alaska Southeast, $22,000
This project will continue to identify potential pollutant sources in the watershed encompassing Montana Creek and the Mendenhall River, both of which are on the ACWA priority list. This project will identify key pollutant sources in the Mendenhall Watershed's streams: Mendenhall R., Montana Cr., and Jordan Cr, an impaired waterbody A suite of water quality parameters and pollutants including sediment, iron, pH, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity will be sampled. Results will be used to assess the effectiveness of current pollution control practices, identify sources, and provide information to establish TMDLs for Jordan Creek.
Contact Dr. Eran Hood, (907) 465-8449

Pullen Creek Assessment Project, Skagway Traditional Council $ 34,189
Pullen Creek is listed on Alaska's Section 303(d) list for metal contamination. Pullen Creek also has extensive urban impacts. This project will perform an environmental assessment, collect baseline water quality, flow and sedimentation data, and develop an Action Strategy for Pullen Creek. Contact Lance Lance Twitchell, (907) 983-4068

Northern/Interior Regions

Chena Slough Water Quality Monitoring, Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation Dist $38,227
This data collection project will provide baseline water chemistry and nutrient data from selected ground water and surface water sites along Chena Slough, an impaired waterbody. The data will help determine if the excessive nutrient levels are due to seasonal ground water fluctuations that flush excess nutrients from faulty septic systems along the slough, since Chena Slough is also a naturally productive system and eutrophication may be an effect of natural process. A systematic ground water and surface water chemistry monitoring program is required to determine if nutrient influx from urban areas is a major factor in accelerated degradation of the slough. The project complements in-progress USGS hydrologic assessment work. With this data, resource managers will have better information to prioritize pollution reduction and restoration measures for the slough. Contact Joni Scharfenberg, 907-479-1213

Mat-Su Region

Cottonwood Creek TMDL Assessment, Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, $14,155
This project will initiate the recovery process of Cottonwood Creek. At present the Creek is listed as an impaired waterbody due to the presence of residue and foam. This project will determine the extent and timing of residue development, evaluation of all point source and non-point source inputs (runoff), longitudinal measures of some water chemistry parameters, fish sampling, and chemical analyses of foam on the creek. The determination of the presence, causes, and sources of the foam will provide a direct link to the development of a TMDL recovery plan for Cottonwood Creek. Contact Jeff Davis, (907) 688-5357.

Anchorage Region

Anchorage Monitoring Program, Anchorage Waterways Council, $78,482
Anchorage has more polluted streams and lakes than anywhere else in Alaska. Restoring these waterbodies is a long-term challenge. This project will collect valuable water quality data from each creek in Anchorage identified on the "ACWA priority waters list." This project will collect field, biological and analytical baseline data from eight creeks in Anchorage using volunteer monitors. The project provides extremely cost-effective data collection while fostering good watershed stewardship in our community. Contact Holly Kent, (907)-277-9287.