



Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Annual Report 2009

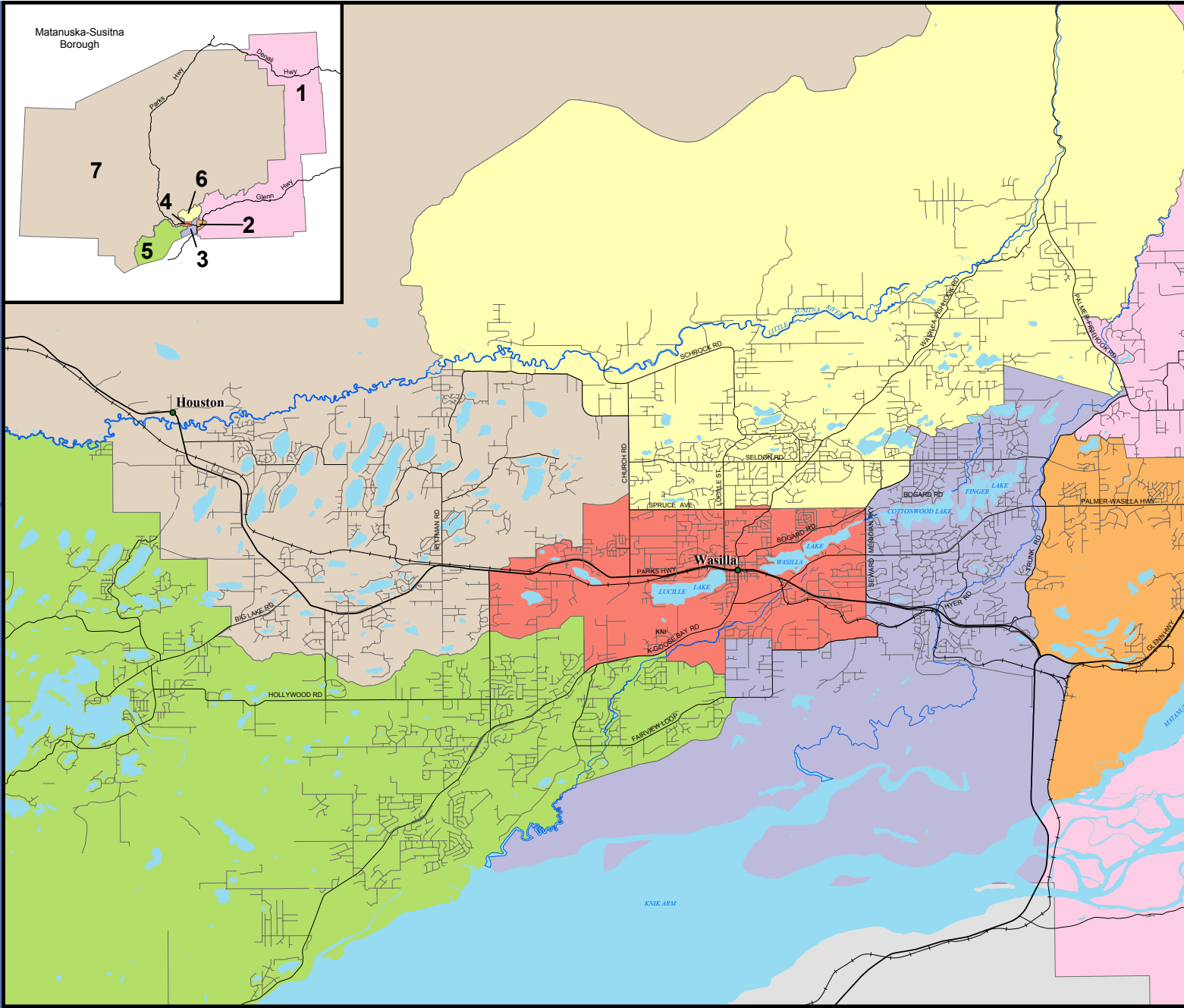


Photos by: Patty Sullivan John Borland

Cedric Gohnig

Strikingly Different

MIGHTY MAT-SU – more than



Talis Colberg, Mayor
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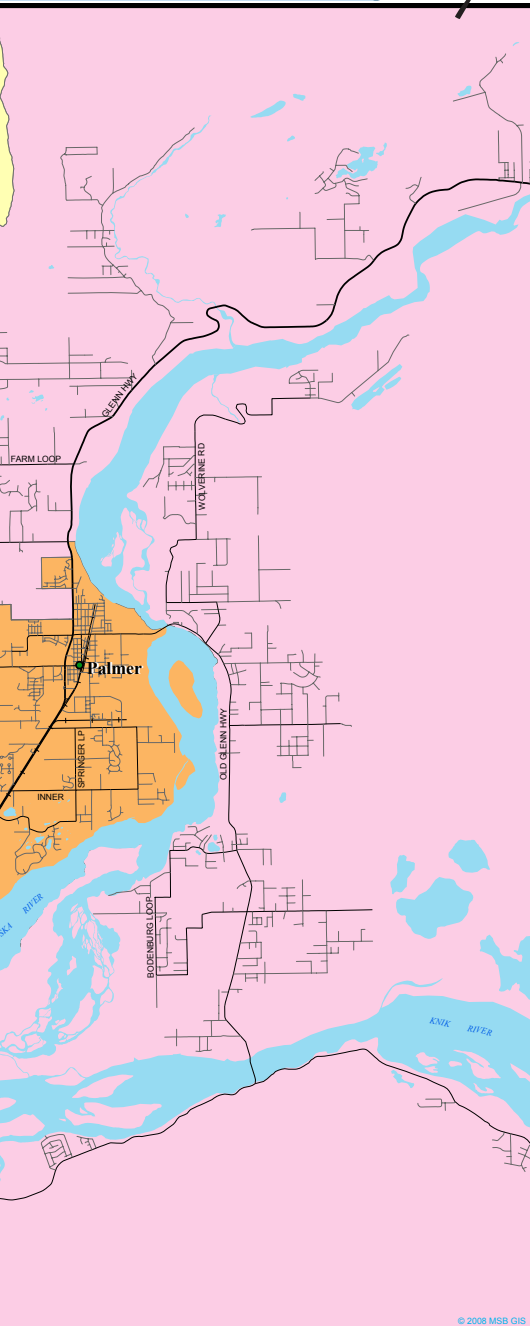


Pete Houston, #2
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Michelle Church, #3
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n 25,000 square miles Nearly the size of Ireland!



Holding the Mill Rate Steady

The Assembly recognized that there would be local ramifications from the strained national and global economy. Fastidious spending cuts produced a lean budget for fiscal year 2010. The Assembly held the mill rate steady, despite increasing expenses and demands for services in Alaska's fastest growing community.

Agriculture is our community's heritage but also needs to be our future.

Growing our own food isn't just about aesthetics, it's about security for the state.

*Michelle Church
Assemblymember*

The new areawide mill rate is 9.98. The non-areawide mill rate is 0.429.

Some \$3.9 million in State revenue sharing funds from local Legislators and Gov. Palin helped further reduce the tax burden on local property owners.

Our school district was able to receive a \$384,477 increase over last year.

Assemblymembers are actively promoting tourism, agriculture, natural resources, and recreation as a means to diversify our economy.

My goal is to grow the population of the Borough without growing its government and to provide the same level of services without any added tax burden.

**Mark Ewing
Assemblymember**



Mark Ewing, #4
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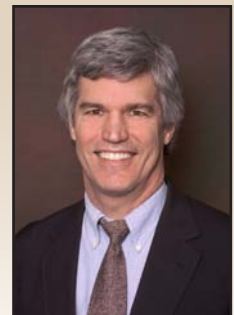
Cindy L. Bettine, #5
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A Letter to the Community



Dear Mat-Su residents,

We think we have it all.

In a striking Alaska setting our amenities are growing: the first Target and Walgreens in Alaska chose to come here. Chili's, Sportsman's Warehouse, & Sports Authority, came one after the other. Independent businesses such as Cubby's market, and tasteful restaurants such as Turkey Red, and The Red Beet have opened their doors.

The Borough economic base continues to expand and diversify. Our bond ratings remain solid at Standard & Poor's-AA, Fitch Ratings-A+ and Moody's-A1 — no small feat in tough economic times. New activities at the Port are generating revenue and returning profit on 6 years of infrastructure investment. The coming industry via the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and the barge dock expansion will help reduce the burden of taxes on the homeowner by diversifying our tax base.

Goose Creek Correctional Center is under way. The \$240 million project creates up to 1,000 direct and indirect jobs in the Borough at a time when the rest of the country is searching for economic stability.

We're breaking ground this summer on a truly state-of-the-art recycling center. The Fred & Sara Machetanz Elementary school is not only an energy efficient new school but a magnificent building for learning. Work on the Susitna Valley Jr/Sr. High will be complete by Christmas. All three structures are LEED certified, upholding high standards in sustainability.

In the past decade our population grew 39 percent. We're still growing. There's much more to tell inside.

-John Duffy, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Manager

Curtis D. Menard,

*Former Mayor of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough
October 2006 - March 2009*

Mayor, you often entered a room at the Borough chuckling, ready for a challenge. In the lows of a night meeting, you interjected a dose of humor and lifted the dull room into laughter. When you fell into storytelling it was often to poke at your own misadventure,—an undersized boat tossed—with wife—in rough seawater, a fishwheel overflowing with reds while you slept like a teenager in a truck; your missing arm you fondly called “the hook.” You addressed everyone with respect: CEOs and kids alike. You led the Borough with grace and advanced us. Time passes, but you are sorely missed.



Magnet for Volunteers

The Borough Animal Care Shelter has come a long way from the days of surgery performed on a makeshift plywood exam table.

A 14,000-foot expansion has brought light and space and goodwill to what was a sick building. A classroom, three adoption rooms, a designated grooming area, and a commercial-grade laundry room are part of the upgrades. Three times the holding capacity for animals makes adoptions more likely. An artful feline mural with windows invites hallway viewing of cats beyond the wall in the cattery. The renovation of the existing 7,600 square foot structure will be complete in July.

Volunteers are buzzing about the busy new shelter, putting in loads of hours. Ashley Kjelland, 16, has volunteered 200 hours in a single month. "It makes a really big difference to see animals coming in and out, preferably out. It makes me feel better to make their stay more comfortable." Kjelland is among a group at the shelter who has earned the Gold in the Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

Just nine volunteers were on board when Volunteer Coordinator Sue Fujimoto was hired. Eight months later, 65 are active with another 30 wanting to learn how. Fujimoto says the community also gains. Kids with special needs, a woman with Alzheimer's, have noticeably gained more confidence after caring for dogs and cats.

The community interest in the attractive new shelter and the stepped-up outreach has helped lower the rate of euthanasia to half the national average.



ZONING CODE UPDATE

A BETTER WAY TO GROW

The Borough's first television commercials were produced in-house by a team of four. The commercials were part of a larger public outreach effort on the challenges of growth in the Mat-Su. Subsequent commercials addressed the rewrite of Title 17, the zoning code. In four Borough community surveys residents consistently said they want better ways to manage growth and development. The Borough Planning Division has committed to undertake this effort and is leading the public review of our zoning regulations. Workshops, review meetings and hearings on the proposed ordinance will take place before adoption. Tell us how you want to grow and visit www.zoningupdate.info/



Willow Musher Erin McLarnon tells the camera, "How will I run my dogs when there are fewer trails tomorrow?" The commercial producers were: Project Manager & Planner Lauren Krueger, Planner Emerson Krueger, Videographer Stefan Hinman, and Public Affairs Director Patty Sullivan. Photo by Patty Sullivan

MASCOT

Two new 30-passenger buses for MASCOT, Mat-Su Community Transit, provide more seats for commuters between the Mat-Su and Anchorage. A \$500,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration and a \$125,000 matching grant from the Borough paid for four new buses and a driving simulator.

Visit the MASCOT website at www.matsutransit.com.

562-7665 Anchorage Share-A-Van

The Mat-Su now has 4 Share-A-Ride vans thanks in part to federal grants. The Borough is partnering with Anchorage in a regional van pool program.

Public Works

The Borough Public Works Department stood out in the state for its household hazardous waste program, earning an award of excellence from the Alaska Municipal League.

"The facility allows our division to provide a significantly higher level of service to residents."

—Greg Goodale
Solid Waste Division Manager



Port MacKenzie

From China to the Mat-Su

In April the Clipper Tivoli arrived from China. Workers unloaded the vessel round the clock. Some 16,000 tons of cement and 3,000 tons of rebar moved across the dock. The Clipper Tivoli paid \$35,000 in wharfage and dockage fees. Another cement ship is expected in fall 2009.

Earlier in the year, the Borough sold 451,000 tons of gravel, generating wharfage and dockage fees as well as royalties, about \$600,000.

“It’s another expansion here at Port MacKenzie,” said Port Director Marc VanDongen. “And other commodities will follow like fuel and limestone.”

VanDongen said this fiscal year the young Port turned a profit. “Once we get our rail line in, I expect significant net profits, in the \$5-\$10 million a year range, here at Port MacKenzie.”



Each supersack of cement weighs 3,300 pounds. Cranes on the ship hoisted twelve sacks onto each flatbed. The loads left the dock about every seven minutes and made their way to a warehouse up the hill.

Photos by Patty Sullivan/MSB



Benefits keep adding up

The Port MacKenzie Rail Extension will give more than a \$100 million boost to the most important project of our time: the natural gas pipeline. With a shorter rail distance to tide water, the transport costs will be lower at Port MacKenzie, resulting in tremendous savings in construction costs. Shipping pipe and heavy materials north on the Port MacKenzie line will save

producers \$122 million over going through Seward, \$107 million over Anchorage, and \$111 million over Whittier. The route to the Port, to date, has not been chosen. An Environmental Impact Study is expected in summer 2009.

Susitna Ferry connecting Upper Cook Inlet in 2011

The Susitna Ferry will promote economic development in the Upper Cook Inlet. Tyonek is already on board and ready to ride as regular passengers to Anchorage. Fairbanks sports fisherman want to ride to Kenai.

“The Navy gets to test new technology and we get to keep this one-of-a-kind ship.”

– John Duffy, Borough Manager

- M/V Susitna can haul freight, more than 20 vehicles and 100 passengers.
- The world’s first ice-breaking catamaran with a variable draft for landing.

ww1.matsugov.us/ferry



Photo by Alan Coffin
Deputy Mayor Lynne Woods and Assemblymember Pete Houston visit the Ketchikan shipyard.

It's about jobs

“Im pleased to say—in this time of economic crisis—we have a major construction project underway that is providing many jobs to Mat-Su residents.”

– **John Duffy,**
Mat-Su Borough Manager

It's about change

“We protect the public, we don't exist to put people in jail.”

– **Joe Schmidt**
Commissioner AK
Dept. Corrections

Up to 1,000 jobs

375 permanent
Corrections jobs

650 Construction
jobs over three
years, \$100 million
payroll



Photo by Cynthia Oistad/RISE Alaska

“At 435,000 square feet, the \$240 million project is the largest building construction project for the state in recent history.”

– **Russ Krafft,**
project manager with Mat-Su Borough

“It may sound odd to people for us to say we are excited about building a prison. ... It's no ordinary prison. As Commissioner Schmidt has said so many times to me, his greatest hope is that some day he'll be out of a job...Some day the prisons and the programs and the rehabilitation efforts will truly pay off in the form of reclaimed lives and character of those incarcerated.”

– **Governor Sarah Palin**

The project will also return tens of millions of dollars to the Alaska economy.

Local landowners benefit because the project is developing infrastructure in the region. Gas and telecom fiber are now available. Also a wastewater treatment plant will be developed, which could provide utility service to the public in the future.



www.matsugov.us/prison



www.matsugov.us

The prison site off Alsop Road is 330 acres with some 90 cleared acres. The site is located about nine miles from the dock at Point MacKenzie. The medium-security facility will have 1,536 beds for male prisoners.

Mat-Su Borough ~ We have it all 7

Building a strong Future

The FIRST in Alaska

The Fred & Sara Machetanz Elementary School is the first LEED-certified school in Alaska. LEED is Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design. The standards incorporate sustainability and efficiencies into the operation of the building. The 51,000-square foot school is a magnificent space. A 39-foot ceiling in the multi-purpose area lifts to a large metal fan. Natural sunlight enters through high windows. Motion-activated sensors turn on and off lights near sinks. Banisters curve with the fluid room. Collaborative learning spaces, connected with the Ethernet, make the hallways useful for independent students on computers. A moveable wall also transforms the large open space into a private stage. In-floor heating is in the gym and kindergarten classes. Toilet handles flush up or down depending on the water demands. An elevator saves 2,000 square feet over the ramps of older schools.

The new prototypical elementary school design is focused on the learning environment and incorporation of technology, building system efficiencies, and collaborative learning."

—Bob Bechtold, project manager, Borough Public Works Department



Photo by Patty Sullivan/MSB

SCIENCE OLYMPIAD TOP ACHIEVERS



Photo by Carol Taylor

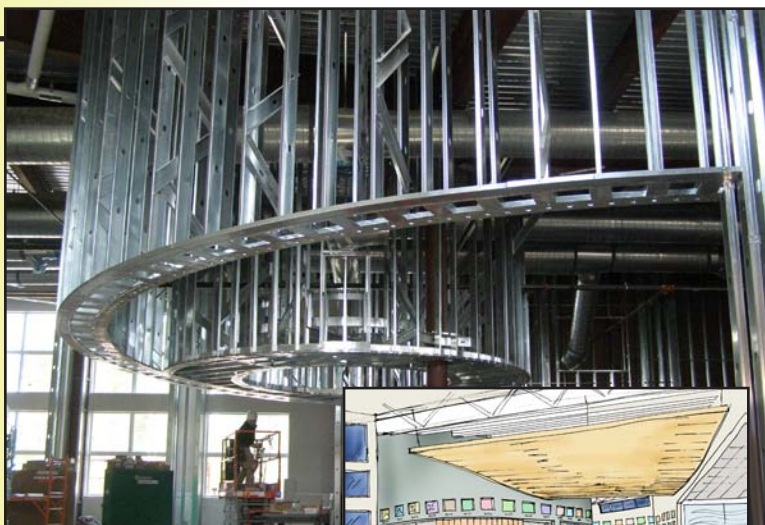
Teeland Middle School students traveled to Augusta, GA in the National Science Olympiad.

Leif Kilkenny Johnson is a 2009 National Presidential Scholar from Alaska, an honor reserved for the top students in the nation.

Two students from each state are selected and are expected to be presented their gold medals by the President. Candidates for the honor must have scored in the top 3,000 students nationwide (the top 1/5th of 1 percent) on the SAT and ACT exams.

Johnson has previously represented Alaska at the national level five times.

All of Johnson's educational career has been in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District.



Robert Scott
— Project Manager



When the doors open this winter, Susitna Valley High School will replace a school lost to fire in June 2007. The 50,578 square-foot school will have a unique foyer. A glass and stone veneer hearth seating area on embedded boulders will give a rustic lodge feeling. The building incorporates many energy saving and 'green' building materials, striving for conformance to LEED standards for the Mat-Su Borough's first platinum-rated building. Su Valley High will accommodate classrooms with flexible teaching areas, a welding lab, a semi-circular media center and several applied science and lab areas. A new drive with lights and a new lit walkway have been added to improve pedestrian safety.

VERTICAL LIFT & Backcountry Glide

Ski lifts and Nordic trails at a regional Hatcher Pass Ski Area are getting closer than ever. The Borough is working on building a road to both sites.

Snow sports already happen at Hatcher's. The ski area will bring avalanche safety, restrooms, food service, a warming place, snow sports rentals, lessons, snowmaking and night-lighting. The two Alpine lifts will give downhill skiers and boarders significant vertical

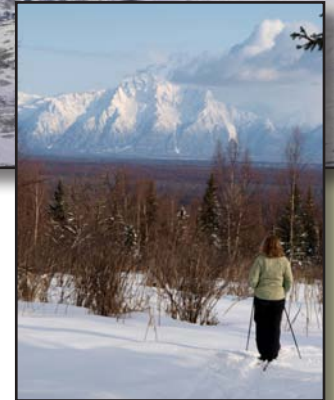
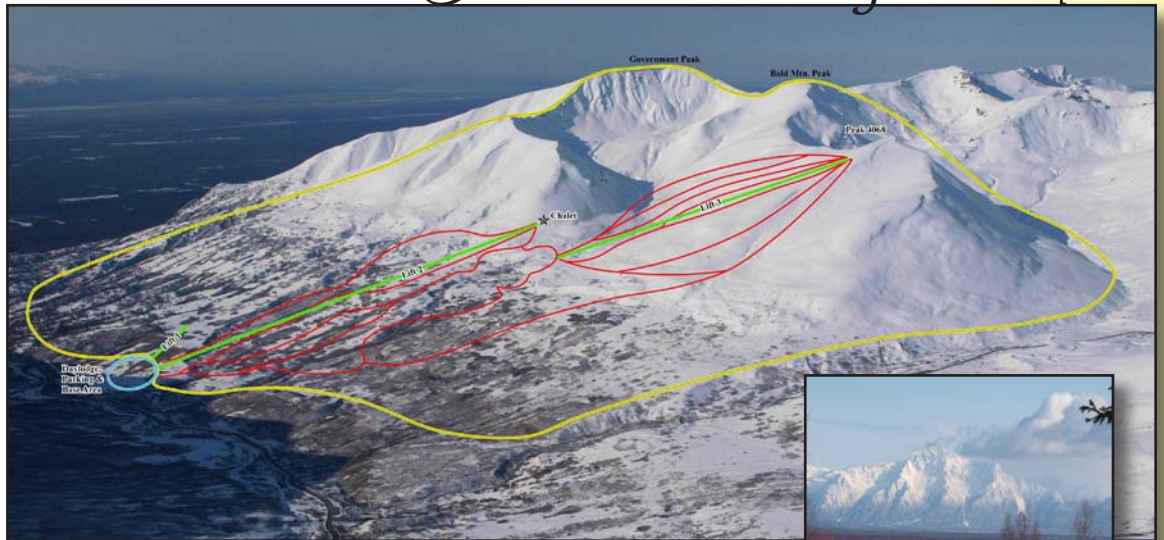
altitude. Around the corner on the Nordic or southern side of the mountain, 20 kilometers of trails— designed by an Olympian—will take a cross country skier through spruce to scenic views.

The \$19 million recreation project will spur economic development by drawing more skiers and their dollars here.

“The ski areas will bring secondary and tertiary economic benefits,” said Assemblymember Rob Wells, who represents the area. The ski area will pay for itself operationally, as well.”

An economic study indicates that on a typical weekend some 700 to 1,500 skiers per day would ride the lifts at Hatcher Pass. And Nordic ski clubs have expressed great demand for the cross-country trails.

\$5.6 million from the Federal Transit Administration is paying for an environmental study, access, and transit infrastructure. The Borough is researching how to fund the project. Visit www.hatcherpass.com.



Photos by Ted Bell

Stop and stay awhile

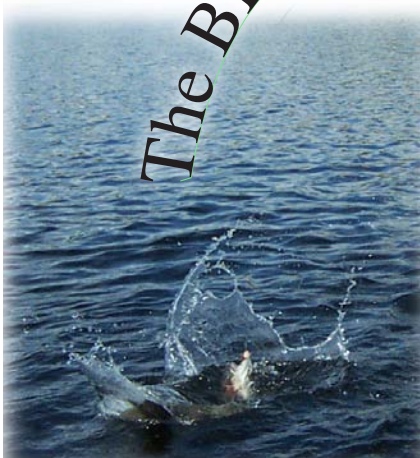
A study on tourism infrastructure showed that visitors here drive through the Borough on their way somewhere else and don't know where to hike and fish.

The Assembly began a new program this year by dedicating \$280,000 of the \$1 million in visitor bed taxes to tourism infrastructure. Signage, information kiosks, destination trailheads and waysides with scenic overlooks and restrooms are part of the plan. This year \$130,000 will jumpstart the effort at Moose Creek near Sutton. Another \$130,000 will be spent on completing the trail system at Talkeetna Lakes Park.

“Because of waysides and scenic overlooks with kiosks, people do stop, they do hike, and they do stay longer.”

—Dave Hanson, Economic Development Director

The BITE is on!



World flyfishing expert Phillip Rowley has dubbed the Mat-Su Borough the Stillwater Fishing Capital of Alaska.

Last summer, Rowley produced two TV shows here. The New Fly Fisher reaches 90 million households. The Borough is marketing this niche to tourists. The Mat-Su holds an impressive concentration of quality waters and diversity of species. More than 80 lakes—wild and stocked—are all within an hour's drive.

Visit the web site at www.akstillwatercapital.com

The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Sportsmen's Committee

Their efforts continue to promote fish returns on Mat-Su rivers.



*Photo by Mike Dawkins
Catch and release - rainbow trout*

Did you Know: There are more than 2,030 miles of trails in the Mat-Su Borough.

www.matsugov.us

Mat-Su Borough ~ We have it all 9

Retrieving from the WATER MOLLER



Photo by Cliff Silvers

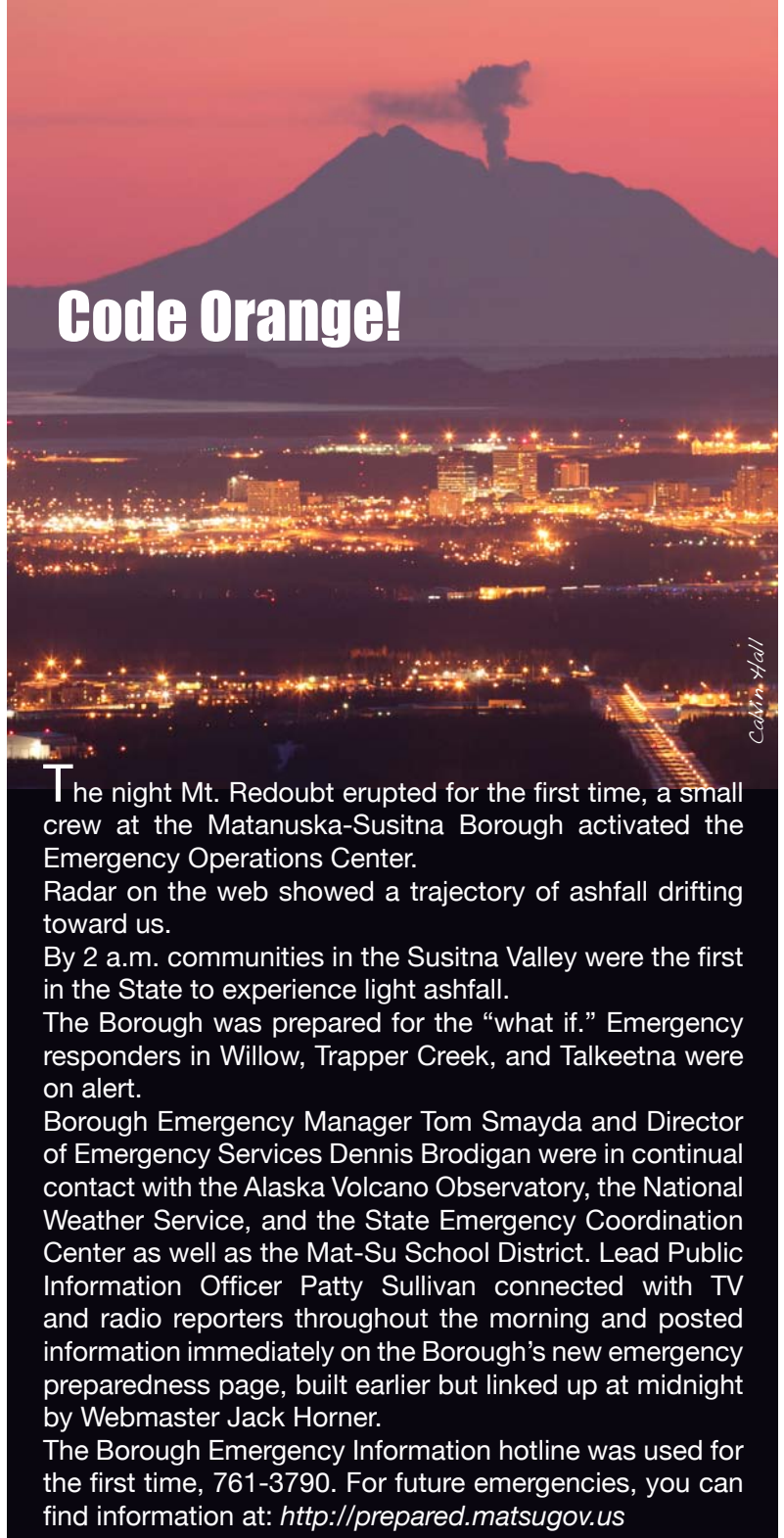
In June 2009, the pilot of a Piper Cherokee 250 sputtered to a silence over Wasilla and left the pilot little choice of where to set down, the congested Parks Highway or—retracted wheels and all—on Lake Lucille? He chose Lake Lucille. The pilot did a good job of putting the aircraft down on the water without flipping it. He got out okay, but his plane was stranded in water six-to-eight feet deep with a goopy muddy bottom, said Cliff Silvers, Chief of the Water Rescue Team. Later Silvers and others went to retrieve the submerged plane. Using underwater lift bags, the crew lifted each wing and the engine with bags that inflate up to 2,500 pounds. Because the nose of an aircraft is heavier than the tail, a diver rode on the tail as Silvers guided the motor boat and plane gently toward the boat launch at the Best Western. “Our actions help mitigate the problems of fuel and oil in the water. Our actions also help the owners of taxable property to be able to salvage that property from the water,” Silvers said.

HAZ MAT



Cargo such as compressed natural gas regularly travels through the Borough on trucks and trains. All members of Mat-Su Borough Emergency Services receive basic Hazardous Material Awareness training annually. Responders learn to identify a hazardous material incident and to keep themselves and the public safe. A Haz Mat Response Team formed two years ago. The team is capable of dealing with minor Haz Mat incidents with detection equipment, personal protective equipment and absorbent to contain spills and to initiate evacuations if necessary. We have a trailer provided by the State of Alaska set up for this mission.

The team trains together monthly and at least annually with cooperating agencies such as the Anchorage Fire Department and the 103rd Civil Support Team. Ken Barkley is the Haz Mat Chief.



Code Orange!

The night Mt. Redoubt erupted for the first time, a small crew at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough activated the Emergency Operations Center.

Radar on the web showed a trajectory of ashfall drifting toward us.

By 2 a.m. communities in the Susitna Valley were the first in the State to experience light ashfall.

The Borough was prepared for the “what if.” Emergency responders in Willow, Trapper Creek, and Talkeetna were on alert.

Borough Emergency Manager Tom Smayda and Director of Emergency Services Dennis Brodigan were in continual contact with the Alaska Volcano Observatory, the National Weather Service, and the State Emergency Coordination Center as well as the Mat-Su School District. Lead Public Information Officer Patty Sullivan connected with TV and radio reporters throughout the morning and posted information immediately on the Borough’s new emergency preparedness page, built earlier but linked up at midnight by Webmaster Jack Horner.

The Borough Emergency Information hotline was used for the first time, 761-3790. For future emergencies, you can find information at: <http://prepared.matsugov.us>

Cabrin Hall

New technology for **TOP LEVEL** response

Six new ambulances will provide top level response. The ambulances cost roughly \$140,000 each. State funds and Borough funds helped pay for the vehicles.

The ambulances will be stationed in Houston, Palmer, Sutton, and two will be in the largest district of Central Mat-Su. The sixth ambulance will be stationed at Big Lake/Meadow Lakes.

Fire Chief Bill Gamble of Meadow Lakes/Big Lake Fire Dept. said the state-of-the-art equipment shows support for the paid, on-call responders. "Good equipment inspires the on-call responders," Gamble said. "When the page goes out, these people get up from dinner, from bed, from work. They drop everything to respond to a call for help from our fellow citizens."

Most Borough emergency responders are not full time employees and have jobs elsewhere, but respond to emergencies when called. Gamble has been an air traffic controller for 24 years and an on-call responder here for nearly 20 years.



Photo by Patty Sullivan

Knocking down fires faster

Two new state-of-the-art fire engines with compressed air foam capability will help firefighters knock down fires faster and ultimately save more property.

The fire engines are equipped with four-wheel drive to maintain traction on icy roads; heated front mirrors that require a glance rather than a turn of the head; and a full compressed air foam capability that increases firefighting efforts five times over.

"Last year our calls increased 13.35 percent over the previous year," said Central Fire Chief James Steele. The quickly growing community of Knik-Fairview is within Central's boundaries.

Central Mat-Su Fire Department is the second largest in Alaska. The engines cost \$530,000 and were purchased by taxpayers of the Wasilla-Lakes Fire Service Area.

The engines will be instrumental in wildland-urban interface fires, where forest fires meet homes. With its two pump system, the fire engine can pump 1,500 gallons of water a minute and can also pump 100 gallons of fire suppressing foam a minute while the engine is rolling.

"In the Miller's Reach (fire) if we had something like this we could have gone up to one structure, coated it in foam, driven to the next house, coated it in foam," Steele said. "In those situations, seconds were what counted."

The Miller's Reach Fire in 1996 was a wildland-urban interface fire, the most destructive fire in Alaska's history, burning 443 buildings, most of them homes.



*Photos by Patty Sullivan
Deputy Chief for Central Mat-Su
Michael Keenan, Assistant Chief Mahlon
Greene, and Capt. John Burns will be
among the drivers of the new engines.*

Financial Highlights

Fund 100 General government

| Expenditure Area | 2007-08 Actual | 2008-09 Budgeted |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| Education | \$ 41,758,621 | \$ 44,711,888 |
| Education/Infrastructure Debt | 16,885,000 | 16,890,000 |
| Assembly, Admin, Law, HR, Clerk, Mayor, Boards | 3,323,114 | 4,499,621 |
| GIS,IT | 2,564,627 | 3,356,360 |
| Finance | 5,712,062 | 6,464,456 |
| Planning | 2,855,613 | 4,027,578 |
| Public Works | 3,245,229 | 3,859,070 |
| Emergency Service | 6,158,581 | 7,575,930 |
| Community Dev. & Rec. | 2,352,630 | 2,854,706 |
| Common Contractual | 909,404 | 1,300,400 |
| MSCVB, City Grants, Roads, Capital Projects | 13,562,127 | 12,320,535 |
| Total | 99,327,000 | 107,860,544 |

Revenue Cap

In 2005, the Assembly adopted a cap on tax revenues. A formula provides the highest allowed mill rate.

Prior year's levy \$91,380,175 +
Prior year's levy (revenue) x (Anchorage
Consumer Price Index 4.63 % + 5 year
average population growth rate 4.19 % =
\$8,059,731

+ value of new construction \$232,671,355
+ new voter approved bonds if any, \$0

Mill rate allowed: 11.508

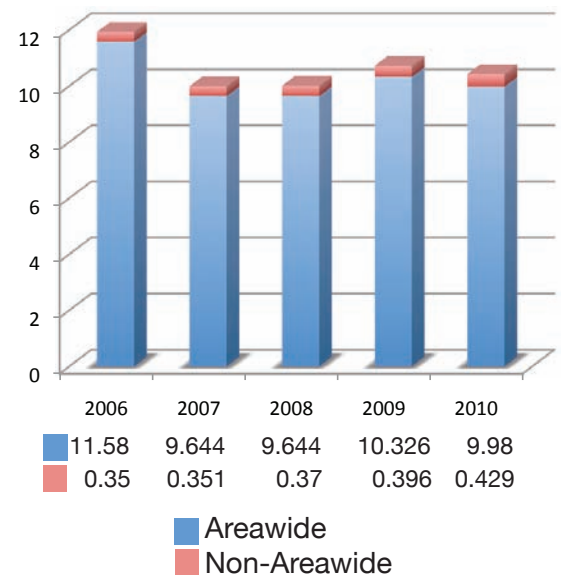
Mill rate adopted: 9.98

Q: What is a Mill Levy?

A: A mill levy is the number of dollars a taxpayer must pay for every \$1000 of assessed value.

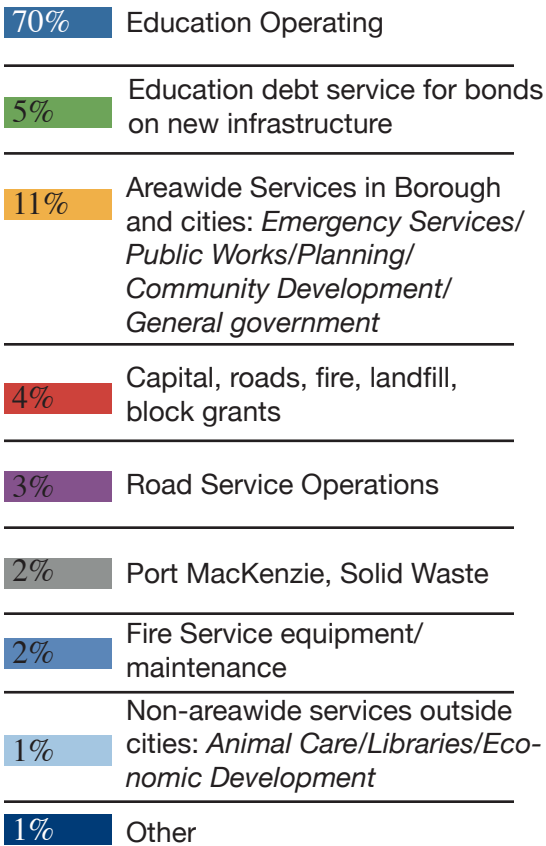
| Revenues | 2007-08 | 2008-09 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Property Taxes | \$ 72,321,090 | \$ 78,176,230 |
| Excise Taxes | 4,528,495 | 5,012,000 |
| Federal Payments | 2,031,560 | 1,961,200 |
| State Grants & Shared Revenues | 15,076,680 | 16,037,141 |
| Fees | 3,463,626 | 4,343,100 |
| Transient Accommodations Tax | 1,038,309 | 1,066,900 |
| Interest Earnings | 5,022,058 | 2,500,000 |
| Recoveries & Transfers | 2,796,879 | 1,369,720 |
| Other | 33,033 | 40,000 |
| Totals | 106,311,730 | 110,506,291 |

Mill Levies

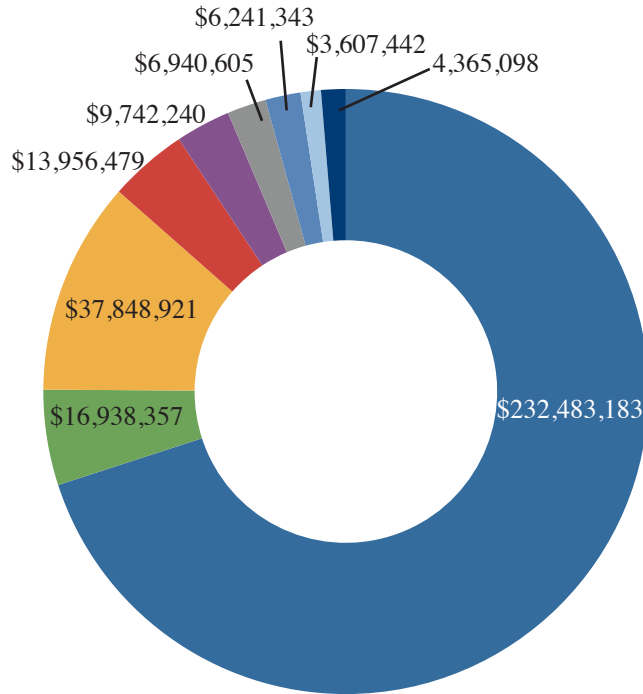


Did you Know: A homeowner will pay \$2,180 on an average assessed home

Comprehensive Borough Budget



FY 2010 Expenditures



Total = \$332,123,668

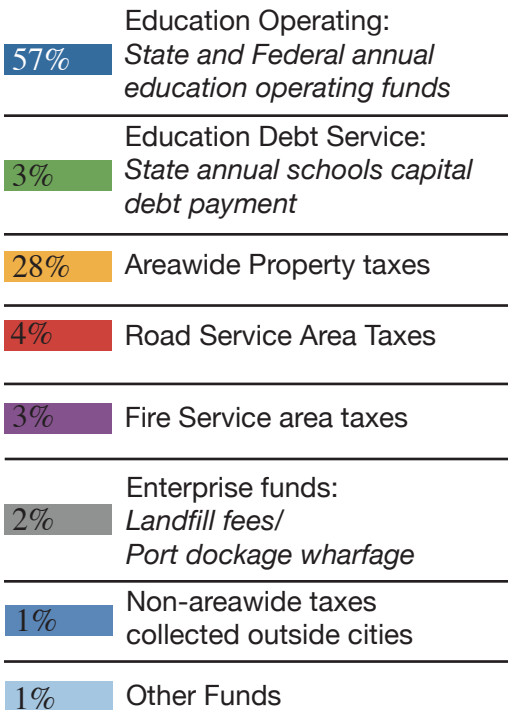
Areawide:
Services and taxes in the Borough and cities such as planning, parks and recreation, emergency medical services and historic preservation.

Non-Area wide:
Services outside cities such as libraries, animal care and economic development.

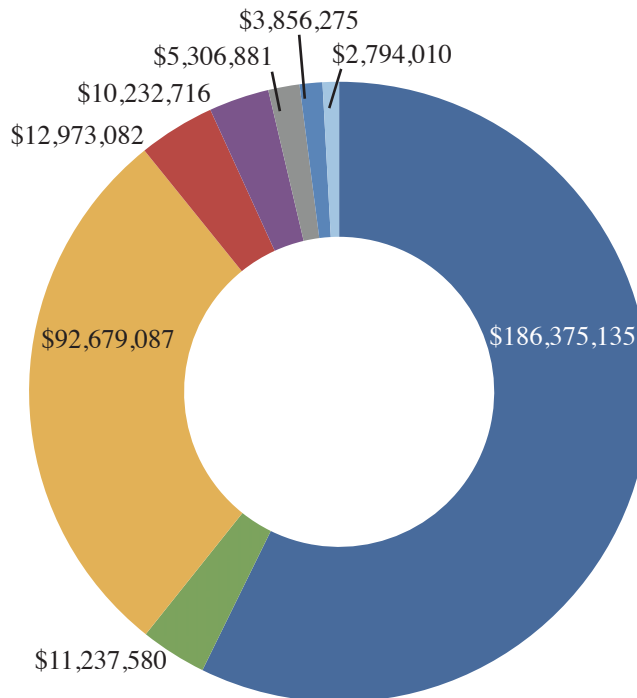
75 cents of every dollar the borough spends goes to education, including operations and debt on schools

Borough Net assets:
\$455,134,797
(6/30/08)

The cost to upgrade one mile of road in a subdivision: \$125,000 to \$175,000. If you add right-of-way or utility costs the number climbs to \$275,000. Paving adds another \$250,000 per mile.



FY 2010 Revenues



Brett Memorial Ice Arena



Adult hockey is booming. Youth hockey is busting at the seams.

– Joe Miner, Manager of the Brett Ice Arena



70,246 skaters enjoyed the ice at the Brett Memorial ice Arena in nearly a year



Jr. Avalanche Squirrels

Photos by Patty Sullivan/MSB
Top, from left to right: Isaiah Hall, Zach Cuffel, Reid Humphreys, Tyler Chivers, Caleb Hall

Lets go swimming!

"I've never been in a community where you had waiting lines to get into Open Swim, ever. There's lots of indicators that say we should build another pool."

– Dan Keyes, Manager of Recreation Services Division

17,478 swimmers went to Open Swim at Wasilla and 12,368 swimmers went to Open Swim at Palmer Pool in a recent ten-month period.

Overall, 51,936 swimmers enjoyed the Palmer pool and 68,648 swimmers enjoyed the Wasilla pool in 10 months.

The cost to remodel showers in locker rooms at Palmer and Wasilla pools and to improve wheel chair access – \$213,700

Intelligent Conversations

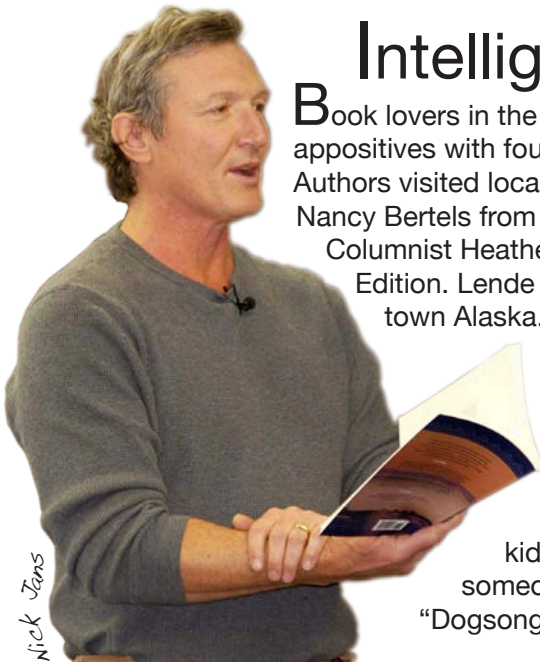
Book lovers in the Mat-Su had the chance to discuss plot and noun appositives with four famous authors this year.

Authors visited local libraries thanks to a grant secured by Sutton Librarian Nancy Bertels from the Institute of Museums and Library Services.

Columnist Heather Lende is a contributor to National Public Radio's, Morning Edition. Lende wrote "If you lived here, I'd know your name: News from small-town Alaska."

Nick Jans, is author of "The Last Light Breaking" and The Grizzly Maze." Residents enjoyed his Alaska slides and insights on the arctic, bear encounters, and a Juneau wolf. Local author Ann Dixon shared excerpts from "Posie Peeked at Christmas."

Gary Paulsen was the last author in the series. "He turns kids on to books," Bertels said. "They're excited to know someone who wrote a book." He is the author of "Hatchet" "Dogsong" and "The Winter Room."



Nick Jans



Life along the Mat River

Every summer the glacially-fed Matanuska River scours out parts of its banks threatening property and sometimes taking it. This year the Matanuska-Susitna Borough began a management plan for sections of the river from Chickaloon to the lower Butte.

"We have been using a band-aid approach thus far to address erosion along this large, powerful river," said Borough Environmental Planner Frankie Barker. "It is time for us to look at better ways we can learn to live next to it."

Erosion incidents in the past have been addressed on a case-by-case basis by a variety of agencies. The Matanuska River Management Plan is being developed to create a framework to address the river, including erosion, recreational access, habitat and land use.



Photos by Patty Sullivan/MSB

A faceted glass bead for jewelry, a stone tool for cutting meat and scraping hides, and a shard of china were salvaged from future mining.



Qeshqa House Athabaskan Chief's House

A beluga harpoon likely dating back to the 1830s was recently dug from the trash of a Dena'ina chief's house near the old townsite of Knik. "In the whole Upper Cook Inlet, nothing like this has been found," said Professor of Anthropology David Yesner at the University of Alaska, Anchorage. "It helps local people say, hey, here's elements of your heritage, right here, that indicate that your ancestors were beluga hunters, right on this spot." Russia sold Alaska to the U.S. in 1867. Beads and pottery found there likely came from trade with other Natives, not from direct contact with Russians.

"We've barely scratched the surface in this part of the country," said Fran Seager-Boss, Borough Cultural Resources Specialist. "That's why we're working jointly with the University. There was a tremendous concentration of villages around the upper Knik Arm, and we're losing them very fast through development," Seager-Boss said. The private land is being mined. State and federal laws protect cultural resources. A federal permit triggered the salvage effort. Yesner and Seager-Boss and their team have been working at the site for eight years, paid through grants, the landowner, and the Borough. Voters in 1987 requested a cultural resources expert on staff.

Talkeetna Lakes Park

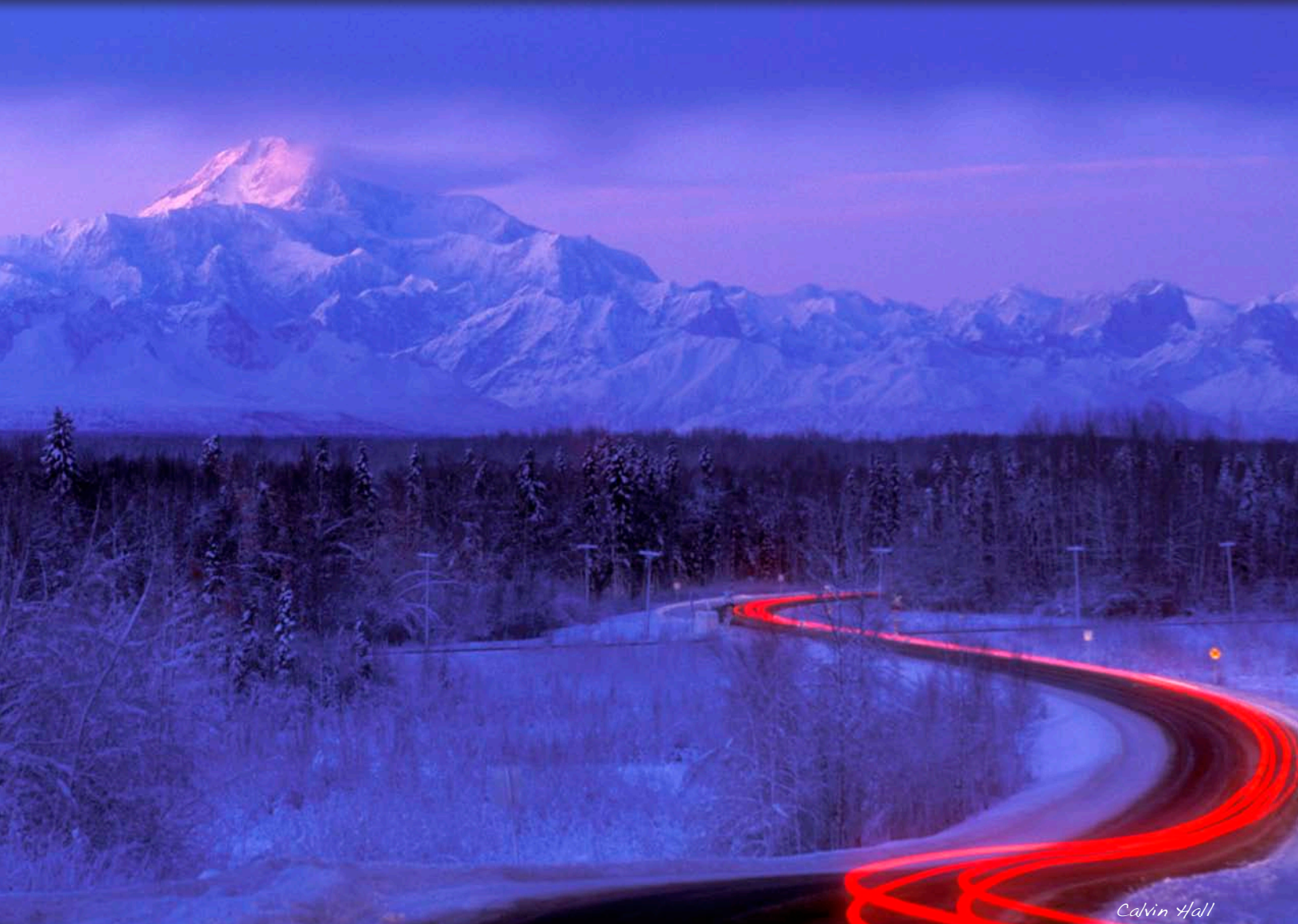
Talkeetna Lakes Park makes ten the number of Mat-Su Borough parks. Its 1,040 acres surrounds six lakes.

As part of phase 1, a new trail offers hiking, snow shoeing, mountain biking, and nearby canoeing and fishing. The next phase is to develop a world class trail system for Nordic skiing.

In 2006, a trail crew with the International Mountain Biking Association visited the park and tuned up the trail designed by Chris Mannix and Karl Swanson of the Denali Nordic Ski Club. "It's a much needed and well-used, cool trail in a beautiful park," Mannix said. "It was a lot of work. We naively thought it would be easy to build a hiking loop."



Mat-Su Borough



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