



The Kenai River is known for its great salmon fishing. When the sockeyes are running, massive crowds armed with dip nets flock to catch these fresh, silvery fish at the mouth, where the river meets Cook Inlet (photo by USFWS/Heather Fuller).

The Meeks Trail pedestrian bridge provides access to the North Beach (pictured above), and, in so doing, crosses a tributary to the Kenai that provides important habitat for salmon and other native fish. This past January, the City of Kenai started work on a really neat restoration project at this site, funded by USFWS's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program via our Kenai Fish and Wildlife Office.

The Goal? There are several: re-establishing connectivity of the tributary's floodplain to the Kenai River; revegetating the area on either side of the Meeks Trail bridge with native dune grasses; and removing abutment debris from the streambed to improve safety of the pedestrian pathway

The Problem? The existing bridge was built on abutments (made of fragmented concrete fill) that extended well into the stream's floodplain. During high tides, the tide swing stranded salt water upstream in the backwater. As the backwater would evaporate, the salt concentration would increase. This ultimately killed the native dune grasses and made successful replanting efforts impossible.

The Project? The bridge and approximately 60 cubic yards of abutment material were removed, and a new 84' bridge installed (it was donated by YRC). By opening up this bottle necked area, more of the flood plain will be exposed to the low current of the receding tide, allowing for the successful reintroduction of dune grass. The project is not finished—this spring the city will continue with revegetation of the area with native dune grasses so stay tuned!

The new pedestrian bridge (USFWS/Heather Fuller).

