LANDMARKS

Kachemak Heritage Land Trust

2025

KACHEMAK HERITAGE
LAND TRUST

COVER IMAGE

Drone image from KHLT's Stariski Meadows property during a Fish Need Land Too field trip. CREDIT: LOBO BRAND SHOP

CONTENT

Fish Need Land Too attendees and leaders at Stariski Meadows. CREDIT: LOBO BRAND SHOP

Hope, Strength, & Togetherness through Conservation **PAGE 4**

Orchids in the Classroom **PAGE 8**

854.115 Acres & Counting **PAGE 12**

Land Back **PAGE 16**

A Very Salmon Summer **PAGE 20**

Discoveries & Delights **PAGE 24**

Land at Heart **PAGE 28**

Hayden Johnson, FAI Intern, visiting "Neptune Bay" property.

Director's Column:

KHLT'S SUPERPOWER

BY: MARIE MCCARTY KHLT Executive Director

We protect land forever. We are a relatively low-profile, steady, strategic crew, and very, very careful in making perpetual commitments to caring for land because of the huge responsibilities that accompany this commitment. You can see in this newsletter that we are celebrating multiple new properties we have recently brought into our conservation portfolio. Each acquisition brings with it years of work before and after it is acquired to meet our commitment to perpetual protection. That commitment, to protect land forever, is our superpower. I was honored recently to represent KHLT at a memorial service, where I was invited to speak about the family's gift of land to KHLT. The donors had passed away, and the conversation between the family and neighbors gathered shared how much the gift of land means to the family. They expressed how proud they are of the land being under the protection of the Land Trust, as it became part of their family history. That family is a part of our superpower, as are each of you! In uncertain times, investing your time, talent, and funds in a local organization like KHLT is one way you can make a positive impact in your community for you, your family, and future generations. Often, your contributions to KHLT are leveraged with other funds, making your local impact even larger. When you take stock of what you can do in uncertain times like these, your local action of investing in KHLT produces a tangible result. Thank you for being a part of our superpower. Our work is ongoing in this beautiful place with much still to be done with the increasing need for conservation that respects people's need to live, work and play on our landscape. Having you as part of our "Superpower Team" means that together we will continue to contribute to creating a bright future in this spectacular place.

KACHEMAK HERITAGE LAND TRUST

KHLT Board Members

Donna Robertson Aderhold
President
Karen Wuestenfeld
Vice President
Larsen Klingel Treasurer
Bernie Griffard Secretary
Sam Means Director
John Mouw Director
Jim Thiele Director
Dave Trudgen Director

KHLT Staff

Marie McCarty
Executive Director
Melissa Bunney
Bunney Bookkeeping
Financial Director
Joel Cooper
Stewardship Director
Carson Chambers
Communications &
Development Manager
Amanda Kelly
Stewardship Coordinator
Hayley Patton
Operations Manager
Chloe Pleznac Contract
Communications &
Development Assistant

Credits

All photos copyright
KHLT unless noted
Fiddlehead Creative
Layout Design

KHLT Contact Info

Kachemak Heritage Land Trust
315 Klondike Ave
Homer, AK 99603
(907) 235-5263
info@kachemaklandtrust.org

Hope, Strength, & Togetherness through Conservation

BY: CARSON CHAMBERS
KHLT Communications & Development Manager

The Land Trust Idea

Back in 1990, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust was a brand-new nonprofit in a sea of many new and budding nonprofits popping up in Homer. It was before my time in this community — actually, even before I was born — but I get the feeling that it was a period of hope, strength, togetherness, and ambition. A time when this tight-knit community set out to "make the world a better place" through truly grassroots initiatives. KHLT's first newsletter in the spring of 1990 painted a clear and promising picture of why the organization came about, why it mattered, and how it could be a tool to help maintain the specialness of this place:

"Just as inventions, buildings and boats launch from an idea, so too did Kachemak Heritage Land Trust. KHLT's idea revolves around maintaining quality of life by balancing development with open space. To KHLT, this means setting aside critical moose calving/wintering grounds and bird nesting sites, establishing city greenbelts, and preserving homesteads, historic properties and regional resources. 'Outside,' there are 800 land trusts, and easement-enabling legislation (allowing non-profits to hold conservation easements) has been in place for many years. In Alaska, such legislation was adopted in May 1989. KHLT is a landmark organization, faced with the challenge of being the first Alaskan land trust, and of serving as a model for future regional trusts.

"Kachemak Heritage Land Trust has been heartily encouraged by your enthusiastic support! You have not only said YES to the vision of open space, you've directed KHLT to initiate a recycling program and to create a comprehensive trail plan for the Homer area. Many challenges lie ahead, but with your continued enthusiasm, the Land Trust idea will keep afloat, preserving quality of life for all generations."

KHLT PLANS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

KHLT Board of Directors
Barbara Seaman, President
Betsy Webb, Vice-president
Michael Yourkowski, Treasurer
R.W. Tyler, Secretary
Marian Beck
Daisy Lee Bitter
Richard Purington
Shelley Rainwater
John Rate

Under the expert leadership of facilitator Chris Laing, board members, staff, and volunteers met in January to outline the long range goals and objectives for KHLT

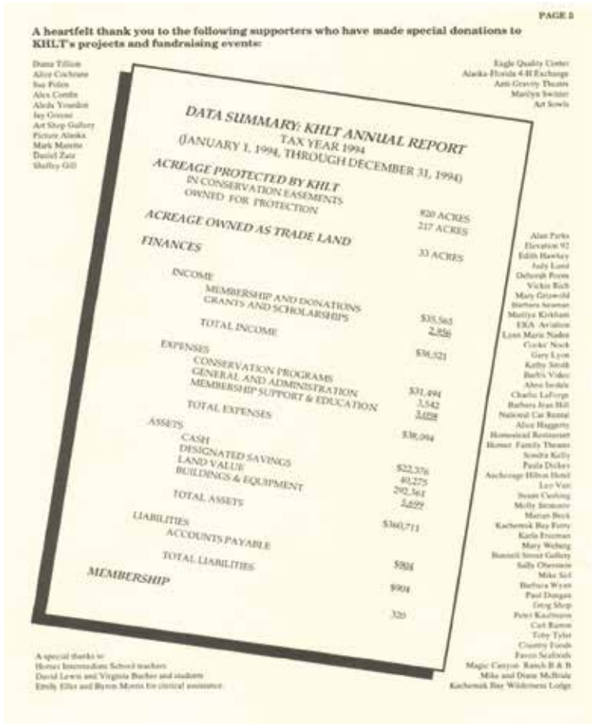
Excerpts from KHLT's 1995 spring newsletter
photo above and data summary below

Here we are, 36 years later, still "afloat" thanks to the continued support of our members and donors, many of whom were part of those early days. We've grown to a staff of six, an operating budget of almost a million dollars, permanent offices in the middle of town, and most excitingly, we crossed the threshold of 4,000 acres of land under our care (in addition to the many other land protection projects we've worked with our partners to complete).

Where We Started

KHLT published this information about current projects in that same spring 1990 newsletter:

"KHLT welcomes donations of land and conservation easements. (Remember — under an easement the land remains yours and can be sold or passed on to your family. All you do is place restrictions on future development and gift these restrictions to KHLT. Conservation easement


PAGE 5

A heartfelt thank you to the following supporters who have made special donations to KHLT's projects and fundraising events:

DATA SUMMARY: KHLT ANNUAL REPORT
TAX YEAR 1994
(JANUARY 1, 1994, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 1994)

ACREAGE PROTECTED BY KHLT
IN CONSERVATION EASEMENTS 920 ACRES
OWNED FOR PROTECTION 217 ACRES

ACREAGE OWNED AS TRADE LAND 33 ACRES

FINANCES

INCOME
MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS $35,565
GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS 2,956
TOTAL INCOME $38,521

EXPENSES
CONSERVATION PROGRAMS $31,494
GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATION 3,542
MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT & EDUCATION 3,028
TOTAL EXPENSES $38,064

ASSETS
CASH $22,376
DESIGNATED SAVINGS 40,275
LAND VALUE 292,361
BUILDINGS & EQUIPMENT 3,699
TOTAL ASSETS $360,711

LIABILITIES
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE $804
TOTAL LIABILITIES $804

MEMBERSHIP 320

Photo of the 120-acre conservation easement referenced in the 1990 newsletter on the North Fork of the Anchor River. Date unknown.

'restrictions' travel with the land title like a subdivision covenant.) In exchange for the donation of a conservation easement, you receive the satisfaction of protecting your land in perpetuity and you can receive significant income and inheritance tax benefits as well. KHLT is working with Yule Kilcher on a conservation easement on 400 acres of his homestead…[and] we are working with another Homer landowner for protection of 120 acres."

That 400-acre easement project turned into 613.61 acres protected as the first conservation easement held by a land trust in Alaska. And those 120 acres turned into the first of several properties protected by KHLT in the Anchor River Watershed which now total over 800 acres. And, as of today, KHLT has worked with landowners to place voluntary conservation easements on 28 properties totaling 2,496.586 acres in addition to the 1,548.709 acres that KHLT owns outright for conservation.

Recent Accomplishments

Over the past 36 years, KHLT worked with a wide variety of landowners — from homesteaders to Alaska Native Tribes to the State of Alaska — to protect special lands across the Kenai Peninsula. Our three newest land protection projects showcase this variety well.

First, in April 2024, KHLT protected 46.393 acres in the cherished Kenai River Watershed. This marked the culmination of the fifth and final collaborative effort between KHLT and the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADoT&PF) as part of the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Reconstruction Project, allowing KHLT to further its commitment to preserving the ecological integrity of this vital region. Since being selected to handle the project's mitigation component, KHLT diligently worked to identify, evaluate, and secure lands crucial for wetland conservation. With this latest acquisition, the total land safeguarded by KHLT with ADoT&PF mitigation funds for the Cooper Landing Bypass project has reached an impressive 200+ acres.

Second, in November 2024, KHLT closed on "The Dragonfly Property." Over the course of a year, we fundraised with the community to permanently protect 11.016 acres on the Anchor River. The Conservation Fund purchased the property in the fall of 2023 with grant funds from the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund and other sources. However, KHLT needed to raise an additional $40,000 for stewardship and overhead costs to ensure that the property could be transferred to our ownership and protected forever. The Dragonfly Property is important for conservation because its location on the Anchor River provides spawning and rearing habitat for king and coho salmon, steelhead and rainbow trout, and Dolly Varden char, and the lower reaches support pink salmon. The property also provides habitat for moose, bear, and other resident and migratory species. What is especially exciting is that the property is located next to eight other parcels owned and protected by KHLT, which make up our Anchor River Salmon Conservation Area. Conserving the Dragonfly property will help maintain existing habitat for spawning and rearing salmon, improve connectivity of conservation lands along the Anchor River, and it will remain open to public access for fishing and hiking.

Third, after initial conversations began back in 2014, KHLT closed on "Two Moose Creek Conservation Area" in December. KHLT worked with local Homer residents who donated nearly 100 acres to protect habitat and open space.

Two Moose Creek Conservation Area 2024.

Photo of Fish Need Land Too field trip participants in 2023 at Henry's Bridge in Anchor Point.

Baby salmon in a photarium on a 2023 Fish Need Land Too trip at Henry's Bridge in Anchor Point.

Protecting this property contributes to the overall health of the Anchor River Watershed, including the headwaters of Two Moose Creek, and ensures healthy habitat for large and small mammals, birds, and fish. These parcels, totaling 94.3 acres and containing 2,100 feet of creek bed, were particularly vulnerable to development due in part to their road and utility access and viewshed.

Based upon groundwater mapping provided by Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, the property includes multiple groundwater flow paths, which are very important to baby salmon. These flow paths help transfer nitrogen generated from alder patches further away from the riparian floodplain — in other words, they help feed baby salmon. This perfectly embodies KHLT's slogan that "fish need land too."

It's All Connected

These three projects highlight a common thread: like the analogy our founding director made about launching the boat, there has always been, and will continue to be, a connection between land and sea for KHLT. As a land trust, we protect land. That land is home to terrestrial creatures, like moose and humans, and, perhaps surprisingly, also to aquatic creatures like baby salmon. The things we do on land affect for better or worse all the creatures who walk on it, swim through it, and live downstream. When we protect and cherish and nurture our land, we also take care of our fresh water, air, and ocean. Without the creatures in the water and sea, there would be no fishing industry, no tourism industry, no Alaskan way of life. We are intricately interconnected to the land. We need it and all its functions to continue to sustain life. As shown by the projects over the past year, and over KHLT's 36 years in operation, we are one piece of the puzzle — one tool to help nourish, cherish, and honor our land and our connection to land. Let's celebrate the thousands of acres that we, as a community, have worked together to safeguard in perpetuity. What an accomplishment! From drinking water sources to moose calving grounds and from headwater streams to world-class fishing riverbanks, 4,045.295 acres are protected forever. As a relatively new member of this incredible community, I feel immensely grateful to all the people who have made land protection a priority. I am so thankful to have been welcomed here with open arms. I feel lucky to be raising my son in a place that values all forms of life and considers the well-being of future generations as our community grows.

So, let's continue to stoke the flames of hope, strength, togetherness, and ambition from 36 years ago. Let's keep working together to find special pieces of land that we can keep undeveloped. Let's keep protecting places that are critical to our way of life. Let's keep the well-being of future generations in mind as we grow with intention.

JOIN IN **If you want more information about placing a conservation easement on your land, leaving KHLT in your estate plans, or becoming a donor or volunteer, please contact me at carson@kachemaklandtrust.org.**

Orchids in the Classroom

Orchids in the Classroom is a collaborative, local program between the Pratt Museum, Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and Kachemak Heritage Land Trust.

BY: CHLOE PLEZNAC
Contract Communications
& Development Assistant

Did you know that over 30 different native species of orchids grow wild in Alaska? Or that there is an alleged secret patch of rare lady's slipper *(Cypripedioideae)* located somewhere on the Kenai Peninsula that only a handful of people knew about, most of whom have now passed on or are otherwise unable to share the secret?

Pratt Museum Head Gardener, Shawn Jackinsky, said one in ten plants in the world belongs to the orchid family. As every species is distinct, there is a high potential for hybridization among the plants, allowing them to thrive in various conditions.

Orchids in the Classroom is a collaborative, local program between the Pratt Museum, Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR), the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and Kachemak Heritage Land Trust. With roots in Florida and DC, the local iteration kicked off in recent years, spearheaded by Dennis Whigham, the Founding Director of the North American Orchid Conservation Center.

Homer school children participating in Orchids in the Classroom activities.

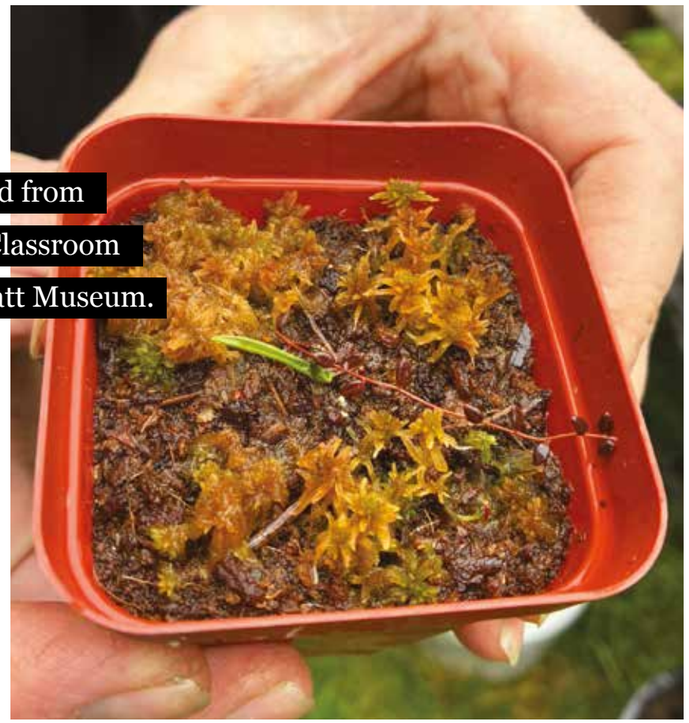
In 2018, Whigham, along with a group of KHLT staff and Homer Outdoor Wilderness League students, traversed KHLT-protected peatlands in search of native orchids and collected seeds from the Effler property, an area made up of sensitive, headwater fen wetlands. Those same seeds have since been propagated by students in the program, with their baby orchids now in collection at the Pratt Museum.

The program is hosted in Homer-area schools, including Susan B. English School in Seldovia, Connections Homeschool, McNeil Canyon Elementary, and Homer Middle School. It helps train both teachers and students about the intricacies of orchid propagation, the importance of peatlands, and the context of land conservation within all of it.

Pratt Museum Curator of Botanical Exhibits, Yarrow Hinnant, said that orchids act as a kind of "canary in the coal mine" and as an "indicator species of a healthy landscape." When ecosystems are damaged by factors such as grazing, development, or heavy traffic, orchids are often among the first to disappear. One way to combat the eradication of orchids is through land preservation. Citing examples like the Million Orchid Project in Florida, Hinnant noted a significant connection between conserving land and saving orchid species from extinction.

Ingrid Harrald works as the Education Coordinator for KBNERR. She said students love the program and enjoy naming their orchid babies. Harrald said the collaborative approach, connection to local ecosystem education, and hands-on scientific learning all create a unique and valuable outlet for students.

In the classroom, local students from elementary to high school age can participate in various tiers of the natural education program. Elementary



Bog orchid sprout planted from seeds by Orchids in the Classroom students, currently at Pratt Museum.

students attend field trips to local peatlands and complete art projects that allow them to learn about the intersection of different plant communities, exploring habitats with hands-on, educational contextualization.

Older students experiment with propagating their own orchid seedlings, germinating them in sterile laboratory environments, and comparing the interactions of the seedlings with different fungi. Jackinsky explained that all orchids require a fungal relationship to survive and thrive, so exploring the ways in which these seedlings interact actually helps advance local research and increases the museum's collection of orchids, as the students donate them at the end of the term.

Jackinsky said the museum recently collaborated with Cook Inletkeeper to use their sterile laboratory facilities to plant "tens of thousands" of orchid seeds. Of those thousands, he said, only about 1% will actually germinate.

But that's the beauty of Orchids in the Classroom. As a science program that helps educate local students with place-based learning, broad ecological context, and awareness of peatland conservation, a whole new generation of stewards is created.

Learning about orchids for this story had me thinking of them as little treasures by the end, watching the way people's eyes light up when discussing them and their unique method of propagation. By helping youth identify and appreciate orchids, as well as the peatlands that are their home, the program also fosters the creation of curious citizen scientists capable of seeking out these natural treasures.

Harrald said middle school students recently visited their 'baby orchids' at the Pratt, where they've been added to the museum's growing collection. Embarking on a scavenger hunt, the students attempted to locate their respective plants, which they had come to know, love, and even name, throughout the semester-long program.

In September, another teacher training was held with staff from the Pratt, KBNERR, KHLT, and the Smithsonian, further expanding the Orchids in the Classroom program to include students in Nanwalek and from Homer Flex High School.

Cultivated piece of peatland with sundews at Pratt Museum.

KBNERR teacher training attendees at KHLT's Effler property.

What treasures might you discover on your land that you had no idea existed there before? And how might you help protect it for generations to come?

Elementary school students participating in Orchids in the Classroom events.

View from KHLT's Brookman Property.

854.115 ACRES AND COUNTING

Thanks to generous contributions from our community and local landowners, KHLT is working to complete three exciting conservation projects over the next several months.

BY: JOEL COOPER
KHLT Stewardship Director

KHLT has held conservation easements on two adjacent properties within the Anchor River watershed since the early 1990s. The 20-acre Brookman conservation easement was donated to KHLT in 1991 and the 120-acre O'Meara conservation easement in 1992. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified organization (like KHLT) that permanently limits how the property can be used to protect its conservation values, such as wildlife habitat. In other words, the landowner maintains ownership of the land and gives up some of their rights to develop the land. Those rights are given to KHLT. The easement "runs with the land," meaning that the landowner could sell or pass on their property, but the restrictions, enforced and managed by KHLT, will remain forever.

As part of closing her husband's estate, Carroll Brookman, the current landowner of the Brookman conservation easement, is honoring her late husband's wish by donating her 20-acre property to KHLT. This is an unusual situation to own property (also known as fee-simple ownership) in addition to holding

KHLT staff and volunteers on a site visit to the Epperson Property.

a conservation easement on the same property. KHLT needed to obtain legal advice on how to accept this donation according to the original grantor's wishes and to meet Land Trust Accreditation Standards. KHLT was advised that we can legally receive the property as a fee-simple donation with an amended conservation easement to ensure permanent protection of the property and its conservation values. In other words, KHLT will own the property outright and the conservation easement will be updated to reflect the change in ownership. KHLT is working to close this project in December 2025.

In May of 2022, KHLT began communicating with another landowner, Sharon Inman, to discuss options for protecting her 20-acre parcel adjacent to the O'Meara and Brookman properties. Sharon has since passed away. Before passing, Sharon made it clear in her estate plans that she was interested in donating her land to KHLT and the executor of her estate is now working with KHLT to fulfill her wish. This project will add 20 additional acres of vital fish and wildlife habitat adjacent to the Anchor River/Fritz Creek Critical Habitat Area and the already protected O'Meara and Brookman properties. KHLT hopes to close on the "Inman Property" by February 2026.

And finally, KHLT is working to receive a donation of 5.21 acres of undeveloped land that will be added to the Two Moose Creek Conservation Area that was protected by KHLT in late 2024. This important habitat is being donated by Terry Harrington and Dean Epperson. This generous donation brings the total acreage of the Two Moose Creek Conservation Area to 99.51 acres.

Once all of these projects are completed, a total of 854.115 acres in the Anchor River watershed will be protected in perpetuity under KHLT's care.

Cosmology

BY: MAYA ROHR

It's 27 degrees and 4:45 pm in the most
beautiful parking lot in the world.
The solemn trees in front of the bank are draped, belted and tucked
into their winter cassocks. The sun is setting south of Mt. Douglas,
and its last light keeps shifting, all softest yellow and silky blues,
throwing Hail Marys in Fata Morgana. The far islands have mirrored
and stacked into spires, a trick of the light amidst the dying of it.
We're a month out from Solstice, and on my walk here, I wondered
about keeping track of hours by light, and
keeping track of light by the land,
and in particular the light's coming and the light's going away from it.
All thus marking our years in light, which
travels so far to get to us, and stays
only so briefly on the slip of my cheeks and nose, all that peeks out
from the knitted cowl Martha traded me for two clay plates the year
we were twenty. Back then I never thought of being thirty-one,
and I still don't dream any further than
perhaps February, when the sun
will bubble up and up, cold and sweet, filling Spring like a tin cup.
As a girl I read about the sky-woman who floated for millennia
cross-legged in a boundless sea of night, until the eagle laid an egg
in her lap. In her surprise, the sky-woman broke the egg
and the shell became earth and sky and the yolk became the sun
and the runny whites became the moon and stars.
There she was, surrounded by the sudden
world in all its bright edges.
Every dark morning on the bus ride down to school
I saw the mountains in silhouette, notched like a great cracked egg
which held the ancient sea like a bowl, and
as the sun rose I felt certain
that the little world into which we descended
was held between that woman's knees.

Maya Rohr reads Cosmology at KHLT's 2024 Annual Meeting.

Heritage Circle

With an annual gift of $1,000 or more, you become an essential partner in conserving the natural heritage of the Kenai Peninsula for future generations. Heritage Circle membership includes invitations to special celebrations, exclusive field trips, and first notice for events and KHLT happenings. Many thanks to our 2025 Heritage Circle members! We would love to chat with YOU about joining our Heritage Circle.

If you'd like more information, please contact Carson Chambers at carson@kachemaklandtrust.org.

LAND BACK

View from the “Neptune Bay” property.

BY: HAYDEN JOHNSON
First Alaskans Institute Intern

Hayden Johnson, FAI Intern with representatives from Seldovia Village Tribe on a site tour of "Neptune Bay" property.

I would like to introduce myself the traditional way first. Waqaa (hello). My name is Hayden Johnson. I am Choggiung Yupik. I come from Eagle River, Alaska, where I was born and raised. My family comes from Clarks Point, Alaska. My mother is Katrina Johnson. My father is Stephen Johnson. My maternal grandparents are Bonnie and Richard Lopez. My paternal grandparents are Linda and Henry Johnson. I have a younger brother named Owen. Quyana Tailuci (thank you for your time).

It feels exciting to finally find work that coincides with the degree I have been working hard to get for four straight years. I graduated from Fort Lewis College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science earlier this year. Before the Land Trust, I worked a lot of odd jobs, from butcher to bookseller. Coming out of school, I was anxious that I would struggle to get a career started for myself. My friends joke with me that I have a fear of unemployment. Which is why I am ever grateful and thankful for Kachemak Heritage Land Trust allowing me to work here as an intern from the First Alaskans Institute. It feels good to be able to find work that allows me to turn my passions into tangible goals — uplifting and advancing the lives of my fellow Natives across the state. I was able to take part in that by working on a Land Back project.

Land Back is an Indigenous movement to regain stolen lands and reestablish sovereignty over those lands. Land Back is important because it corrects historical wrongs and helps to uplift the lives of Natives who are the victims of colonization and land theft. Land Back helps to empower Indigenous communities by giving them new opportunities and land to practice and recultivate their traditional ways. This is often a process of healing and growth, as for many members of their tribe, this may be their first time setting foot on their ancestral homeland. This can help improve the mental and physical well-being of community members. Land Back can also be a powerful tool to help protect the environment. I feel as if this is one of the least talked-about benefits of Land Back. Indigenous people are some of the best caretakers of the land, as they are the living accumulation of centuries of knowledge of how to be a part of an ecosystem and how to sustainably manage the resources in that ecosystem. I feel as if there is a real opportunity to do good for both the environment and the people who live there through a partnership between Indigenous nations and land trusts. This is why I would like to tell the story of our Land Back project here at KHLT.

The Neptune Bay parcel of land has an interesting history. It was first acquired by Kachemak Heritage Land Trust as a donation from Walter Johnson. Walter Johnson was a doctor who worked at the Alaska Native Medical Center for many years. He then decided in the early 1990s to donate the property. However, he left his intentions for the land purposefully vague so the KHLT board of directors could have free rein to manage the property as they saw fit. Later, an archaeological survey conducted by Janet R. Klein in 1991 revealed a previously unknown shell midden on the property along with a flake of jasper. The jasper is believed to have been brought from the Alaska Peninsula region to this property, seeing as no natural sources of jasper have been identified in the Kachemak Bay area. A rock shelter with signs of use and a culturally modified tree were found on a nearby parcel of land to the south as well. After that survey, not much transpired on the property. Due to its location and the substantial changes in the tides, it is a difficult place to reach. On top of that, the property is covered in thick spruce and devil's club. These factors made the property hard to monitor in the past. At one point, it was offered up for sale to the Alaska State Parks system. This sale was turned down due to limited funds. For years, the property sat, only being monitored and listed as "habitat" in reports. When I joined the Land Trust, my supervisor and KHLT's Stewardship Director, Joel Cooper, tasked me with facilitating the return of the land to a Native organization or tribe.

Joel Cooper, KHLT Stewardship Director and Hayden Johnson, FAI Intern at Hayden's graduation ceremony.

This decision came about as a result of the hard work of previous Vermont Law School interns to determine if KHLT could legally donate the property to a Native tribe and that this would be consistent with Walter Johnson's wishes.

Firstly, I had to find a suitable recipient and make sure this transfer could even take place. After much careful consideration, it was decided that the land should be returned to the Seldovia Village Tribe (SVT), as they are closest to the property and therefore could make the best use of it. There then came two issues needing to be resolved. One: Does this fall in line with the Rule of Donor Intent? Two: How should the Covenant Restrictions for the property be written?

Donor Intent is important because it not only determines how the property is to be managed, but also whether the property can even be given away in the first place. Johnson left his intent ambiguous on purpose, giving KHLT discretionary power over the property. That was not specific enough. Thankfully, KHLT's 2024 Vermont Law intern, Elle Elliott, found in KHLT's records that Johnson wanted the use of the property to stay consistent with that of the surrounding land, much of which belongs to the Seldovia Native Association. This clarified the issue of donor intent.

When I was tasked with writing the resolutions for the boards of both SVT and KHLT to pass, I first wrote them in a standard way with all the normal restrictions, such as no dumping, no tree cutting, that sort of thing. Although this would work, this felt inauthentic to me. It felt like less of a gift and more like passing along a burden. It felt like giving someone a basketball but telling them they could only store it and never play with it. In a conversation with KHLT Executive Director, Marie McCarty, we both found that we agree that these first resolutions undermine the blossoming trust between KHLT and SVT and weaponize doubt. What I mean by that is the restrictive covenants place a lack of faith in the ecological knowledge on how to care for and exist within nature that has been accumulated in the Tribe since time immemorial. By placing restrictions, it harms the Tribe's ability to practice their traditional ways of life because traditional ways always coincide with what is healthy for the land. It was not until the introduction of Western values that one would be at odds with the land. These days, doubt has become a powerful weapon to take away the validity of someone's lived experience, and it seemed like the standard language of covenant restrictions would place doubt on tribes' traditional ways and accumulated knowledge. On top of that, the only restriction we needed to place was that land use be consistent with the surrounding Seldovia Native Association land. I was told to rewrite the resolution the way I wanted to. So, I took out everything that chipped away at the spirit of a gift until I had only what upheld donor intent and honored Native values.

What I think really helped bring the Seldovia Village Tribe on board was the great site visit we had. After much coordination, we were finally able to visit the property. We also decided to conduct our annual monitoring that day. Perfect, partly sunny weather with a breeze to keep the bugs away greeted us. As we were walking through the tidal grass flats on the way to the property, a coyote ran away from us. That is the second time I have seen one in Alaska. The foot journey was rather challenging at times as we had to cross several muddy tidal streams. I remember all of us getting stuck at least once. We also fell a lot, too, as the grass was thick, which made it hard to see the actual ground we were stepping on. Later, as we approached the property, we saw a young black bear exploring the beach before fleeing from us. I sat on the beach with Trinket Gallien, the SVT secretary, as KHLT Stewardship Coordinator, Amanda Kelly, and SVT President, Crystal Collier, conducted the monitoring. That was a nice time with an enjoyable conversation. Crystal and Amanda returned with blueberries they had found on the property; they were particularly good despite being a little tart. Trinket told me the land has a subsistence purpose now that they have found vast amounts of berries.

A week later, the SVT council passed the resolution unanimously. Two weeks later, SVT President Crystal Collier and KHLT President Donna Aderhold met in Homer and signed the deed, officially passing over ownership of the land.

Overall, I am immensely proud of this land-return project. This is exactly what I set out to do when I started school. I hope I can continue along this path of facilitating Land Back. I hope this new addition to SVT land is publicized to the Tribe's members as widely as possible so they can take pride in it as well.

HarborFest attendees showing off their personalized Baby Salmon stickers.

- A VERY -

SALMON SUMMER

BY: CARSON CHAMBERS KHLT Communications & Development Manager

In May, KHLT, Trout Unlimited (TU), and Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF), had a wonderful time in Seward talking all about fish passage (aka culverts) funded by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant. Huge shout out to the inquisitive, energetic, and inspiring kids from Seward Elementary who braved the cold and wet weather to join us on a field trip to Spring Creek Campground. We got to learn all about watersheds, different types of culverts and which work best, and why fish need land, too. We couldn't have pulled this off without the amazing Tara Swanson at Seward Elementary, the parent volunteers, and our local partner organizations. THANK YOU!

Thanks to a variety of grant funding, the KHLT team was swimming in opportunities to spread the good word about protecting baby salmon habitat this year. Our spring, summer, and fall have been full of salmon outreach.

Rosie Masui, KBNERR Coastal Training Program Specialist, seining for baby salmon during a Fish Need Land Too trip. CREDIT: LOBO BRAND SHOP

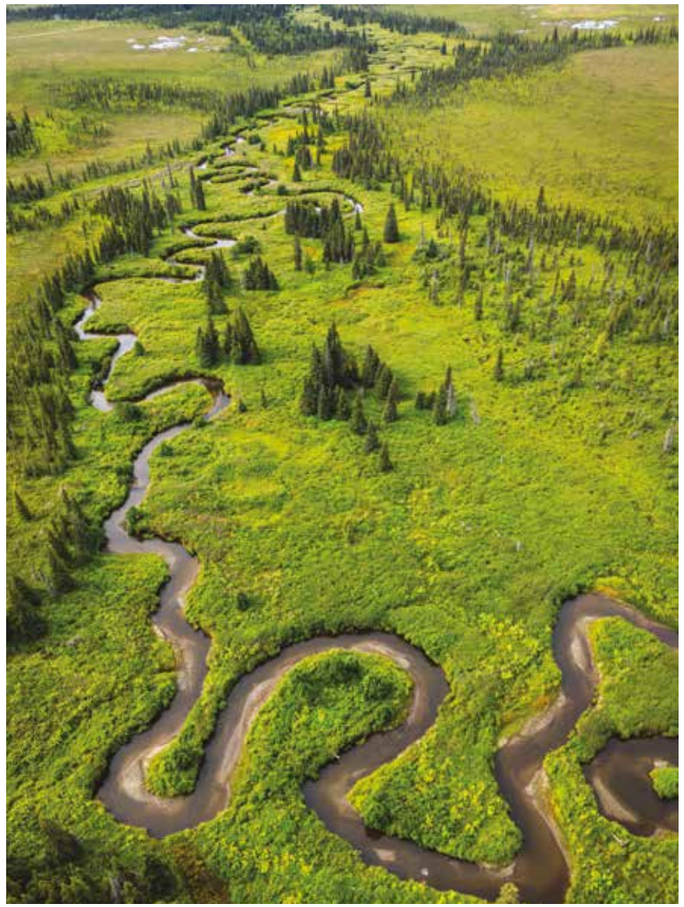
The KHLT crew tabled at HarborFest, Concert on the Lawn, and the Kenai Peninsula Fair this summer. We had so much fun celebrating Wild Salmon Day at the Kenai Peninsula Fairgrounds in Ninilchik with KWF and Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR). Thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth to learn how land conservation and healthy water quality supports thriving salmon runs on the Kenai Peninsula!

In July, Marie got to spend the afternoon with students in partnership with KWF's summer program. She talked about what stewardship means to a land trust, how land might change over time, and what rules we enforce as land managers all while relating it back to the habitat we share with salmon.

In early August, staff from Senator Lisa Murkowski's office, State Senator Gary Stevens office, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly President joined the KBNERR and KHLT on a Fish Need Land Too field trip to learn how important healthy watersheds are for salmon. It was the perfect reminder that salmon need more than clean water—they need healthy forests, wetlands, and creek banks, too. When we protect land, we protect the future of our fisheries. Facilitation of this Fish Need Land Too field trip was funded by a grant from Department of Environmental Quality Alaska Clean Water Actions (DEC ACWA).

KBNERR staff and KHLT joined the City of Seldovia and local community members for a tour of their drinking water reservoir in late September. Discussions focused on potential hydrology, watershed ecology and fisheries research and wetland assessments, pending recent collaborative grant proposals.

Finally, in October, the KHLT team got to chat at KWF's Fireside Chat series hosted at Kenai River Brewing. We



Drone image of Stariski Meadows. CREDIT: LOBO BRAND SHOP

discussed how our land trust works with willing landowners to protect land that is critical to salmon, especially baby salmon, and to ensure we can continue to nourish our Alaskan way of life.

KHLT's participation in some of the aforementioned events was funded, in part, by a Dept. of Environmental Conservation Alaska Clean Water Actions grant 25-02.

Baby Salmon Live Here outreach in Seldovia and at Stariski Meadows.

Seward Elementary students exploring the watershed at Spring Creek.

STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION
Streambank Restoration

BY: JOEL COOPER KHLT Stewardship Director

The Kenai River draws recreational anglers from around the state, the country, and the globe for world-class sportfishing opportunities. Riverbank sites throughout the City of Soldotna are among the most popular for shore-based anglers and experience lots of foot traffic in the summer. While some shoreline areas throughout the city have been improved with light-penetrating walkways and angler access points, locations without such improvements often experience significant erosion from human use, which damages fish habitat.

Upstream from the mouth of Soldotna Creek is a 159-meter section of the Kenai River shoreline that is being degraded by angler foot traffic. The area is protected by the Mullen Conservation Easement and the section below the bluff is closed to all foot traffic. However, that hasn't stopped sockeye salmon anglers from accessing this area during the height of the fishing season. As a result, the bluff is highly eroded, and the habitat trampled.

Last year, KHLT was awarded a grant to collaborate with the Kenai Watershed Forum's Stream Watch volunteers, providing the labor required for installing cabled spruce trees that will help stabilize the eroded bluff and improve degraded shoreline habitat. By collaborating with Stream Watch, this project will leverage local experience and community support to ensure long-term success.

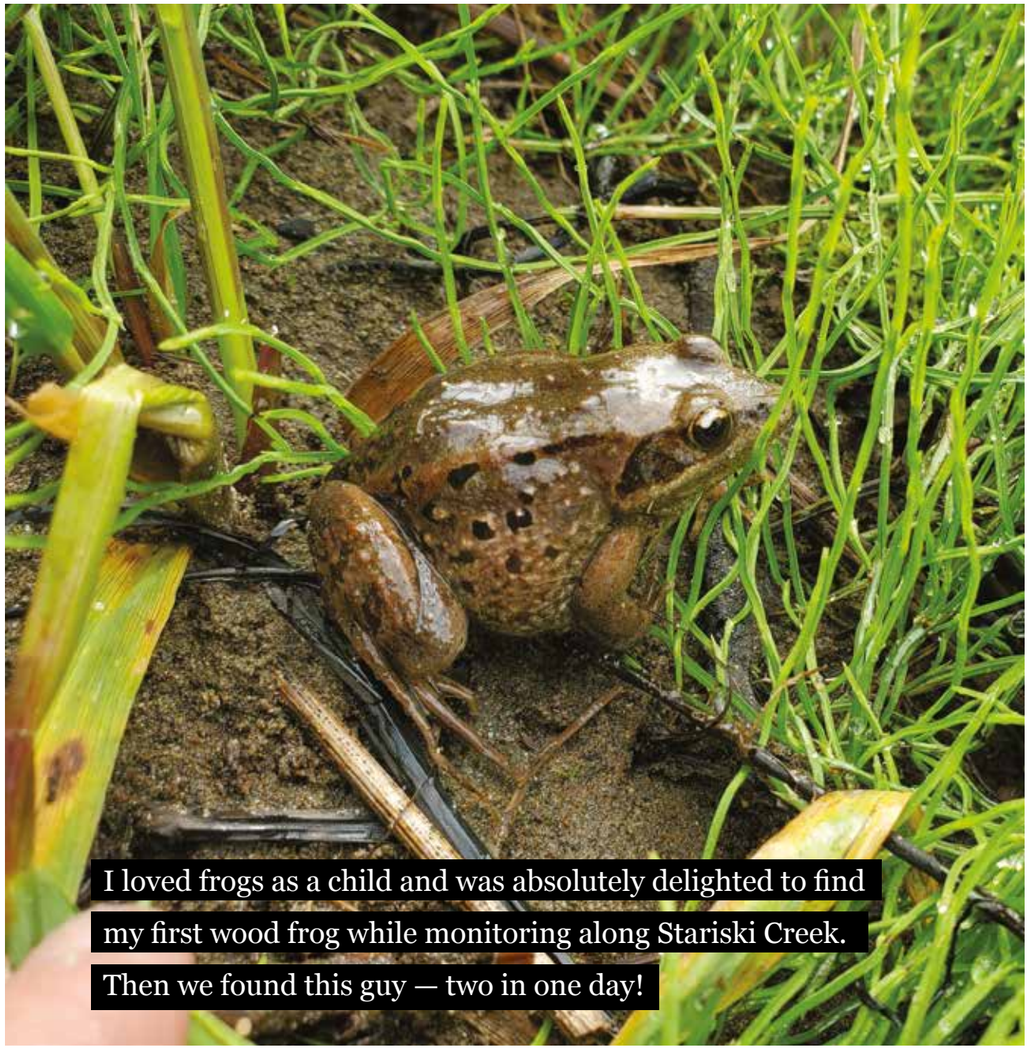
Raffle Success!

Our third annual Pack-Your-Pantry local food raffle was a great success. Congratulations to this year's big winner, Teresa Sundmark. Thank you so much to all the local businesses who donated to this year's raffle and to all those who purchased tickets. For those who didn't strike it lucky, your ticket purchase directly supports KHLT's work to protect land on the Kenai Peninsula. Thank you!

Much appreciation to our donors:
Blood, Sweat & Food Farms
Bridge Creek Birch Syrup
David Schroeder
Grey Wilson Knife Sharpening
Jakolof Bay Oyster Co.
Quickwater Adventure
Synergy Gardens
The Classic Cook
Twitter Creek Gardens
Two Sisters Bakery
Udder Delights
Ulmer's Drug & Hardware
Wagon Wheel
Will Grow Farms
Claire Waxman -
Saleswoman Extraordinaire

DISCOVERIES & DELIGHTS

BY: AMANDA KELLY KHLT Stewardship Coordinator



I loved frogs as a child and was absolutely delighted to find my first wood frog while monitoring along Stariski Creek. Then we found this guy — two in one day!

Sundew is a carnivorous plant found in boggy areas like our protected peatlands. Roundleaf sundew *(Drosera rotundifolia)* is the predominant species in the Homer area, but our Stariski Creek properties also have English sundew *(Drosera anglica)*, pictured here. Its leaves are more elongated and sometimes curl up around trapped insect prey.

Looks like we have four successfully hatched chicks! Snipe or yellowlegs? They both inhabit our wetland properties, and their eggs look very similar. I'm no expert — are you? Let us know!

There's never a shortage of beauty in the field. Before the fireweed blooms, abundant wild iris adorns a variety of wetland habitats on our conservation lands.

Every year, I find fresh brown bear tracks on the muddy banks of Stariski Creek. I'm grateful for their trails, which make traveling through the dense, tall grasses just a bit less cumbersome. I call out to thank them and warn them of our presence.

Hm, why can't I cross this little side channel? I did last year. … Aha! A beaver dam (bottom left) flooded the channel, making it wider and deeper than it had previously been. (photo credit: Kim McNett)

When I saw fresh dirt below me on a remote hillside, I was, at first, confused. Who would be digging out here, and for what? Ohhh, I see. A bear emerging from her cozy winter home!

Spruce grouse feathers!

There were several sets of coyote tracks — some quite small — in the mud of this Kenai wetland property. Pups, perhaps?

Is there anything more elegant than angel wing mushrooms in a damp forest in fall?

Moose teeth!

LAND AT HEART

Richard Purington

BY: CHLOE PLEZNAC Contract Communications & Development Assistant

Every year, KHLT recognizes an individual for their distinguished contributions to land conservation on the Kenai Peninsula. This year, the Land at Heart Award was given to Richard Purington.

Richard was born on June 16, 1927, in Massachusetts. He grew up on a dairy farm during the Great Depression. Reflecting on his memories, Richard recalled that his father was a hard worker, often returning on Friday evenings to give each child in the family a dime as an allowance. He said his mother—a "New England mom"—was a good cook.

It was his mother's younger brother, Reuben, who perhaps had the most impact on Richard. When World War II broke out, his Uncle Reuben joined the service, relinquishing his farm next door. Purington eventually joined the service as well, serving in the Marine Corps.

After the war, Richard found that most East Coast schools were already filled with servicemen looking to attend college. He wrote to Reuben, who then lived in Denver, Colorado and was able to register for classes there, studying to become a highway engineer. Highway engineering would eventually lead Richard to Alaska in 1951, where he spent time working on the Seward Highway with the Bureau of Public Roads. Reuben came to Alaska with him, and they explored the area together, including Girdwood and Seward, before Reuben eventually settled in Homer, staking out a homestead nestled on Diamond Ridge.

Richard described his first impression of Homer as being "the little town that Reuben lived next to." In 1985, he moved to Reuben's homestead and has lived there ever since.

Richard's experience in survey work and road engineering lent itself well to trail work, which he utilized in helping KHLT carve out trails during his years as a dedicated volunteer and early board member. The construction of the Calvin & Coyle Trail was organized by Richard, who welcomed East Coast students over a series of years to assist in its creation.

One of the trails Richard worked on, the Homestead Trail, features a bench dedicated to Reuben near his homestead. Richard, a dedicated woodworker, created the bench himself, in honor of his Uncle Reuben. Michael Armstrong once described the bench as "a thick slab of spruce high enough above the fireweed to admire the view."

Executive Director, Marie McCarty, said Richard has also utilized his woodworking skills over the years to create various chairs, coat hangers, and other creations for the Land Trust. Last year, he gifted KHLT a wooden boat he had built for the annual fundraising auction, helping to secure funding to support KHLT's mission of protecting Kenai Peninsula land in perpetuity.

Richard, 98, said as far as hopes for the future go, he hopes to reach 100.

Richard Purington and his family.

Lasting Connections

BY: ABIGAIL AUSTIN KHLT Law Intern 2025

My time in Alaska was nothing short of incredible. I met wonderful people, saw breathtaking scenery, and worked with an organization that I'm proud to tell people about. Everyone says spending a season in Alaska will change your life. I agree.

I said yes to the summer law student internship at Kachemak Heritage Land Trust on a whim. I didn't have a plan. All I knew was that I would embark on a long drive (4,723 miles from South Royalton, Vermont to Homer, Alaska) after my spring semester finals ended. Suddenly, it was May, and I was packing up my car to leave on what would become an amazing and fulfilling summer. Even though I couldn't see it then, this experience became much more than a summer job. It became about the difference I got to make through KHLT and the amazing people I spent my time with.

The KHLT staff welcomed me with open arms. From the first week, I felt I was at a place where I mattered. It was refreshing to be part of an organization where people care immensely for the people and the community around them.

On my first day, KHLT Executive Director, Marie McCarty, told me things only get interesting when people get involved. While she was talking about people involved in complex property law matters, I think her statement applies to just about everything. Connecting with people is not only an integral part of KHLT operations, but it also was one of the best parts of my Alaska experience.

Alaska is the perfect place to meet an incredibly unique, diverse group of people. What I like most about the state is that it acts as a unifier, bringing together all kinds of people who have little in common aside from wanting to experience Alaska. A large portion of the people I met came from somewhere else and moved to the 49th state chasing a way of life. What I found so special about my time in Homer was being able to connect with so many people who I have nothing in common with other than the shared love of a place.

I've never felt more tied to a place in such a short amount of time. Even though I was only in Homer for a couple of months, I made lasting friendships and connections, and I left knowing that I made a difference at KHLT. The work I did feels not only meaningful, but also lasting. I'm proud that the projects I worked on, including writing the stewardship plan for the recently acquired Two Moose Creek Conservation Area, will be helpful to KHLT for years to come. I greatly appreciate that I was given the opportunity to work with KHLT's legal counsel on other complex issues involving land protection, as well as field opportunities including annual monitoring of conservation easements and restoration work on the bank of the Kenai River.

When I look back on this experience many years from now, I likely won't remember the exact details of the projects I participated in during the summer of 2025 or the hours that I spent in my office at KHLT. Instead, I'll remember the wonderful feeling of accomplishment and the incredible people who made my time in Alaska an unforgettable experience.

It is important to me to return to school in Vermont to tell everyone how special KHLT is. I'm thankful to all the staff, committee members, board members, and friends of the Land Trust for making me feel valued. I feel as though I made a difference during my time here, and for that, I can't be grateful enough.

Abigail Austin, KHLT Law Intern at the Homer Spit.

REMEMBRANCE & GRATITUDE

BY: MARIE MCCARTY KHLT Executive Director

Our community recently lost Barb Seaman and Roberta Highland, two people key to KHLT. We miss them.

Barb Seaman joined the KHLT Board in 1990. She became Board President in 1992 and then became KHLT's Executive Director from 1995 to 2008. Her vision, spirit, and leadership shined through in each conservation acquisition. She led KHLT to preserve land across the Kenai Peninsula, from the Homer Spit, to Inspiration Ridge, to land on the Kenai River, the Anchor River, the Poopdeck Platt property, and acres on the Homer Bluff. She oversaw multiple years of the KHLT all-day Lodge Hop across Kachemak Bay, and many fun events and themed parties. She often mentioned the precision with which the KHLT marching band performed at Winter Carnival with orchestrated opening and closing folding lawn chairs. This mix of hard work, humor and lots of land conservation meant a great deal to our organization.

Barb Seaman

Roberta Highland

In classic Alaskan workstyle, one day a week Barb would skiff the mail across Kachemak Bay as a contract postal worker in the morning, regardless of weather, and then head back to Homer to protect land in the afternoon. She gathered a team together to haul loads and loads of wood chips to build the Calvin & Coyle Trail. Many thanks to Barb Seaman for her leadership years with KHLT.

Roberta, along with her husband, Robert, were two of the founding Board members of KHLT when we opened our services in 1989, just one month before the Exxon Valdez oil spill. We were very grassroots in the very best way, as our KHLT family wanted to ensure that what makes our home such a lovely and rich place to live, play and work would stay that way.

I recently found myself making a list of Roberta's attributes and filled the page immediately. Leader, passionate, impactful, fun, sticks neck out, sees beyond self, challenges things, kind, funny, serious, adventurous, selfless, imagines the best future for all, land steward, passionate about horses. The list goes on for a whole page.

Janice Schofield, Jon and Nelda Osgood, Roberta Highland, Robert Archibald, Mary Pearsall, Toby Tyler, Diane McBride, Devony Lehner, and Daisy Lee Bitter sat in a room in Homer considering the role a land trust could play in the community, and the need for a public vehicle to hold title to land and conservation easements. Their impetus was an imminent land trade across Kachemak Bay. This small group was the first in Alaska to birth the concept of a land trust into an organization. In doing so, these foresighted people set down the corners of the puzzle.

There was no legislation in Alaska that allowed conservation easements, so the team and new partners figured it out and made it happen. Roberta and Robert imagined the best future for our community.

Roberta is someone we can each carry on our shoulders, reminding us to be vigilant and not quiet when things seem wrong, to be compassionate and think long into the future. One of Roberta's legacies should be to use our voices to make our home a better place; to be kind, serious and laugh.

Roberta and Barb, KHLT and I will carry you with us as we make our way forward.

Legacy Giving Circle

After we're gone, the land remains. But what will it be?

Will the land we cherish on the Kenai Peninsula still support clean water, healthy habitat for healthy wildlife populations, wild salmon runs and ample outdoor recreation opportunities?

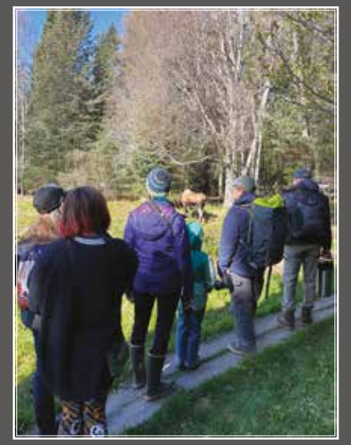
Will future generations thank us for our foresight?

Planned giving enables you to make a lasting statement. A legacy gift to Kachemak Heritage Land Trust allows conservation of land on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula to be part of your legacy and ensures that generations to come will enjoy places with special natural, recreational, and cultural values. Planned gifts provide the financial stability necessary for Kachemak Heritage Land Trust to protect land forever and may also offer a significant reduction in your estate taxes.

Join our Legacy Giving Circle by letting us know you've included us in your will or estate plans. Email carson@kachemaklandtrust.org or call 907-235-5328.

Thank you to our current Legacy Giving Circle Members:

Diane McBride
Jeanne McArthur
Mike O'Meara
Janette Keiser & Kim Zook
Steve Hughes & Robbie Coffey
Ray Sinclair
Randall H. Wiest
William Bell
Chris Degernes
Patrice M. Krant
Ed Berg
Karen & Bill Wuestenfeld
Webb Family Trust
Jim Thiele & Sue Pope
Dave & Marcia Trudgen
Kathryn Anderson & Patrick Speranza
Toby Wheeler
Richard Chiappone
Barbara Reilly
Neil Wagner
Other Anonymous Members



Shorebird at Our Calvin & Coyle Trail

Many thanks to Sue Pope for reading an excerpt from her memoir, *Rivers and Ice*, about her wild encounter with a resident goshawk on the Calvin & Coyle Trail. We had a fabulous time listening and looking for birds along the trail, a local birding hotspot, during Homer's Shorebird Festival this spring. Thank you to our birding guides as well as our participants.

And, thanks to our moose friends for sharing the trail with us.

KACHEMAK HERITAGE LAND TRUST
315 Klondike Ave
Homer, Alaska 99603

Ways To Donate

Scan to Donate

Pick. Click. Give.

Pick.Click.Give. is an easy way for Alaskans to support your favorite non-profit by donating part of your permanent fund dividend. Please consider KHLT when applying for your 2026 PFD!

KACHEMAK HERITAGE LAND TRUST

TELEPHONE CONTACT: (907) 235-5263
E-MAIL CONTACT: info@KachemakLandTrust.org
HEADQUARTERS: 315 Klondike Ave
Homer, Alaska 99603

STAY INFORMED:
Search for *"Kachemak Heritage Land Trust"*

www.kachemaklandtrust.org