

ABSTRACT

Natural Resources Internship Program

The Kuskokwim River is the second largest river in Alaska, draining an area approximately 130,000 km² and supports an annual average subsistence and commercial harvest of nearly one million salmon (*Oncorhynchus spp.*). The goal of salmon management in the Kuskokwim River is to provide for long-term sustainable fisheries. Historically, Kuskokwim River community members have felt removed from the fisheries management process. This lack of local involvement translated into local community mistrust of both state and federal management agencies. More recently, management actions and monitoring projects are receiving stronger support from Kuskokwim River communities and residents. It has taken specific actions such as the KNA Natural Resources Internship Program and other efforts to build positive working relationships and to foster respectful communication. The Natural Resources Internship Program was incorporated in 1998 by the Kuskokwim Native Association to the George River and Tatlawiksuk River weir projects, and in 2001 to the Kalskag fish wheel project. A total of 128 internships for students ages 14-17 have been provided since program inception. Annually 85% of students have completed their assignments and received the stipend provided by the program. The success of this program has resulted in increased student involvement, student awareness, community support, and local employment opportunities.

Citation: Hildebrand, H. L. and D. E. Orabutt Jr. 2007. Natural resources internship program. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program, Final Report (Study No. 04-309). Kuskokwim Native Association, Aniak, Alaska.