



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Office of the Borough Manager

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 12, 2024
TO: Mayor and Assembly
FROM: Michael Brown, Borough Manager
RE: Manager's Weekly Post

Borough Healthcare Costs: The Borough Manager and Human Resources Director met with the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center CEO on Monday, June 10. Both parties agreed to meet again in the next couple of weeks and do a deep dive into paid claims, where the Borough has data for in-patient services billed from both Mat-Su Regional Medical Center and Alaska Regional Hospital. This will allow for a more comprehensive discussion on billed and paid claims at our local hospital.

Fisheries Funding: The following is an update on fisheries funding in the State budget. The Assembly and Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission supported these priorities. ADF&G will manage both programs.

Coho Salmon Genetic Testing of Upper Cook Inlet Commercial Harvest (5-year project-\$300,000 per year from FY25 to FY30) - This project was first established using money the legislature provided the MSB for salmon project funding in Upper Cook Inlet. The project has already established Upper Cook Inlet coho salmon genetic baselines and provided four years of commercial harvest sampling results, but it has been unfunded since 2016. Similar to current sockeye salmon genetic testing, coho salmon genetic testing allows the department to determine total run size, harvest rates, productivity of specific coho salmon stocks, and temporal harvest patterns for different gear groups within Upper Cook Inlet, thereby providing for better scientific management of these economically important salmon stocks. Genetic testing of the Upper Cook Inlet commercial coho salmon harvest in State waters may provide even more critical data with the uncertainty created by federal salmon fishery management of Cook Inlet EEZ waters during 2024.

Re-establish Chelatna Lake Weir (\$130,000 = \$45,000 in startup costs + \$85,000 in base budget for 3 seasonal positions to operate the weir) - At the head of Lake Creek, this weir counts a sockeye salmon population with the largest spawning escapement goal in the Susitna River drainage. In 2020, the weir was decommissioned due to budget cuts. Without the operation of all four Susitna River drainage weirs, there has been no adequate evaluation for total ADF&G established Susitna River sockeye/coho goals. Re-establishing this weir will lead to better data and more fishing opportunities for local residents.

Willow-Caswell Fire Service Area (FSA) Insurance Services Office (ISO) Review: The Willow and Caswell FSAs have recently completed a review by the ISO. The ranking provided by ISO is used as a factor in setting fire insurance rates in a community. The ranking also serves as a metric for how a fire department performs compared to similar communities. The Willow-Caswell Fire Department is proud to announce that it has received an ISO ranking of 5. This is an improvement for the Willow community, which was previously rated at 6. With ISO, a “1” is the best ranking possible, and a “10” is little organized fire protection. Willow-Caswell is now one of 23 fire departments in Alaska to achieve this rating. The Caswell FSA maintained its current rating of 5, which is significant for a small community. This improvement reflects the cumulative efforts of our responders, staff, and boards and the tremendous support of the Willow and Caswell communities and the Borough Assembly.

For this review, the ISO graded Willow and Caswell communities as a single entity operating as one department. Both FSA boards support a proposal to consolidate into a single fire service area, and the proposal is moving forward for Assembly consideration for potential placement on the November ballot.

Alaska State Firefighters Conference: Central Mat-Su Fire Department is hosting the annual Alaska State Firefighters Conference from September 30 through October 4, 2024. The Alaska Fire Chief’s Association and Alaska Firefighters Association are organizing the event. We expect 300-400 people to attend, including their family members. Events throughout each day will take place at the Menard Sports Complex, Fire Station 62, Fire Station 61, and Palmer Fire Training Center.

Social Security Administration Services Press Release: U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) today announced that the Social Security Administration (SSA) has committed to a series of service improvements for Alaskans. In his letter to Sen. Sullivan, Commissioner O’Malley committed to increasing the number of virtual appointment days in the Mat-Su, placing five new hires in Alaska, and launching a new awareness campaign to educate Alaskans about the availability of virtual SSA services. The improvements are slated to begin next month.

“My team and I have heard the frustrations of many Alaskans encountering unacceptable hurdles and delays as they try to schedule appointments and secure the Social Security benefits they are entitled to,” said Sen. Sullivan. “I brought these issues directly to Commissioner O’Malley on multiple occasions, including prior to his confirmation. I also emphasized the fact that, unlike a state like Maryland or Delaware, Alaska has hundreds of communities not connected by roads—and, the Alaska communities that do have road access can still be hundreds of miles from the nearest field office. I commend Commissioner O’Malley for recognizing Alaska’s unique challenges and following through with policy changes that will better deliver on this essential function and responsibility of the federal government. While the increase in services and new SSA staffers are important steps, there’s more work to do. I will also continue to press for additional field office locations in Alaska, especially in regions that have experienced significant population growth, like the Mat-Su.”

Alaska is currently served by three SSA field offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau, and five virtual appointment centers in Nome, Kodiak, Kenai, Ketchikan, and Wasilla.

The Borough Mayor sponsored RS 23-040, which was adopted by the Assembly in April 2023 to support having a Social Security office in the Mat-Su. Sen. Sullivan's staff recognized this and city support as the impetus for this positive result.

Public Affairs Media Flyover:

Recycling

- [Big Lake event encourages kids recycling](#)
Alaska's News Source

Fisheries

- [Montana Creek Second Annual Plants for Salmon Event Set for June 15](#)
Alaska Sporting Journal
- [New Rules for this years Copper River dipnetting season](#)
ADN
- [Gone Forever \(Opinion\)](#)
Craig Medred
- [Temporary closure of Kasilof river personal use set gillnet fishery](#)
Alaska Sporting Journal

School District

- [MSBSD Eliminates student advisory board of representatives](#)
Alaska's News Source

Technology

- [Summer Scam – APD warns of sophisticated phone scams rise](#)
Alaska's News Source

Boards and Commissions

- [CUP Discussed at Planning Commission](#)
KTNA

Assembly

- [Assembly weighs-in on Mat-Su Health Foundation](#)
Frontiersman
- [Mat-Su Borough Assembly passes health resolution](#)
KTNA

Outdoors

- [Judge orders temporary removal of Benka Lake Fence-reestablishing public access](#)
Alaska Land Mine

Top Facebook Posts

- [Mat-Su Central School Construction in photos](#)
Reach: 15k
- [7th Summit Shooting Range in photos](#)
Reach: 11k
- [Mat-Su Central School Tour Video with the Mayor](#)
Reach: 5k

Facebook Performance last 28 days vs month prior

- Reach +49.1%
- Content Interactions +73.6%