



January 16, 2024

Grant Coordinator, Business Operations Division
ATTN: Climate Resilience Regional Challenge
NOAA Office for Coastal Management
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413

Dear Climate Resilience Regional Challenge Grant Coordinator:

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of the **Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Community Council** for funding the proposal entitled, *Kenai Peninsula Borough Resilience and Adaptation Initiative*. The Conservation Fund is partnering with the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR) and the Kachemak Heritage Land Trust to engage with the Kenai Peninsula Borough and support science and land protection priorities that help the community adapt and improve climate resilience along the Alaska coastline.

The conservation actions presented in this proposal will further the ongoing efforts to steward the land and freshwater of the Kenai Peninsula Borough region, employing an extensive network of community relationships that the KBNERR has cultivated with nonprofit, agency, and tribal entity partners over the past two decades. This project will foster long-lasting collaborations and resilience projects through monitoring, training, and education programs. Specifically, this proposal protects freshwater sources by purchasing lands and establishing conservation easements on high-priority properties that in turn protect groundwater for healthy salmon streams and drinking water sources for people and wildlife. For instance, by protecting peatlands throughout the region, valuable habitat for salmon and moose persist, and carbon storage is maintained to mitigate climate change impacts. Additionally, this project will address identified mapping needs for floodplain inundation and coastal erosion models, which are in high demand by borough constituents and property owners. Through expanding groundwater hydrology research to inform priority locations for land acquisition, not only are the sources of freshwater protected in the region, but the natural resources of Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay are protected, maintaining healthy cultural and subsistence marine and coastal resources into perpetuity.

Established in 2002, the KNBERR Council's primary purpose is to provide an organized structure for substantive and meaningful dialogue and recommendations between agencies, local governments, researchers, environmental educators, conservation groups, and others interested in natural science research and education and Research Reserve staff. To that end, the Council has actively been that link between local communities and KBNERR over the past 20 years, bringing a wide range of issues and questions to the Reserve for consideration and investigation.

We strongly support this important project as a partner of KBNERR in order to help address the impacts of a changing climate on our coastal communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Matz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

George Matz
Council Chair
KBNERR Community Council
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