

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH**  
**FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. FWC 22-02**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION DETAILING COMMENTS RELATING TO THE MATANUSKA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION FISHHOOK TO PITTMAN POWER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT.

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WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) was created in 2007 to represent the interests of the borough in the conservation and allocation of fish, wildlife, and habitat; and

WHEREAS, the FWC has been effective in representing these interests to political leaders, government regulators, and boards of fish and game; and

WHEREAS, the MSB has a vested interest in utilizing science-based standards and forward looking policies to help ensure a balance between the critical fish and wildlife resources of the region with other needs of the population, including responsible development; and

WHEREAS, the creation of new transmission line corridors through forested and other vegetated habitat may increase access for both wildlife and hunters so that presently healthy moose populations could be adversely affected; and

WHEREAS, the FWC believes it is important that our citizens have accurate and robust information and opportunities to comment on major projects that could impact fish and wildlife resources that includes the benefits and costs of such projects; and

WHEREAS, the MSB has spent over \$20 million on fish habitat restoration in the borough, replacing more than 100 culverts that have restored over 67 stream miles and 6,224 lake acres of anadromous fish habitat; and

WHEREAS, healthy habitat not only supports our fish and wildlife, but ensures clean water for our communities and creates economic opportunities for Alaskans; and

WHEREAS, economic studies in our region in 2007 and 2017 show the significant positive economic impact returning salmon have on the economy of the MSB, that included \$56 million in direct spending benefits to the MSB in 2017 alone, and there are additional economic benefits from healthy wildlife populations, both of which require adequate and quality habitat locally; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) released the Fishhook to Pittman Power Improvement Project decisional document on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, after soliciting public and agency comment; and

WHEREAS, MEA in their decisional document stated it intended to pursue the Northern Route option, which would cross the Little Susitna River, a major producer of salmon and supports a robust sport angler fishery; and

WHEREAS, Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff submitted concerns about negative impacts to fish and wildlife from illegal fishing activities and off-road vehicles accessing the Little Susitna River area through the proposed Northern Route option; and

WHEREAS, the Little Susitna River also supports a run of

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Chinook salmon, a species that has a recent history of poor run returns creating the need to preserve quality riverine habitats found on the Little Susitna River; and

WHEREAS, off-road vehicle traffic has caused considerable damage to wetlands and anadromous streams in the Mat-Su Borough; and

WHEREAS, the Mat-Su Borough budgeted \$280,000 to repair damage to stream and riparian areas at Wasilla Creek, including installation of bridges for off-road vehicles and barriers to reduce the potential for them to leave the trail; and

WHEREAS, off-road vehicle traffic damage to wetlands and anadromous streams resulted in the need for extensive public engagement and MSB staff time to create and develop management plans for the Knik River and the Jonesville Public Use Areas including an inventory of off-road trails in what is now the Knik River Public Use Area; and

WHEREAS, the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership continues to recognize off-road vehicles as one of the top ten threats to salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Borough.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the MSB FWC submits the following comments regarding the proposed Matanuska Electric Association Fishhook to Pittman Power Improvement Project:

1. The FWC recognizes the importance of choosing development options that minimize impacts to critical fish and wildlife

resources.

2. The FWC shares the concerns that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game expressed about impacts to fish and wildlife from the Northern Route option on the Little Susitna River watershed, particularly by opening up access.

3. The FWC believes impacts to critical fish and wildlife resources should be avoided when possible, and minimized and fully mitigated when not possible within the impacted watersheds.

4. The FWC believes it is extremely difficult to close right-of-way corridors to off-road vehicle traffic and other access.

5. The FWC recommends a route option with less potential impact on fish and wildlife resources in the Little Susitna River watershed.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Fish and Wildlife Commission  
this 21<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2022.

  
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Mike Wood, Chair

ATTEST:

  
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Ted Eischeid, Planner II Staff