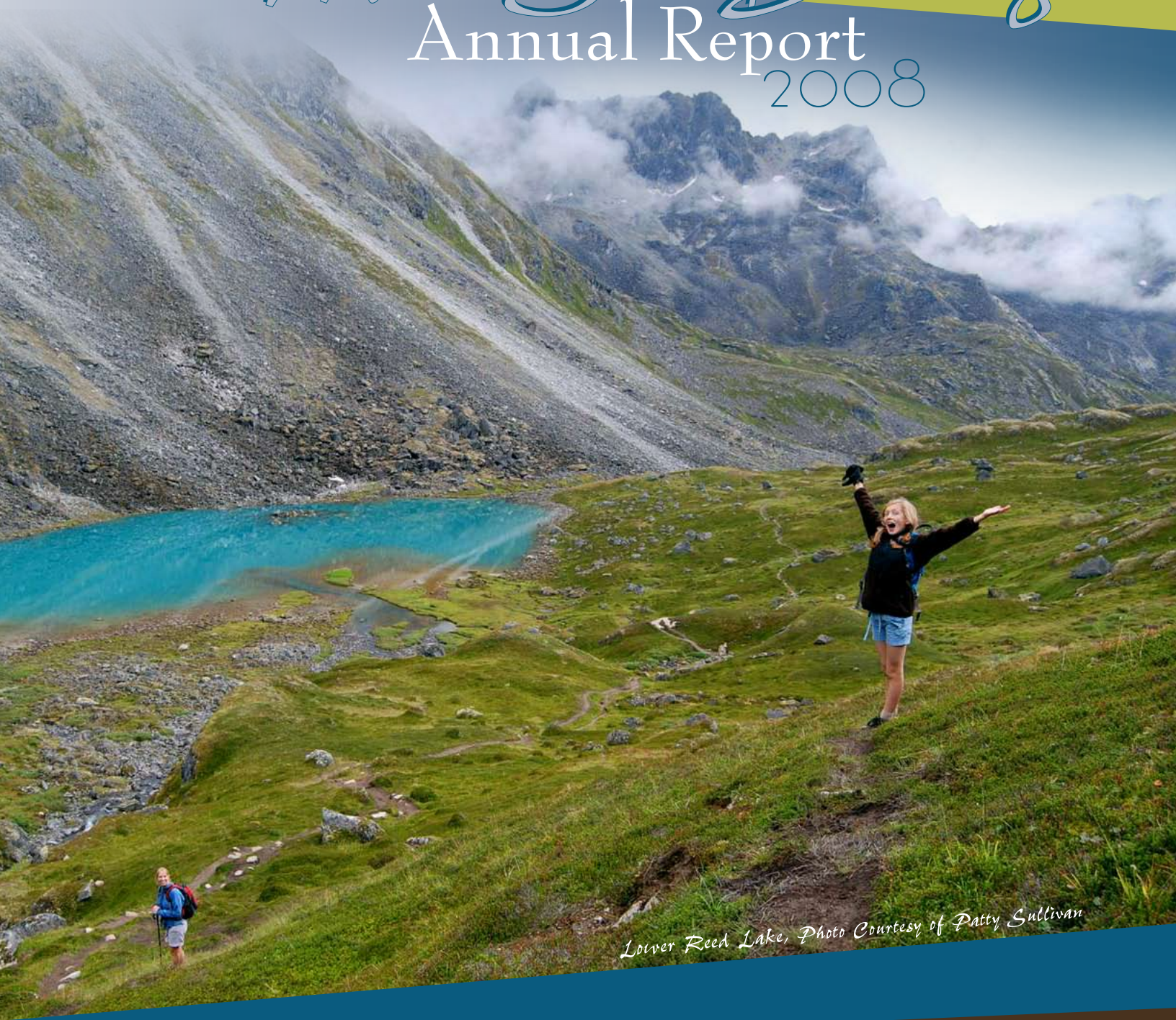


Mat-Su Borough

Annual Report

2008

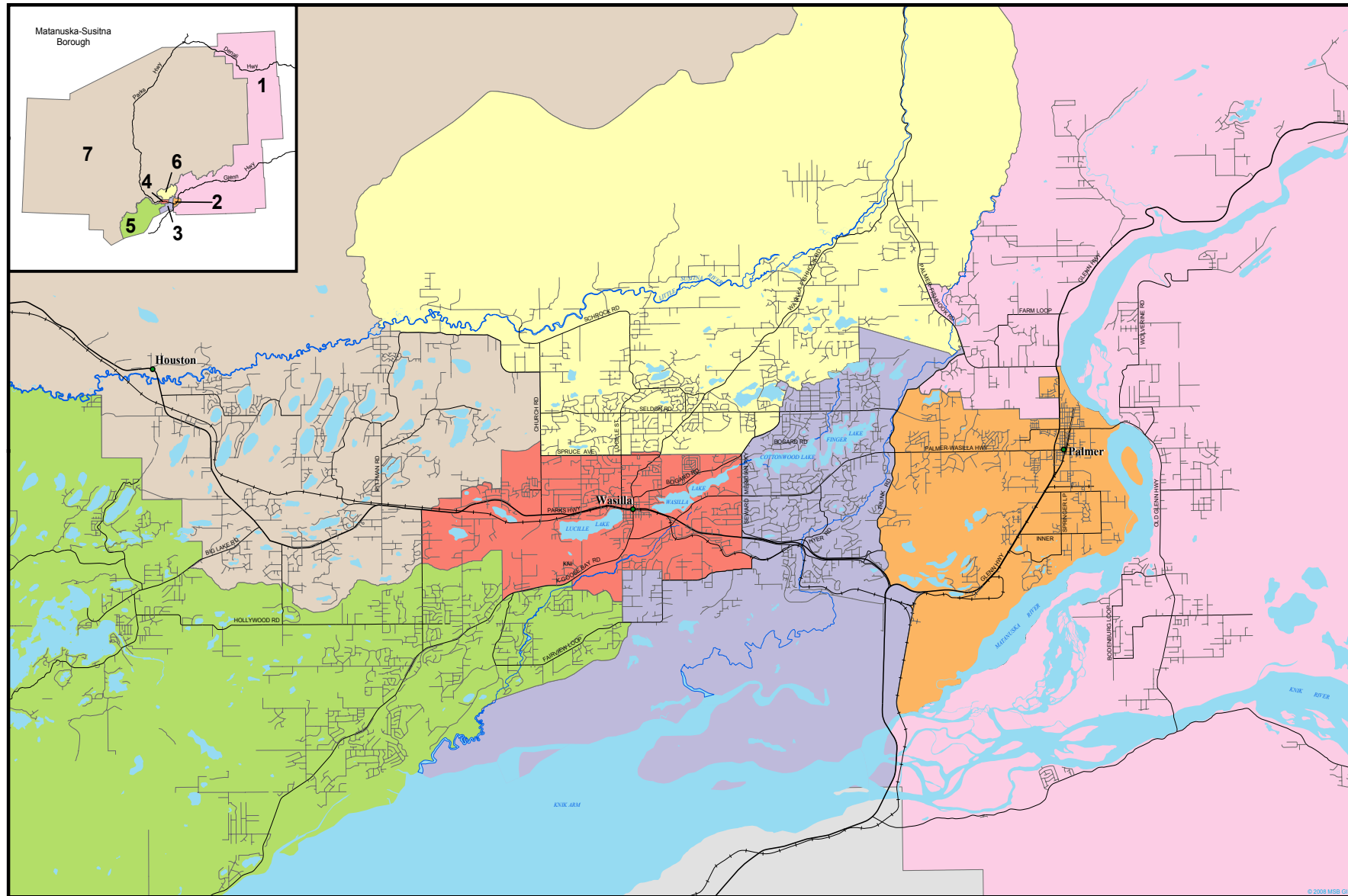


Lower Reed Lake, Photo Courtesy of Patty Sullivan

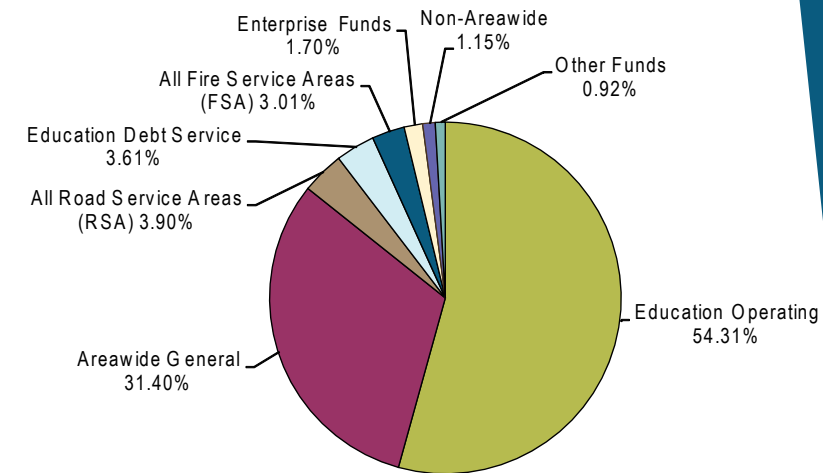


MIGHTY MAT-SU:

stretching 25,000 square miles— that's as big as West Virginia!



Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Revenues



Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Expenditures

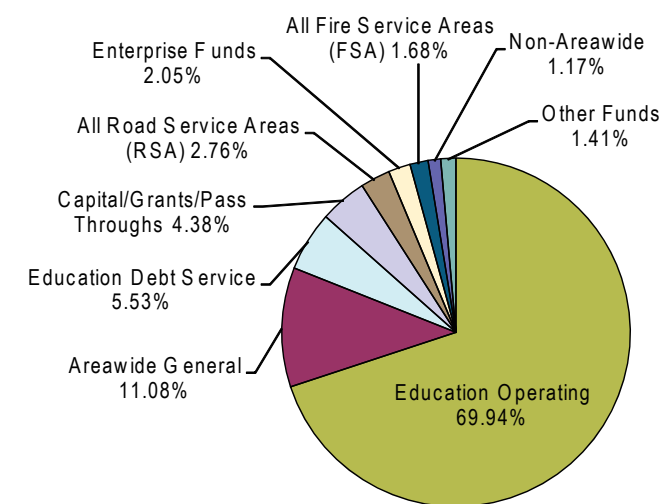


Table of Contents

- Hello to Residents 4
- Awards 5
- Highlighted Services 6-7
- Su Valley High 8
- Economic Development 9
- Fish Protection 10
- Transportation 11

- **CERT** - 700 residents have taken disaster training classes, 30 volunteers are card-carrying members. Nowhere else in the state is CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) so mobilized.

- **SPOT** - Inmates training down-on-their-luck dogs. More than 120 pups have a new life. It's the only program of its kind in Alaska.

- **Susitna Ferry** - the first ice-breaking catamaran in the world—is coming in 2010.

- **LEED** - likely the first LEED-certified schools to be built in the state.
*Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design



Curtis D. Menard, Mayor 376-5855 cmenard@matsugov.us	Lynne Woods, #1 746-4527 aklyne@mtaonline.net	Pete Houston, #2 746-0908 akpete@mtaonline.net	Michelle Church, #3 354-1887 michellechurch@mtaonline.net	Mary Kvalheim, #4 376-5742 marykvalheim@mtaonline.net	Cindy L. Bettine, #5 892-8877 cindybettine@mtaonline.net	Robert F. Wells, #6 746-5585 rwells@mtaonline.net	Tom Kluberton, #7 841-7107 tkluberton@mtaonline.net
--	---	--	---	---	--	---	---

- Mat-Su is the land of:**
- 10,940 snow machines (the registered ones)
 - 11 years of climbing economic growth
 - the highest concentration of public and private airports in the nation
 - world-record heavyweight vegetables: colossal carrot 19 lbs

Mat-Su Borough, A bellwether community



Curtis D. Meward,
Mayor

Dear fellow Mat-Su resident,
What's not happening in the Mat-Su Borough?

A \$300 million Port MacKenzie rail extension, a \$200 million state prison, a Mat-Su ferry that will connect the waters of Upper Cook Inlet—It's all underway and will bring unprecedented jobs and opportunity for us all.

In just 8 years, the Borough population grew by 35 percent.

As promised, Knik Elementary was built in a year to relieve overcrowding at nearby Goose Bay. Groundbreaking got underway for South Palmer Elementary and will get underway this fall at Su Valley High. Both schools will meet the new Green Building standards, saving taxpayers money through energy efficiencies.

Less and less of us—32 percent—are working in Anchorage. Even so, our economies are linked. The Borough is building new roads to reduce congestion and increase safety. With gas at \$4.50/gallon, the Borough is investing in commuter rail, in van- and car-pools, plus a new ferry to create a comprehensive transportation system. In fact, we are working to create a regional transit authority that will drive public transportation well beyond the single-passenger-SUV.

Tourism is an economic force here already. Imagine when the South Denali Visitor Center opens its doors in 2014. The year-round recreation destination is expected to draw more than 250,000 visitors here annually.

Despite a weakening economy, our A+ bond rating is as steady as ever; no small feat when one considers our tax levies have also remained stable.

We have a committed team working on your behalf at the Borough.
Take a look inside.



John Duffy,
Borough Manager

Every spring the Assembly walks a tightrope. Holding down property taxes while meeting increasing demands for public services is not an easy balancing act. In 2008, the Assembly came through again, thanks, in part, to grants from our local Legislators and Governor. The areawide mill rate rose slightly from 9.64 to 10.32. However, a tax credit, obtained by using revenue sharing funds, will offset this slight increase, effectively lowering the mill rate to 9.645. For example, a house assessed at \$220,000 will receive a tax credit for \$150 off the 2009 tax bill. The effective tax rate over the last three years has remained the same in spite of escalating costs and increasing population. No easy task.

At the same time, the commitment to education remains strong: our School District received an increase in funding, up \$1.1 million over last year. Finding dollars for roads and bridges remains the top priority for an Assembly that represents a rapidly growing region with some of the most dangerous roads in the state. Building schools, protecting our fish, sponsoring recycling, and providing proper treatment for our animals are among the successes. Assembly members are actively promoting tourism and agriculture as a means to diversify our economy. They set aside \$300,000 for farmland preservation through future federal matching grants. The Assembly increased bed tax funding to the nonprofit Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau to continue drawing tourists here. A study on infrastructure needs will prove to be a sound investment. Tourists in Mat-Su spent \$201 million last year alone.



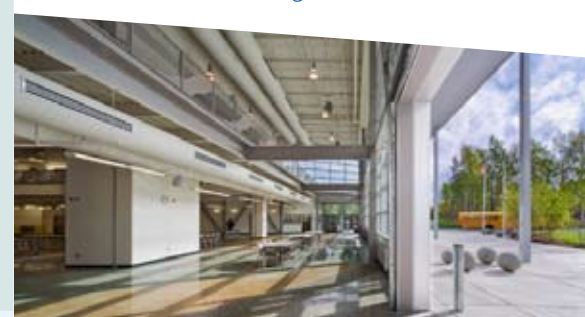
Assembly Members



Smart & BOLD

The Mat-Su Career & Technical High School earned two prestigious design awards. Only 11 national applicants out of 100 were chosen to receive the 2008 Educational Facility Design Citation from the American Institute of Architects. McCool Carlson Green—Architects designed the building. The Borough manages all the construction of new schools. Borough Public Works Director Keith Rountree was impressed with the first award, let alone a second. "McCool Carlson Green has set the standard in designing this remarkable building," Rountree said. "They have positively shown how our school buildings can very much compliment the educational process."

The Career & Tech school also won the Len Mackler Award, which recognizes excellence in design.



Borough GIS stands out on a global scale

GIS Manager Tom Herschbach and his Alaska crew earned an international distinction in 2008. The Borough GIS was one of only 170 chosen from among more than 100,000 worldwide for a Special Achievement in GIS, awarded by ESRI. The company is on the cutting edge of designing and developing geographic information systems technology. This prestigious award was based on the Borough's rapid development and deployment of an enterprise-wide GIS solution to support the migration from the old mainframe onto the new multiple server environment. This new GIS solution will incorporate all of the Borough's information into one tightly integrated system. This will aid in reducing duplicative tasks, while increasing overall productivity. "It's like taking 30-some years of system development and compressing it into a new system in one year," said Tom Herschbach. "The staff pulled together and accomplished the work. I'm very proud of them," Herschbach said. At the same time the GIS crew is adopting cutting-edge technology that would take typical agencies several years to implement.

The office of GIS, pictured front, left to right, Heather Kelley, second row, Leah Jones, Will Sands, Lindsey Finney, third row: Manager Tom Herschbach, Gerry Romanzok, Erick Johnson, & Eric Goudey.



Standing out in the nation Including the public on big decisions

In 2007, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough was singled out from local governments across the nation when it was profiled in American City&County magazine. The Mat-Su earned the Crown Community title for how well staff involved the public during discussions on where to build a state prison. Public meetings and a comprehensive web site helped disseminate information. The site received 44,449 hits in a five-month period.



"We knew we needed to keep our residents involved, get their questions answered, and listen."

- Public Affairs Director Patty Sullivan

What do I get for my taxes ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Animal Shelter expansion, worth the investment

333 investigated bites, 1,934 strays in a typical 12 months. Animal Care staff responds to such calls to keep our streets safe. For too long, the crew has been working in an unsatisfactory building. When Veterinarian Katrina Zwolinski needs to perform a surgical procedure, she lays plywood atop a dog kennel for a makeshift exam table. "I do the best I can," she said. With the shelter upgrade, the Vet will be working in proper facilities. "We're mandated by the voters to provide animal care," said Assemblymember Mary Kvalheim, of Wasilla. "We have to do it and we have to do it right."

The cost: \$14 a year per \$200,000 in assessed value for residents who live outside the cities. Shelter user fees will pick up a third of the remaining costs. The \$5.2 million project will be built by summer 2009. "We are beyond excitement," said Dave Allison, Animal Care Chief. "Our ability to have any proactive programs is limited because



presently there's only space for crisis management. We're stacked in here like cord wood."

Even so, adoption rates are up, above the national average even, and the euthanasia rate is below the national average, (45 percent versus 63 percent). In a 12-month period, 3,660 animals were taken into the Animal Shelter, among those figures: 1,384 animals were adopted, 1,373 animals were euthanized (some at the owner's request), and 611 animals were returned to owners.



celebrating the shelter expansion: Pictured left to right, Assemblymember Mary Kvalheim, Assemblymember Michelle Church, Mayor Curt Menard, Animal Care Boardmember Jim Chesbro, Animal Care Board Chair Mimi Peabody, Veterinarian Katrina Zwolinski, Animal Care Chief Dave Allison, Borough Manager John Duffy.

LIFE-SAVING Response



Borough resident Barry Bunnell and son Corbin Mahnke, 12, give an account of how Borough responders helped save the life of daughter and sister Sierra Mahnke, then 17.

When Barry Bunnell came upon a flattened Honda upside down in the alders off Knik-Goose Bay and Donovan Roads, he recognized instantly that his daughter and her two teenage friends were inside. "I was a police officer in Juneau for 10 years. I knew it was bad," Bunnell said.

"The responders didn't give me any indication of how severe it was. I wouldn't have either," Bunnell said. He was told to get his wife and go to the hospital. Judging by what he saw at the scene—an urgency,

a professionalism—Bunnell trusted the Borough responders. "I am absolutely thrilled with what they did. Knowing what I know, having seen what I've seen as a police officer, she was effectively dead at the scene," Bunnell said, reliving the morning of March 21, 2008, with son Corbin Mahnke at his side. All three teens had to be extricated and had serious injuries. Daughter Sierra Mahnke, then 17, was the worst off: a passenger in the back seat. When the car left the road, it tumbled down an embankment, and spun into trees. Branches broke through glass and likely struck her head, causing a traumatic brain injury. Four vertebrae in her back and the bone around her eye were broken. She was put in a drug-induced coma for two days. Bunnell said he later inquired about the on-scene response. "All indications are they did a fantastic job," he said. He singled out EMT II Jo Hansen's persistence at keeping

his daughter talking, at keeping her fighting. "Hansen showed an unbelievable amount of compassion," he said. All three teens have recovered. Bunnell wanted responders to know how the trauma ended. "She's almost back to 100 percent. Nobody expected that in a year, if ever."

(Responders on scene were: Gene Wiseman, Jo Hansen, Lisa Behrens, Kim Burns, Pete Pevan, and Duane Farrington. From fire/rescue: James Steele, Michael Keenan, Tara Mellon, Charles Cucullu, Richard Boothby, Ken Hutchings, Randy Newcomb, Allen Swett, David Angaiak, Dane Melvin, Jacob Boothby, and Brian Shea.)



"Knowing what I know, having seen what I've seen as a police officer, she was effectively dead at the scene"

- Barry Bunnell

ARGO them across



Helping fight fire, Butte firefighter TJ Kellar shuttled state fire crews through unruly terrain in the Argo.



Photo by: Marty Quass

Photo by: Patty Sullivan

A track vehicle that floats might sound like over-the-top equipment for a fire department, but not for the Butte Fire Service Area, where nearby trails at Jim Creek hold boggy ruts that swallow trucks whole. May no man or woman on a vehicle enter the Knik River area without his or her own winch. Such conditions lay beneath the corroding ice of spring breakup when the Friday Creek Fire broke out March 31, 2008, and the Butte Fire Department was called upon for help.

It wasn't Butte's fire to fight, but they were nervous watching it. "We stayed here all night with a full crew," said Butte Fire Chief

Charles Von Gunten. The first night smoke blew into nearby Palmer. "We had 50 mph winds coming down that Knik River Valley," Von Gunten said. "Between 5 and 7 p.m. the fire traveled a mile. By 10 p.m., it had traveled two miles downriver and was really cooking and blazing," Von Gunten said. They were worried about flying embers and about flames reaching a stand of volatile black spruce at the base of the mountains, which could allow the winds to drive the fire into the Maud Road area.

En route to monitor the remote fire, the vehicle of a firefighter for the state Division of Forestry ran into trouble in the unusual terrain. And more state firefighters would need to pass through. That's when Butte Firefighters and especially TJ Kellar, in the Argo, were called upon to assist over the course of two days. Kellar grew up riding the maze of trails. He understood the conditions. Kellar and the Argo helped shuttle state



fire crews and equipment to the fire scene. He and fellow Butte firefighters showed Forestry crews where best to cross the braided, flowing tributaries of Jim Creek, which change every season. When a Forestry crewmember broke through ice on the trail, Kellar, in the Argo on ice, pulled him out with a winch. "I helped them get a perimeter around the fire," Kellar said. "The rest they did on their own." When the wind shifted and humidity rose, the 200-acre fire fell to its knees in a swamp.

The Argo continues to pay for itself. In its short time here, the Argo has helped save lives on Knik River rescues and back country accidents near Sutton. Most recently it drove up the side of the Butte hiking hill and helped fight a fire. The \$20,000 Argo was purchased through a grant sponsored by Alaska Rep. Bill Stoltze. Its \$6,175 tracks and accessories were paid for by local taxes of the Butte Fire Service Area.

3 mechanics, 198 vehicles, etc.

It's not popular to mention, but the plain fact is some Borough employees need to clone themselves. Ken Crump, Henry Schreiber, and Dale Butscher repair and service 198 vehicles etc. That's 66 per man. The three mechanics are Fleet Maintenance for the Emergency Services Department. Ambulances, command vehicles, heavy rescue rigs, tankers, pumpers, support vehicles, ladder trucks, engines, boats, trailers, brush trucks, snow machines, a six-wheeler and an Argo are in their hands. And not all of them are in the shop. Ambulances are stationed all the way up the Parks Highway to mile 115, Trapper Creek, and then up the Glenn Highway to Lake Louise, mile 160. "I have 20 ambulances and they zig-zag up the highway to Lake Louise," Schreiber said. "Not only is their load heavy, but they think fast on their feet, oftentimes so a \$337,000 piece of equipment is pulled from the deep freeze and driven back into the warmth of a garage bay. Like the time when Crump was called out to a stranded tanker with 2,000 gallons of water on board. It was 20 below and the air brakes were locked up. Crump took off his gloves and nursed the 34,000-pound rig back to the bay with only six pounds of brake pressure. Don't worry, he took back roads and had an escort. "He rolled into the station just as I got the doors up," said Lt. Tawnya Hightower. "He was the hero. He saved us," she said. Fleet Maintenance must be doing a good job. Several of the vehicles are more than 20 years old and still humming under the duress of emergency response in the north. Temporary worker, mechanic Howard O'Neil, helps with preventive maintenance but his hours are limited.



Photo by: Patty Sullivan

What do I get for my taxes ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Borough delivers on economic development



RISING FROM THE ASHES

Photos by Dennis Brodigan

On June 5, 2007, flames shot through the roof of Su Valley High School as bystanders watched in dismay. The school, 14 miles south of Talkeetna, was in the midst of getting a very hard-won structural upgrade and new roof for \$5.2 million. Responders from the Borough and beyond came to save

Borough and community rally behind Su Valley High

it. Firefighters poured more than 500,000 gallons of water on the fire and actively fought the blaze until 3 a.m. in an effort to save the building. Only after two backdraft explosions, did firefighters retreat. It was one of the largest structure fires fought in the Mat-Su. After the loss, the community rallied with the support of Assemblymember Tom Kluberton to keep their kids nearby while a new school was built. The first



Su Valley High will be the first LEED-certified high school in the state. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The school will be an energy efficient and sustainable building.

hurdle: finding an interim school. Borough staff worked expeditiously on all fronts. Economic Development Director Dave Hanson negotiated a contract with the Upper Susitna Seniors Inc. for a temporary school site nearby. Project Manager Bud Lovel in Public Works led the charge to contract and complete more than \$1.4 million in required improvements to the building and lot in less than sixty days. The next hurdle: getting the new \$17 million school built in a year. The Borough remains committed to opening school doors in fall 2009.

Photo by Paddy Sullivan

BENEFITS TO THE STATE RUN DEEP



The 30 to 45 miles of track planned to Port MacKenzie are clearly among the state's most promising opportunities.

"This high-speed freight train to our Port is a legacy project that's going to benefit the state and help diversify our economy."

-Borough Economic Development Director Dave Hanson

The rail link will give a \$100 million boost, through reduced transport costs, to the most important project of our time: the natural gas pipeline. Stimulated by the less expensive transportation, three new mines are expected to provide up to \$18 billion in revenues to the state through taxes and royalties. The line will support creation of significant new industries such as cement production. Jobs and cheaper fuel will boost the Fairbanks area. Just building the \$300 million extension will create many jobs and businesses in the Mat-Su. The route is not yet chosen. The environmental impact statement is due in March 2009. The State directed \$17.5 million to the project for preliminary engineering and initial rights-of-way acquisition.

350 prison jobs coming to Point MacKenzie

Groundbreaking is expected in spring of 2009 for the largest building project in recent state history. Trees are being cleared now, and a design/build team will be picked in the fall of 2008 for the Point MacKenzie Correctional Center. When the 1,536-bed prison goes in, the region will be charged with the influx of 600 to 700 construction jobs and 350 prison jobs. Occupancy: 2012.

The prison will be located at the corner of Alsop Road and Point MacKenzie Road, some nine miles from the Port MacKenzie dock. The anticipated cost to design and build the prison is more than \$200 million. Borough Purchasing Officer Russ Krafft is managing the contract solicitation process.

"This is one of the largest vertical construction projects that's ever taken place in Alaska. Two groups formed a joint venture specifically for this project. It's like building an entire university campus at once."

-Russ Krafft



Point MacKenzie correctional center. Occupancy: 2012

Battling beavers and ice, all in a day's work

When beavers dammed up 20 feet of a five-foot wide culvert beneath Willow Creek Parkway a few years ago, it was up to the road maintenance employees to dig it out. A track hoe picked out the debris. "When we finally got the water to flow, it blew the plug out about 30 feet past the end of the pipe," said Road Maintenance Superintendent Mike Garner.

"The ground shook enough that we were concerned that we might lose the road, but we didn't." -Mike Garner

Winter chinooks and spring breakup bring ice. All at once, hundreds of culverts in the Mat-Su need thawing, otherwise our roads flood.. A small crew in arctic gear and chest waders gets to work on a steam thaw truck, usually at a manic pace. Some culverts, such as two near Port MacKenzie, take six hours to thaw. If the work isn't done, water backs up and runs over the road, turning it into a hockey rink.



Technician Mark Cowley wades through water to thaw a frozen culvert.

Photo by Kerin Bantle



Photo by Paddy Sullivan

Swimming instructor Paul Paris teaches second-grader Eslie King

Kick Kick Kick!

In May, swim classes at the Wasilla Pool were in such demand for the youngest swimmers that 18 people filled a waiting list. "We had to open yet another class," said Jill Irsik, Wasilla Pool Manager. "We bus kids from as far as Talkeetna, Sutton and Knik-Goose Bay." This year's numbers are surging over last year's for Wasilla and Palmer pools. In 2008, 25,851 people kicked and fluttered through lessons at Wasilla, and at Palmer, 17,472. The total of lessons is up 17,413 lessons over last fiscal year due to a new home school program, and not all the numbers are in yet. So far, 103,385 visitors enjoyed the water.

250,000 visitors a year Revealing the other face of Denali in 2014

In a single year, visitors spend \$101 million in the Mat-Su Borough. When the South Denali Visitor Center opens its doors, tourists are projected to spend an additional \$44 million in the Mat-Su each year. Visitors will come for the hiking, the wildlife, the view. Outside the center's panoramic windows the sheer scale of Denali and the Alaska Range will be revealed. At this \$30 million center, the road will remain open when snow begins to fly, providing a year-round recreation destination. The project is building momentum. In 2008, the State funded \$8.9 million for the access road.



Photo by Alaska State Parks

Driving Change

TANGIBLE RESULTS FOR SALMON DRAW NATIONAL NOTICE

The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership earned the U.S. Department of Interior's 2007 Cooperative Conservation Award. The group is made up of more than 30 members that share a vision for healthy growing communities and thriving fish and wildlife in the Mat-Su. The Salmon partnership is a pilot project drawing significant notice because of its tangible results. The Borough, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and others have teamed up to restore more than 15 salmon crossings by installing fish friendly culverts beneath our Mat-Su roads. In the Mat-Su, salmon are swimming in some places where they haven't been for a long time. In 2006, the habitat restoration project revived salmon in Moose Creek near Chickaloon Village, which is also a member.



Protecting Mat-Su fish stocks



Kara VanDongen caught this 53lb King at the mouth of Lake Creek, where it enters the Yentna River, in June 2006. Dad, Marc, beams with pride.

Alarming fewer salmon have been returning to the Susitna, Yentna, and Fish Creek drainages in recent years, and the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Sportsmen's Committee isn't stopping at simple answers for why.

"I am very proud of the work that they have done." Mayor Curt Menard said. "It definitely is a step in the right direction for making the fish population in the Upper Cook Inlet more abundant."

The 7-member group is made up of sportsmen, an outdoors writer, and a former board of state fisheries member, among others. The Sportsmen's Committee has undertaken the problem of how to get fisheries managers to listen.

Among the concerns: commercial fishermen in Cook Inlet have record catches, while upstream in the Susitna drainage, salmon returns have been weak and restrictions have been regularly placed on sportsfishermen.

The Borough Assembly supported them in a resolution, which asks the Palin Administration and the Board of Fisheries to list sockeye and chum salmon in the Susitna, Yentna, and Fish Creek as "stocks of concern" under Alaska's Sustainable Salmon Fisheries Policy.

Under a "stock of concern" designation, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game must introduce a program of watchful management.

Led by Committee Chair and Assemblymember Tom Kluberton, group members represented the Mat-Su's interests for 12 days at the Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings.

Mat-Su salmon are appearing in reduced numbers because of: interception along the way through the commercial corridors; water quality in Mat-Su water bodies; and, predators, namely pike.

Two breakthroughs were made. The Board of Fisheries granted the stock of concern designation for sockeye.

And later, the Alaska State Legislature approved a Joint Cook Inlet Salmon Task Force, which includes several Legislators from the Upper Cook Inlet.

"It will require years of ongoing study and careful management to regain the health of our stocks," said Assemblymember Tom Kluberton. "Fortunately, our State Legislators have stepped up to support the effort."



Photos by: Bill Rice, USFWS



Culture change underway

Last year, the Borough employees, Borough Manager, and the Assistant Borough Manager agreed to adopt the High Performance Organization principles. The HPO model is a focused, disciplined process, which requires that the old "top-down" form of management be replaced with decision-making methods that allow employees at every level to participate, actively and creatively, in determining how work gets accomplished.

With more than 190 employees trained and more undergoing classes each quarter, we're on our way to improving our internal systems and processes, so that our work becomes more effective, efficient and satisfying.

"One of the best things policymakers can do to benefit residents is to ensure that their tax dollars are used efficiently and effectively. The integrated management principles in High Performance Organizations will ensure that departments will work in unison for the benefit of our Borough."

-Deputy Borough Mayor Lynne Woods

Borough Transportation



The Transformation of Upper Cook Inlet

Susitna Ferry, landing near you

Workers and contractors in Anchorage will need an affordable and convenient means of travel to the new prison construction site at Point MacKenzie, and later, prison employees will want the same. Members of the Tyonek community are looking for a way to get to Anchorage that is more affordable than flying. Sportsfishermen from Fairbanks are eager to cut hours off their drive by catching the ferry to Kenai. It's a wonder these waters weren't connected by ferry service before. On every trip, 114 passengers and 20 automobiles can be transported.

The ferry is more than 40 percent finished. It is expected to be launched in 2009 and delivered in 2010. The Motor Vessel Susitna is one of the most complex commercial ships to be built in the last 100 years. It's the first ice-breaking catamaran and the first ship to transition from a deep draft, high speed SWATH hull to a shallow draft barge—and back (SWATH: small waterplane Area Twin Hull). It's also the ship the Navy is seeking to keep our country safe. Unlike any other vessel, the ship is able to balance three critical performance characteristics: speed, range, and payload.

Alaska Ship & Drydock is building the ferry in Ketchikan as a prototype for the U.S. Navy. Taxpayers will receive a double value out of the project. Prototypes always end up on scrapheaps. This ship will lead a second life as a commercial ferry, transporting thousands of passengers to jobs and recreation. The ship will also provide the Navy with scientific data on operations and maintenance, something they've never gotten before.



Blocks and modules waiting to be moved to the pad for ship erection.

When the ferry lands at Point MacKenzie, it will give snow machiners fast access to hundreds of miles of trails in the Lower Susitna Valley. In the summer, sportsfishing enthusiasts will have convenient access to the salmon rivers too.

Ferry prices are still not set, but as a goal fares will be less expensive than driving costs. We invite you to relax on the Susitna and take in Alaska views from the water.

Teaming up in a Regional Transit Authority



Photo by: Stephanie Wheeler, ARR

In June 2008, Mat-Su Borough Mayor Curt Menard (right) and Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich (left) signed an agreement to develop a Regional Transit Authority to better serve the 14,000 people who regularly commute between the Mat-Su and Anchorage. Commuter rail is among the discussed transportation modes. Alaska Railroad Board Chair John Binkley looks on.



Photos by: Brad Swartz

Smoother Connections

Building a second east-west corridor

The \$2.4 million Seldon Road Extension allows drivers to continue a mile west to Church Road, bypassing many congested roads.

"It's the first arterial built by the Borough since 1996,"

- Jim Rowland, the Borough's project manager

Our State Legislators funded the project. "This is a great project and will reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, while enhancing traffic safety for years to come," said Borough Manager John Duffy.

The project is a key component of a major west-to-east corridor that will ultimately connect the Glenn Highway to the Parks Highway near Houston. The eastern leg is the \$40 million Bogard Road Extension. After lengthy hearings and debate, Assemblymembers agreed on a route in 2008.

MASCOT on the move

Before the pain at the gas pump hit, the Mat-Su Borough was already supporting the public bus system, MASCOT, Mat-Su Community Transit. In 2007, the Assembly dedicated \$125,000 as a match for a grant that will purchase five new buses and a driving simulator. Two are already here. The investment is paying off as more people climb aboard the fleet of 11 buses as a result of high gas prices. In a two-month period in 2008, ridership rose 28 percent on MASCOT buses between the Mat-Su and Anchorage. MASCOT is considering starting a direct commuter route between Wasilla and Palmer.

This 2008 annual report was produced by Public Affairs Director Patty Sullivan (907) 745-9577,
to give Mat-Su residents information about Borough issues.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Strikingly Different

Photo by: Bryan Watson

Design work by: Annie Brace, Land Design North

