

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. FWC 23-03

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PROPOSED REVISED WATERBODY SETBACK ORDINANCE 23-049.

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough 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 Matanuska Susitna Borough is charged by the State of Alaska with Land Use Planning and Implementation; and

WHEREAS, Title 15 of the Borough Code contains a multitude of plans containing statements, goals and objectives about the protection of water quality and shoreline habitat; and

WHEREAS, Title 17 of the Borough Code contains only two sections with minimal regulations concerning waterbody setbacks,

WHEREAS, the Borough has also conducted a multitude of studies and adopted or facilitated other documents and partnerships concerning waterbody setbacks, protection of water quality and shoreline habitat, which this ordinance is inconsistent with, including:

1. Voluntary Best Management Practices for Development Around Waterbodies
2. Economic Benefits of Sport Fishing in the Mat-Su
3. Shoreland Setbacks Analysis and Recommendation, 1999
4. It Takes Fish to Make Fish Board of Fisheries Booklets

5. Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership goals, plans and projects

6. Various other studies, publications and partnerships facilitated by the borough

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough has spent over \$20 million on aquatic restoration projects in the borough, replacing more than 100 culverts that have restored over 67 stream miles and 6,224 lake acres of anadromous fish habitat; and

WHEREAS, healthy shoreline habitat not only supports our fish and wildlife, but ensures clean water for our communities, key economic opportunities for Alaskans and an effective way of preventing and mitigating floods; and

WHEREAS, economic studies in our region in 2007 and 2017 show the significant positive economic impact sport fishing has on the economy of the MSB, including \$56 million in direct spending benefits to the MSB in 2017 alone, with additional economic benefits from healthy wildlife populations, both of which require adequate habitat locally; and

WHEREAS, an intent of waterbody setbacks is to protect life and property that support a high quality of life while helping maintain clean water and quality fish and wildlife habitat.

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough is home to roughly 15% of the state's population and covers over 25,000 square miles, and continues to be the fastest growing region of Alaska with abundant aquatic resources encompassing two major river systems, all six of the Alaska-

designated recreation rivers, and contains a multitude of lakes, rivers, and streams supporting fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough projected growth will increase by approximately 38% by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Department estimates that approximately 700 lake shore structures are currently in violation; and

WHEREAS, the number of structures built in violation of the shoreline setback dropped dramatically between 2008 and 2010 when a land use permit was required through the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Department; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Assembly established the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission to *"advise and make recommendations to the assembly, borough manager, and/or any state or federal agencies, departments, commissions, or boards possessing jurisdiction in the area of fish, wildlife, and habitat on the interests of the borough in the conservation and allocation of fish, wildlife, and habitat"* and to *"advise the assembly and the borough manager on any other... areas concerning fish, wildlife, habitat, administration, application, enforcement, or appointment... the borough should take on fish, wildlife, or habitat issues"*.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission hereby opposes the adoption of Ordinance 23-049; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission hereby recommends a work group, involving representatives from the Assembly, Planning Commission, Fish and Wildlife Commission, an Matanuska-Susitna Borough staff, be formed to work on this issue further.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission this 18th day of May, 2023.



Mike Wood, Chair

ATTEST:



MSB Staff