MEMORANDUM

TO: Grace Merkes, Assembly President
            Members of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

THRU: John J. Williams, Borough Mayor
            Craig Chapman, Finance Director
            Max Best, Planning Director

FROM: Bonnie L. Golden, Grants Manager

DATE: February 7, 2008

SUBJECT: Ordinance No. 2007-19-39: Appropriating $100,000 to the Kenai Watershed
            Forum for restoration projects

The Kenai Watershed Forum (KWF) is dedicated to maintaining the health of the Kenai Peninsula watershed using education and outreach, restoration, and research programs. Because other organizations are focusing their efforts on bank habitat and providing responsible access, KWF has decided to focus its efforts upon restoring fish passage. KWF began its program in 2002 and has completed one to two projects each year since then.

A single road crossing with a bad culvert can prevent fish from reaching miles of habitat. Small tributaries provide the path to salmon nurseries. Juvenile salmon, particularly Coho, migrate up streams. Studies have shown that juveniles that successfully migrate up and down small streams survive better in the ocean. It is important to keep these migration routes free of barriers.

Partnering with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, KWF has been assessing culverts across the entire Kenai Peninsula. It has identified more than 350 roads crossing salmon bearing streams. Half of these have been evaluated and over 70 percent are problematic for the migration of fish. This translates into several hundred miles of habitat being off limits to fish on the Kenai Peninsula.

Each year the borough receives revenues derived from the State's fish tax. Such revenues average approximately $647,000 per year, depending upon the success of the commercial fishing industry for that year. The Administration proposes using a portion of these revenues to support fishery habitat and, thus, support the fishing industries. Enactment of the attached ordinance will provide funding to the KWF to continue its work on restoration projects.