



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Office of the Borough Manager

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 6, 2021
TO: Mayor and Assembly
FROM: Michael Brown, Borough Manager
RE: Manager's Weekly Post

Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Update: Staff continue to work on efforts to reduce wildfire risk reduction.

Public Education and Awareness. Borough GIS staff have been working closely with Emergency Services and Emergency Management to deploy and utilize many new solutions including working to build an all-encompassing READY site with information in one location for year round reference (<https://ready.matsugov.us/>). A part of the READY site are the new focus preparedness sites for natural hazards, specifically focused on Fire Preparedness. On this site we breakdown FIREWISE for individuals and allow the public to request a free home visit to receive a Fire Risk Rating. Communities can work with Emergency Management to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). The Department of Emergency Services (DES) completed a campaign to educate community councils on the FIREWISE program and encourage each community to adopt a CWPP. DES will continue to provide support to those communities that want to develop their own CWPP. DES also responded to 50 FIREWISE surveys of private property this past summer at each property owner's request. Staff continue to look for potential grant opportunities to enable property owners to FIREWISE (create defensible space) their properties who may be unable to FIREWISE on their own.

Fuels Risk Reduction. Our Community Development Department staff are continuing to perform fuels reduction maintenance on various parks across the core area. Cutting of beetle-kill spruce on Borough lands adjacent to a private property is also allowable by the adjacent property owner(s). The Assembly also recently approved code changes to exempt dead and dying timber from the five-year timber harvest schedule, provide for over the counter sales, and remove the fair market value determination in an effort to assist in fuels risk reduction.

Beetle-Kill Spruce Brush Collection Program. The Central Landfill and Big Lake, Sunshine, and Willow transfer stations continue to support beetle-kill spruce brush collection at no charge to the public. From January 2021 – September 2021 the program served over 5,000 customers and collected approximately 5,800 tons of brush.

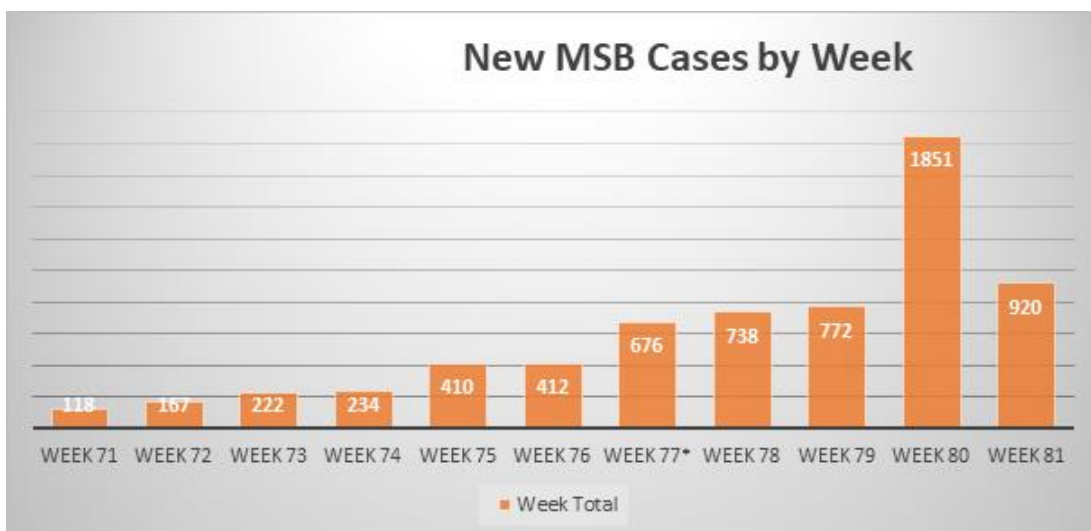
Ready, Set, Go. As part of the Borough’s “Ready, Set, Go” initiative, staff from GIS and Emergency Management created a Public Emergency Information Application. This application will be a single source for the public to access during an emergency event and click on the map or type in their address to see if their area has been designated for ‘Ready – prepare to evacuate,’ ‘Set – set to evacuate at a moment’s notice,’ or ‘Go – leave immediately.’ This will give citizens a graphic user interface showing the distance away from event data such as evacuation areas, secured roads, and detours. This application supports sharing information relevant to many events such as wildfires, floods, and volcanoes.

Publication Request re EDA Grant to Mat-Su Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (MSCVB): The EDA grant application for the Gateway Visitors Center is moving through the review process. The Borough received requests to provide proof of land ownership, new individual SF424 forms for the Borough and the MSCVB, and publish a public notice requesting responses be submitted in writing regarding potential impacts on environmental resources or historic properties associated with this proposed project to: Jim Jacobson, EDA Regional Environmental Officer, jjacobson@eda.gov or call (206) 833-6035.

The full notice will be published in the Frontiersman on October 8, 2021, October 10, 2021, and October 13, 2021, and the public will have until October 28, 2021 to submit comments. Once this is complete, the EDA will make a final determination on the grant funding.

Additionally, see the attached copy of Senator Murkowski’s letter of October 5, 2021 to U.S. Secretary Castillo in support of this project.

COVID-19 Update: COVID-19 confirmed cases declined for the first week in over the past couple of months. Mat-Su Borough School District cases have also continued to decline gradually over the past four weeks. 36,509 Borough residents are fully vaccinated.



Some added COVID-19 information can be found in DHSS Commissioner Adam Crum’s recent podcast that includes a brief history of Alaska’s response and some comments about our current situation. The podcast is titled Episode 1 with DHSS Commissioner Adam Crum by Governor Mike Dunleavy. Listen

Providing Outstanding Borough Services to the Matanuska-Susitna Community

here: <https://soundcloud.com/user-50733543/first-hand-episode-with-dhss-commissioner-adam-crum?si=f02289f4133946a1863599609bcecc91>

Also, the DHSS is still conducting their ECHO series and there are resources from past ECHO presentations that can be accessed here: [Alaska Department of Health and Social Services](#)

Public Affairs Media Flyover:

Election

- *Who will be running Alaska's cities and boroughs? Voters decide Tuesday - Must Read Alaska*

Trails

- *Government Peak Recreation Area to Skeetawk trail Inches closer to reality - Frontiersman*

Community

- *Wolf Lake community buying weather station in honor of aviation legend Mike Pannone ...*
- *Palmer Food Bank outgrows current space – Frontiersman*

Borough

- *Army Corps of Engineers holds public meeting on flood control project plans - KTNA 88.9 FM*

COVID-19

- *Commissioner Adam Crum shares in-depth how Alaska has fared against the COVID-19 on the State's new podcast, FirstHand. –Alaska Governor's Office*

Future Events:

Saturday, October 23, 2021, 10am-2pm – National Prescription Drug Take-Back at three locations: Fred Meyer Wasilla, Fred Meyer Palmer, and Willow Community Center.

ATTACHMENT

LISA MURKOWSKI
ALASKA

COMMITTEES:
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October 5, 2021

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The Honorable Alejandra Y. Castillo
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development
Economic Development Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW Suite 71014
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Castillo:

I am writing to express my support for the application submitted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska, to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration for funding under the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program for the new Mat-Su Gateway Visitor Center. The new visitor center complex centrally located at the intersection of the Glenn Highway and Parks Highway will become the first stop for visitors coming via Anchorage to the 23,000 square mile Matanuska-Susitna Valley that has everything visitors desire – mountains, glaciers and wildlife – and is the gateway to the breathtaking Denali National Park.

A new visitor center for this region is much needed. The current modest visitor center, built 35 years ago, has been overtaken by development around it. This new center has been in planning and development phases since at least 2007.

If the application is successful, the Borough will be able to build a facility that will inspire visitors and link them to nearby cultural, historical and recreational activities. It will help build back a strong visitor economy which was disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The shovel-ready project features trip planning information, an interpretive display area that highlights agency partners, a multipurpose room and wet lab for naturalist programs and cultural talks, public restrooms, a coffee counter and fireside seating area, administrative offices for staff and agency partners, retail space and public Wi-Fi and charging stations.

Consistent with applicable law, policy and guidance, I respectfully ask that you give due consideration to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's grant application and all Alaskan grant applications. I ask that you keep my office apprised of the outcome.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator