

By: E. Krueger  
Public Hearing: May 18, 2026  
Action: Approved

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH  
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 26-08**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF AN ORDINANCE CLASSIFYING KEY BOROUGH-OWNED PARCELS ON THE SHORE OF THE DESHKA RIVER AS WATERSHED LANDS TO PROTECT SALMON POPULATIONS. (MSB008272)

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WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) Planning Commission has reviewed the outcomes of a recent study on the temperature of water entering the Deshka River from adjacent groundwater seeps; and

WHEREAS, this new information shows that certain parcels supporting the cold-water inputs to the Deshka River are essential for maintaining healthy salmon runs in the river; and

WHEREAS, spatial variation in water temperature is a key feature of habitat complexity that contributes to the movement, resilience, and persistence of cold-water fishes, including salmon; and

WHEREAS, during spawning migration, periods of high river temperatures can block migratory corridors and cause thermal stress and mortality; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) ranks the Susitna River drainage king salmon population as the fourth

largest in the State of Alaska, with the Deshka River providing spawning and rearing habitat for approximately 20 percent of the Susitna River king salmon return on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, during the 10-year period from 1997-2006 Deshka River king salmon spawning escapements averaged more than 33,000 fish per year and the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery was an important economic driver for the MSB; and

WHEREAS, even with no sport harvest allowed in 2023, 2024, and 2025, not a single king salmon spawning escapement goal was attained anywhere in the Susitna River drainage and the sport fishery is closed again for 2026; and

WHEREAS, unsustainability of the Susitna River drainage king salmon population is a rapidly accelerating problem; and

WHEREAS, the Deshka River has a very productive silver salmon run within the Susitna River drainage, with Deshka River silver salmon escapements used by ADFG as a tool for managing silver salmon stocks throughout the entire Susitna River drainage; and

WHEREAS, local economic studies in 2007 and 2017 show the significant positive economic effect returning salmon have on the MSB economy, that included \$56 million in direct spending benefits to the MSB in 2017 alone, and there are additional economic benefits from healthy wildlife and fish populations; and

WHEREAS, the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Planning Commission believe it is important the MSB takes every available action to safeguard healthy salmon runs in local water bodies; and

WHEREAS, the MSB can classify these parcels as watershed lands in recognition of the water quality function they provide that protects salmon habitat; and

WHEREAS, a Borough inter-departmental review was conducted, along with 30-day public notice in accordance with Title 23 and Land and Resource Management Policy and Procedures adopted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; and

WHEREAS, through land classification, the parcels identified as essential for salmon habitat cannot be changed without Assembly approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission hereby recommends Assembly approval of the land classification contained in Exhibit A.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission  
this 18th day of May, 2026.



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Richard Allen, Chair

ATTEST



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Lacie Olivieri, Planning Clerk

(SEAL)

YES: Fonov, Carpenter, Allen, McCabe

NO: None

