



CONTEST COORDINATOR

Merrill Sikorski, 262-4949

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Soldotna High School student wins President's Environmental Youth Award for Slikok Creek project...**

February 14<sup>th</sup> - Soldotna High School junior Marit Hartvigson has earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's President's Environmental Youth Award (PEYA) for her Slikok Creek Stream Keepers Grate Walk project completed in 2004. Hartvigson won the 2004 Caring For The Kenai (CFK) competition with her idea and went on to permit, fund, and complete the project later that fall. This is the fourth time a former CFK winner has been selected to receive the prestigious PEYA award. CFK is sponsored by Agrium and Chevron through a grant to the Kenai Watershed Forum which annually awards over \$16,000 worth of cash awards for students and their schools that come up with the best ideas to improve the environment or prepare for a natural disaster.

The PEYA program has been in existence for 30 years. Youth of any age from kindergarten through high school across America may enter. Winners from the 10 EPA Regions are invited to participate in the annual awards program in Washington D.C. compliments of the EPA.

When Marit Hartvigson was in sixth grade, she was part of the Adopt-a- Stream program at K-Beach Elementary School. She and her 30 some classmates would hike down to Slikok Creek to do monthly water sampling. Hartvigson, whose brother was a CFK winner that year, noticed that the kids participating in the Adopt-a-Stream program were trampling the banks of the creek, increasing erosion and damage to the habitat. It was then she first thought of building a raised walkway to prevent the problem. Three years later after winning \$1,500 cash for her idea in the CFK contest and encouragement from sponsors, she set to the task building her project. Together with the community support of the Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Alaska State Parks, Kenai Peninsula Borough and local businesses such as Mike's Welding, the permitting and construction was completed in less than 9 months.

Marit and her parents will be recognized at the Wednesday Kenai Chamber of Commerce luncheon when CFK sponsors, volunteers, and the 2005 CFK winner Hannah Watkins will present details and new ideas for the 2006 CFK community partnership.

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