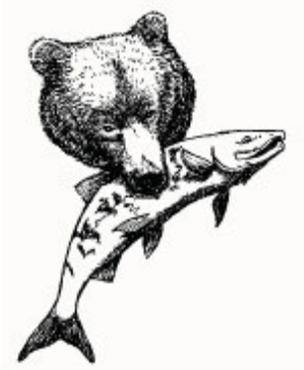
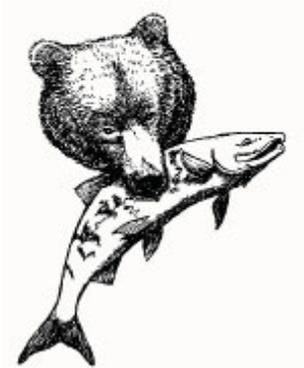


Friends of McNeil River
P.O. Box 231091
Anchorage, AK 99523-1091



Friends of McNeil River (FOMR) is a 501c(3) #92-0149711 - tax-deductible nonprofit organization, dedicated to ensuring the protection of the McNeil bears and their associated habitat.

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING **ANNOUNCEMENT**

Friday evening business meeting from 6:30-7:15 p.m.
And then from 7:30-8:45pm will be our
McNeil River Presentation and Discussion period
March 28, 2008
at the
Public Conference Room & Wilda Marston Theatre,
Loussac Library, Anchorage, Alaska

6:30-7:15 - Meeting Agenda (snacks will be provided for the business meeting):

- Status of the Bears of McNeil River in regards to the Board of Game Meetings
- Announcement of FOMR lottery for volunteers for this summer's work session
- Future projects

7:30-8:45 - McNeil River Presentation & Discussions:

John Hechtel, biologist & supervisor of staffing for the McNeil River Sanctuary, Alaska Department of Fish & Game and

Joe Meehan, Program Coordinator, Lands and Refuge Program, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Division of Wildlife Conservation

**Friends of McNeil River
POB 231091, Anchorage, AK 99523-1091
KEEP ME ON YOUR MAILING LIST!**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

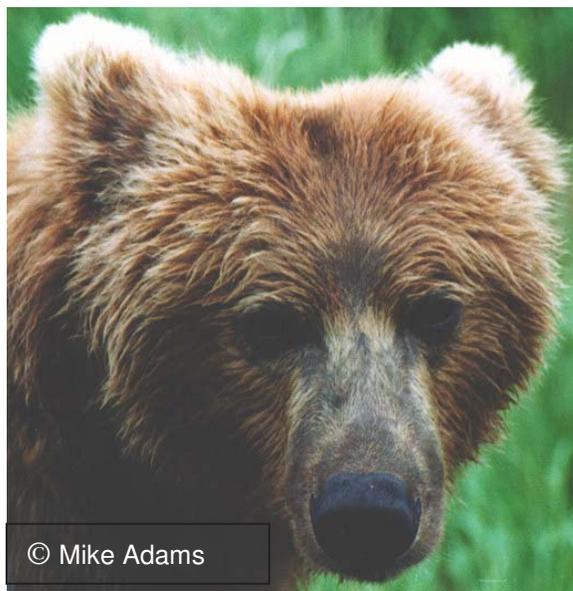
Phone _____

Fax/email

Membership

- \$20 Cub \$35 Family
 \$50 Donor \$100 Paw Patron
 \$250 Generous Griz
 \$_____ Other

I want to be a Volunteer Helper! We need to hear from you in time for our March 28th meeting. Your email address is required for rapid processing! See below for more information



Please let us know you still care!!

We are not yet set up to handle credit cards, but checks, money orders, etc are certainly appreciated (we're working on the credit card situation and apologize for the inconvenience)

To cut down on printing costs, we really need everyone's email address. Please email us!

Contact us immediately if you are interested in entering our lottery to be a volunteer helper to help the rangers open the Sanctuary this summer! The projects are varied and generally the bears are just coming out of hibernation from the winter. Please remember:

- You must be a member to enter our lottery to be a volunteer helper for us at the Sanctuary. It is recommended that you be in relatively good shape and work well with others! Based on last year's comments, we will consider two names per lottery draw, but the names will not be entered twice into the draw. The number of volunteers is primarily determined by seating on the plane, but normally not more than five volunteers are selected. ADF&G has the final decision.
- As a volunteer, you are responsible for your own transportation, safety, clothing, tenting, bedding, etc, just as though entering the sanctuary as a viewer. Friends of McNeil River will be helping with some of the food provisions. Be prepared with your hip waders and warm, layered clothing, along with a willingness to hike and repair the same trails the visitors will use later in the summer. (Approx. the first 4-5 days of June) (Homer Floatplane fare will be about \$650 each – we are currently negotiating with Beluga Float Plane Service on behalf of the volunteers)
- As opportunities arise, some bear viewing is normally interspersed with trail clean-up, firewood cutting and hauling, maintenance of rangers' cabins and outhouses, along with whatever chores and projects need to be accomplished. Tools are provided – it's the spirit to help that you need to bring (along with your camera)!

Fax: 907-522-1707; email either mike@mcneilbears.org or paul@mcneilbears.org

2007 FOMR Volunteers trip to the Sanctuary

After last year's FOMR meeting, where the volunteers names were drawn by lottery, as usual, addressing their positions in the draw, four finalists were selected to make the trek. Many of these folks found that their work or home life just wouldn't let them get away that summer. For some the costs were difficult to overcome. We had a lot of last minute scurrying to replace those who finally chose to not go. At that point it was critical that we had peoples email address and/or phone numbers. Some people just couldn't be reached. If you missed out, please try again! It's always worth it.



Larry Murphy (Anchorage), Richard Purington (Homer), Lennie Gorsuch (Auke Bay, AK), Brad Raasch (Port Byron, IL), and Karen Buzanoski (Utah), were the lucky five to help Doug, Ian & Tom with ADF&G open the Sanctuary for another summer. All volunteers are asked to write articles for our newsletter. A special thanks goes out to Lennie for writing the following article and for volunteering to serve on the FOMR board.. She writes:

We were a diverse bunch! Five volunteers - five home towns - and we all met for the first time at the grocery store in Homer the day of departure to buy the week's provisions. After brief introductions and a three minute planning session, we blitzed the store selecting ingredients for the one evening meal each of us was charged with preparing for the group. We had Spaghetti-Os from the can one night and pasta in white wine clam sauce another. We were a diverse bunch!

We shared flights with the Sanctuary crew (Doug, Tom and Ian) who were taking advantage of the same tide as the Volunteers to arrive mid-day on May 31. This meant we were there at the very start of camp mobilization -- no shelter or comfort until the plywood shutters were removed! The weather was typical -- rainy when we arrived and for much of our week, punctuated by a pretty substantial storm mid week and ending with warm sunshine.



It didn't take long before each of our natural skills bubbled to the top – some good at wood chopping, some better at wood packing and stacking. Inevitably we became competitive resulting in chopping contests and demonstrations. I think it is called group dynamics. We all hauled water, cut brush, collected firewood from the beach, cleared some trail, spread some gravel, and helped move the outhouse (something you don't often get to do in normal lives). It was a fun and fast week, both tiring and relaxing as we were captivated by the world that is McNeil. No radios, no traffic noise, no news – just nature.

A highlight was the post-lunch nap we took along the trail we were clearing one sunny afternoon. We believed it to be our first group nap since nursery school! However, the big event of the week was the 80th Birthday celebration of our Homer Volunteer, Richard Purington. The Sanctuary Crew baked brownies and supplied party fare that made for a very festive occasion. (As I recall, Richard was the winner of the wood chopping contest – don't let age fool you.)

Bears. Yes, we did see bears. Some came by along the beach, some fed on the hill behind the camp, some wandered along the river. We had no close encounters just the promise of a close encounter as the population increased the longer we were there.

We were none of us eager to leave at the end of our week, but leave we did on the return flights that brought in the first groups of viewing permit holders. Just how long would it take them to burn our wood, drink our water, track dirt into our clean cook shed, we could only wonder and hope they appreciate all of our and the staff's efforts in this great Sanctuary.



In February, 2007, Rep. Paul Seaton, R-Homer, introduced a bill into the Alaska Legislature that, if approved, would have derailed plans by the Alaska Board of Game to open up Kamishak Special Use Area to bear hunting. After the announcement at the end of the Board of Game's meeting, that it would extend the current hunting restrictions for the Kamishak Special Use Areas, this bill was left to languish in committee where it will die at the end of this legislature.

McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and McNeil River Game Refuge Management plan

In April of 2006, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game held public meetings in Homer and Anchorage to revise the current management plans for these areas. This was done because the Board of Game had demanded a review and revision of these policies.

Paul Joslin and Mike Adams attended the Anchorage meeting on behalf of the Friends of McNeil River. It was enlightening in many ways. We have not yet heard the final outcome of these revisions. It was interesting that hunting and trapping is currently allowed in the Refuge (not the Sanctuary) for most small game. This did not sit well with us, but there was a bigger problem to address: how can the ADF&G protect the bears of McNeil River without greatly offending the hunters of the state. It was tantamount in the considerations of the committee reviewing the McNeil River Management Plan.

Both in this meeting and in nearly all the Board of Game meetings we have continued to hear a recurring theme. That is the philosophical battle that some hunters refuse to hear the argument that individual bears, like Teddy, if lost to hunters matters more to the health of the McNeil bear population than an arbitrary single bear kill somewhere in the overall population elsewhere in the state. Preliminary findings of the study of the proposed revisions to the Plan were presented to the B.O.G. in the spring of 2007.

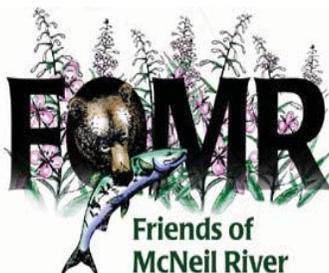
Last Years Board of Game Meeting

Of over 200 proposals that BOG addressed during the spring 2007 session, approximately 20 proposals dealt with brown bear hunting and at least 10 of those specifically addressed the McNeil River Bears. Proposals 43-48 specifically dealt with the McNeil Sanctuary and surrounding areas. Proposals 40 & 41 would have closed portions of Section 9C, adjacent to the Refuge. All proposals were for stopping or further limiting brown bear hunting in various portions of these areas. Thanks to all that spoke up or wrote, we made an impression!

The BOG had initially indicated that their intent was to open the Kamishak Special Use Area to brown bear hunting for the fall hunting season of 2007. HB127 was initiated by Rep. Seaton, R-Homer, into the Alaska Legislature that, if approved, would have derailed plans by the Alaska Board of Game to open up Kamishak Special Use Area to bear hunting. Once the Board of Game announced it's intention to extend the current hunting restrictions to the Kamishak Special Use Areas, this bill was tabled for future consideration. We have been informed that it will remain tabled indefinitely, unless the need arises to re-address this issue. This bill would have wrapped this area into the McNeil River Sanctuary.

We had many volunteers and interested parties that attended the meeting here in Anchorage, and testified as to why the bears need to be protected. Peoples' comments were once again received and distributed by Friends of McNeil River, along with several other groups addressing the proposals. The Board of Game web site to watch for future meetings and information is <http://www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/gameinfo/meetsum/meetsum.php>.

For future consideration, only written comments in hard copy form are accepted by the Board of Game. If you only have time to email us on future issues, send them to comments@mcneilbears.org. We will convert your email into a hard copy and forward it as needed. Be sure to include your name and address so that the Board of Game can consider your comment as legitimate.



Although Friends of McNeil River hasn't authored proposals or articles recently, many of the articles written or produced recently had some background information which was provided by members or former members of the Friends of McNeil River. Some of these articles are referenced on our website at: <http://www.mcneilbears.org/> More articles will be added soon.

We are in the process of updating our website, so you should see more current content on it in the near future. Please "bear" with us. Thank you.

2008 Newsletter
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