



City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Port and Harbor

4311 Freight Dock Road
Homer, AK 99603

port@cityofhomer-ak.gov

(p) 907-235-3160

(f) 907-235-3152

Memorandum 21-018

TO: HOMER CITY COUNCIL & MAYOR CASTNER
THRU: ROB DUMOUCHEL, CITY MANAGER
FROM: BRYAN HAWKINS, PORT DIRECTOR/HARBORMASTER
DATE: JANUARY 14 2021
SUBJECT: KBNERR MOU

The Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (KBNERR) is in the process of updating their partnerships. In 1998, the City of Homer signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ADF&G to “assist the governmental agencies in cooperatively managing the areas within the boundaries of KBNERR.” At that time, ADF&G was assigned by the State as the agency responsible for managing the Reserve.

In November 2019, the UAA Alaska Center for Conservation Science’s Director Matt Carlson contacted the City with a request to update the MOU since it is now the University of Alaska, Anchorage that is responsible for managing KBNERR. The MOU is tied to KBNERR’s Management Plan, which has also been updated. Port and Harbor and Administration received the final draft of the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve’s (KBNERR) on July 6th from KBNERR Reserve Manager Coowe Walker and reviewed the proposed MOU and made comments. City attorneys, JDO Law, have also reviewed the document and made suggested edits. Presented today is the final document encompassing all input from KBNERR and City interests for final council review and approval.

Background:

- Homer City Council has passed legislation over the years supporting the efforts of KBNERR, namely Resolutions 18-027, 14-030, 98-14, and 96-106.
- KBNERR has historically provided beneficial services to the City, including baseline data on coastal bluff erosion currently being used to inform capital improvements to the Seawall; assess nearshore fish prior to harbor expansion; provide trainings on green infrastructure; work on the City's climate action plan; and most recently applying groundwater models for the Bridge Creek reservoir, and exploring options for financing coastal peatlands.

- The Homer Harbor and area slated for expansion are not part of KBNERR's domain. In 2014, the harbor and surrounding areas were excluded from the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area managed by ADF&G after findings that this area should not be precluded from development on account of environmental needs/sensitivity. This important City project will not be hindered as a result of this partnership.

Going Forward:

- The updated MOU provides the opportunity for the City to partner with the UAA system and receive benefits like a free exchange of management, research, and assessment data while making sure KBNERR is in compliance with City regulations.
- Points of interest in the updated Management Plan and possible ways the Port can benefit:
 - long-term datasets that facilitate understanding of regional ecological shifts (such as fish and sea life) over time and serve as a magnet for emerging research and technological approaches. Understanding such shifts is critical in managing coastal and marine ecosystems in ways that promote their resilience and sustainability.”
 - Invitation for attendance to the Coastal Training Program (CTP). “The CTP provides up-to-date scientific information and skill-building opportunities to coastal decision-makers on relevant coastal management issues. Target audiences may vary for each reserve, but generally include local elected or appointed officials, managers of both public and private lands, natural resource managers, coastal and community planners, and coastal business owners and operators.” The City was identified as a priority audience for this program.
 - Partner on research and monitoring projects and enhance place-based research.
 - “...identify lands and waters with high priority for retention.” “Consistent communication and coordination between these entities and KBNERR will facilitate cooperative efforts on land acquisition, management, and potential restoration projects, as well as collaboration on critical resource issues, research needs, and outreach efforts on affected lands.”
 - Provide access to resources held by other partnering agencies including NOAA regional, Alaska Sea Grant, and Alaska Ocean Observing System, Chugach Regional Resource Commission, and Prince William Sound Science Center.
- The Management Plan also offers other benefits that, although they don't directly tie to the port, could benefit the City as a whole such as public education programs and general information exchange and consultation services.

Homer is a regional commerce center and transportation hub for many different industries. Protection and sustainable use of natural resources while balancing the needs of the industries supported by them is paramount. Signing on to partner with UAA in regards to KBNERR will provide helpful information and guidance on topics like land development and coastal erosion. As stated in the MOU, “the Reserve will serve to increase public awareness and understanding of the complex nature of estuarine systems, their values and benefits to humans and the natural world, and the problems the confront them.” The City is not under any

financial obligation under this agreement and may terminate it without penalty.

Recommended Action:

Make a motion of support for the proposed MOU between the City of Homer, University of Alaska Anchorage and Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and authorize the City Manager to execute appropriate documents.

Enclosures:

Draft MOU