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Haines Wetland Program Underway With Local Advisory Committee Meeting

On February 28th, the Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition's (SAWC) Aquatic Resource Mitigation Coordinator will facilitate a meeting in Haines to discuss community wetlands identification and planning with a local advisory committee. The meeting is hosted by the Chilkoot Indian Association (CIA) and is part of a tribal initiative to develop a public education tool that will inform the public and developers on the presence and value of wetlands in Haines.

The CIA and SAWC have invited Teri Camery, a senior planner and wetland review board lead for the City and Borough of Juneau, to present at the meeting and share with participants the experience of the CBJ in mapping and assessing wetlands in their community.

SAWC works to support local governments and tribes to play an active role informing natural resource management decisions in their communities. In 2011 it was brought to SAWC's attention by various tribes, local governments and the public throughout SE that there is little information available on local wetlands to inform community development.

Wetlands are regulated under the Clean Water Act Section 404 program, which requires land developers that impact or fill in aquatic resources to obtain a permit through the Army Corps of Engineers. The lack of information regarding the location and resource value of local wetlands causes significant issues for entities applying for a 404 permit and for decision makers trying to inform developers as to the best locations to build.

In response to this informational need, SAWC partnered with the Chilkoot Indian Association (CIA) in 2012 to develop a wetland program for Haines. The initial goal of the wetland program is to launch a pilot project for the region in which local professionals are trained in mapping and assessing the wetlands in the Haines town site and Chilkoot watershed.

With this wetlands information collected, the CIA and project partners will convene a local stakeholder advisory committee to support in the development of a public education tool that will be used to inform the community and developers as to



where the wetlands are and what the functions and values are of the wetlands identified. This tool will support informed development and stewardship of aquatic resources in Haines.

This week's meeting will bring together members of the local stakeholder advisory committee. The advisory committee includes decision makers and natural resource managers that have been asked by the CIA to help inform and guide this process. While this meeting is not open to the public, there will be public meetings held in regards to the development of the wetland public education tool and meeting minutes and all shared information are open to the public.

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