

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. FWC 22-01**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION DETAILING COMMENTS RELATING TO THE WEST SUSITNA ACCESS ROAD PROJECT PROPOSAL.

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 resource development; and

WHEREAS, the MSB 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

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION Resolution FWC 22-01 Page 1 of 4

anadromous fish habitat; and

WHEREAS, healthy habitat not only supports our fish and wildlife, but ensures clean water for our communities and key economic opportunities for Alaskans, including several businesses that depend on the area that the West Susitna Access Road project would impact; 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, during the special MSB FWC meeting on May 7, 2020, and again during the MSB Assembly meeting on December 7, 2021, there was extensive public testimony indicating concerns and unanswered questions about the West Susitna Access Road project, and the MSB FWC has asked for monthly updates with minimal information being shared on the specific costs and benefits of the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the MSB FWC submits the following comments regarding the proposed West Susitna Access Road (WSAR) project:

1. The FWC recognizes the importance of following the Alaska

Recreation Rivers Management Plan in guiding WSAR project design and permitting decisions.

2. The FWC believes all waters impacted by this project should be surveyed for anadromous fish presence and this information uploaded to the Alaska Anadromous Fish Catalog before finalizing project design and permitting.

3. The FWC believes impacts to anadromous fish passage and habitat should be avoided when possible, and minimized and fully mitigated when not possible within the impacted watersheds.

3. The FWC believes impacts to wetlands, riparian zones, water quality, and water quantity should be avoided when possible, and minimized and fully mitigated when not possible within the impacted watersheds.

4. The FWC believes impacts to wildlife habitat, including key migration movement corridors should be avoided when possible, and minimized and fully mitigated when not possible.

5. The FWC believes that the WSAR project impacts on the unique hunting and fishing traditions currently practiced in this roadless area should be avoided when possible, and minimized and fully mitigated when not possible.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Fish and Wildlife Commission
this 17th day of March, 2022.



Mike Wood, Chair

ATTEST:



TED EISCHEID, Staff

(SEAL)

YEAS: M. Wood, A. Couch, H. Delo, L. Engel, P. Probasco, K. Zamzow.

ABSTAIN: J. Sumner.

ABSENT: T. Hale.