

To:  
Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly and Committee Members

From:  
Tiffany Brand - District Manager  
Kenai Soil and Water Conservation District

RE: Gravel Pit Code Revisions

As a proud resident of the Kenai Peninsula since 1996 and land owner for the last 20 years I have watched our communities grow, flourish, and struggle. As a volunteer and professional with many hours and miles spent on our lands, I have also seen the challenge and harm of that development. I foresee the Borough and its encompassed municipalities facing further costly challenges if simple preventative measures are not taken to address the rising issue of noxious non-native (invasive) plant presence and spread. Therefore this letter is written to encourage the Assembly and pertaining Committees to consider adding provisions addressing this issue to the developing Gravel Pit/Material Site Code revision.

The Kenai Soil and Water Conservation District is a long acting public entity with a purpose to promote success and sustainability in our area. In recent years we have operated a successful program entitled "Weed Free Gravel". This certification program involves gravel pits being inspected by a field expert and receiving advice for eliminating any high priority noxious non-native (invasive) plant life present. A Weed Free Gravel Certification is required for some contact work, for example that done near or within federal parks. This program therefore helps qualify those companies for said contracts when they come about. A vital purpose for this requirement is due to the extreme harm and cost that arises from the introduction of invasive plant species. While we are not suggesting the Borough require all pit owners to obtain a certification from this program; we are strongly advising and encouraging provisions be written into code that require pits be inspected, and high priority invasive species be dealt with to prevent inevitable spread.

The Kenai Peninsula, and Alaska as a whole, is unique in many ways; something we are all proud of. In that, operators on the Peninsula travel hundreds of miles, often in one day, from site to site. In addition, our residents also cover a broad area traveling on lands and roadways; not to mention that our highest traffic times on the Peninsula are during the summer season when invasive plant species are at their most viable to spread. Our habitats on the Peninsula are vital to not only our own sustainability, but to the revenue producing industries that thrive here. Invasive plant species threaten those habitats. It is therefore vital that we take action to address and prevent further harm.

One of the most successful measures to prevent the spread of harmful invasive plant species and reduce costly eradications in the future is to target material sites that are moving not only material, but also equipment in and out. This can be done simply and effectively with little effort.

Example Steps for Prevention:

- 1) Have existing and new material sites inspected at the beginning of the season and at least once during mid season depending on the duration of use. Have invasive species identified and eradication methods advised.
- 2) Eradicate invasive plants identified before material is transferred offsite. Examples of simple eradication include burning, burying, and pesticide application. Until invasive plants are eradicated avoid equipment travel and material transfer in the area.
- 3) Survey worksites for invasive plants when bringing equipment and material in or out to avoid transferring back to a main material site. If invasives are discovered contractors may choose to deal with them themselves or request the land owner do so before moving forward.

The damage and spread of invasive plant species is not new to our area, however it is a concern that is rapidly becoming more prevalent as the damage quickly had on a habitat and the costs incurred in the process are substantial. It demands attention and action. The Borough is a vital entity of leadership with the opportunity to instill positive change to address this threat. The Kenai Soil and Water Conservation District and collaborating agencies such as Kenai Watershed Forum and the Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (KP-CISMA) are available to answer questions and offer assistance in the committee's efforts. At Kenai Soil and Water we have a long time local expert in the field that is also available for consultation. With great merit and in effort to preserve the integrity of the lands governed by the Kenai Peninsula Borough I urge the Assembly and its appointed Committees to add provisions to address the threat of invasive plant species into the current Gravel Pit/Material Site Code revisions.

Thank you for your time.

-Tiffany Brand  
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