

# MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer, Alaska 99645

## CHAIRPERSON

Andy Couch

## VICE CHAIR

Peter Probasco

## MSB STAFF

Ted Eischeid  
Maija DiSalvo



## BOARD MEMBERS

Howard Delo  
Larry Engel  
Tim Hale  
Gabe Kitter  
Mokie Tew  
Kendra Zamzow  
*Ex officio:* Jim Sykes

# FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

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### **Regular Meeting**

**10/19/2023**

#### **Pg. = Item:**

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- 33 = Beaver Meadows Subdivision re: preliminary decision status
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**Physical Location of Meeting:** Lower Level Conf. Room, DSJ Bldg, 350 E. Dahlia Ave., Palmer.

**Remote Participation:** See attached agenda.

**Meeting Documents:** Can be found on the FWC website: [Matanuska-Susitna Borough - Fish & Wildlife Commission \(matsugov.us\)](http://www.matsugov.us)

**Planning and Land Use Department - Planning Division**

**Cell Phone (907) 795-6281**

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**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH**  
**MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission**  
**AGENDA**

Edna Devries, Mayor

Andy Couch – Chair  
Peter Probasco – Vice Chair  
Howard Delo  
Larry Engel  
Tim Hale  
Mokie Tew  
Kendra Zamzow  
Gabe Kitter  
Jim Sykes – Ex officio member

Ted Eischeid - Staff



Michael Brown, Borough Manager

PLANNING & LAND USE DEPARTMENT  
Alex Strawn, Planning & Land Use Director  
Kim Sollien, Planning Services Manager  
Jason Ortiz, Development Services Manager  
Fred Wagner, Platting Officer

*Lower Level Conference Room  
Dorothy Swanda Jones Building  
350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer*

**October 19, 2023**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
4:00 p.m.

Ways to participate in MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings:

IN PERSON: Lower Level Conference Room, DSJ Building

REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS:

Join on your computer:

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 216 174 900 837

Passcode: gVr2TZ

Or call in (audio only):

1-907-290-7880

Phone Conference ID: 762 641 708#

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM/LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - A. September 28, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes
- VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person, for items not scheduled for public hearing*)
- VII. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS

- A. Staff Report
- B. Chair Report
- C. Waterbody Setback Advisory Board
  - i. Nov 1 – 6:00 pm @ DSJ Employee Breakroom

#### VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Special ADF&G Fishing Season Summary Meeting
  - i. December 7, 2023 - 5:00 pm in MSB Assembly Chambers
- B. Eklutna River Flow Restoration
- C. Beaver Meadows Subdivision
- D. Board of Fisheries Meeting/Planning
  - i. Upper Cook Inlet Finfish, Feb. 23 – March 7, 2024
  - ii. BOF Work Plan
- E. North Pacific Fisheries Management Council/NOAA Fisheries in Cook Inlet
- F. Special ADF&G Game Season Summary Meeting Planning
  - i. April – date TBD

#### IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Moose Range & Jonesville Public Use Area Management Plan
  - i. <https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/mgtplans/jonesville-mooserange/pdf/complete-prd-mr-jpua-9.22.2023.pdf>
  - ii. Public Comment Period, Sept 22 – Nov 9
  - iii. Public Meeting Oct 24, 5:00 – 7:00 pm @ Chickaloon Comm. Center
- B. NOAA Alaska Salmon Research Task Force

#### X. MEMBER COMMENTS

#### XI. NEXT MEETING DATE: November 16, 2023, Location TBD

#### XII. ADJOURNMENT

**Disabled persons needing reasonable accommodation in order to participate at a MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting should contact the borough ADA Coordinator at 861-8432 at least one week in advance of the meeting.**



**MSB FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION****Regular Meeting: September 28, 2023****Minutes**

DSJ Building, Lower Level Conference Room//TEAMS Remote Participation

*Minutes prepared by Ted Eischeid, Planner*

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I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 4:10 PM by vice chair Andy Couch.

II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM/LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Present:

Andy Couch/AC

Howard Delo/HD

Larry Engel/LE

Tim Hale/TH- left at 5:33 PM

Gabe Kitter/GK

Pete Probasco/PP

Kendra Zamzow/KZ

Absent:

Mokie Tew/MT

Excused:

Jim Sykes/JS

Quorum established.

AC Read the Land Acknowledgement:

*We acknowledge that we are meeting on traditional lands of the Ahtna and Dena'ina people, and we are grateful for their stewardship of the land, fish, and wildlife throughout time immemorial.*

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Moved by LE; seconded by HD.**

**Changes? Change lettering on New Business items as "B" is used twice;**

**Motion passed without objection.**

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. May 18, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes.

**Moved by LE second by HD.**

Corrections: None

**Motion passed without objection.**

b. June 1, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes.

**Moved by LE second by HD.**

Corrections: None

**Motion passed without objection.**

VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person, for items not scheduled for public hearing*):

1. John Wood, Resident: Thanks to Ted for his service; Encourages the FWC to take on a new task, to engage with the AWC data and illustrate historic salmon runs in the MSB and the habitat that remains here for salmon to spawn in.

2. Neil Dewitt

3. Jennifer Dawkins, Public Affairs.

4. Cindy Bettine; Beaver Meadows subdivision proposal for Big Lake area; Meadow Creek, a salmon stream in the area that could be impacted by this development; Would ask this development proposal be placed on the next FWC meeting agenda.

5. Gary Swan, Commercial fisherman, UCI, Northern District Set Netters.

6. Bill Stoltze, MSB Staff, hopes to be heavily involved in BOF.

7. Maija DiSalvo, Staff.

8. Melissa Heuer, Susitna River Coalition.

9. Mike Wood, freshman BOF member, just wants to listen in; concerned about instream flow changes.

10. Marc Lamoreaux, Native Village of Eklutna Environmental Director. Concerned about Eklutna River water flow. Most of the salmon habitat in the Eklutna valley is in the Eklutna Lake, but it would need a free flowing Eklutna River connecting the Lake to the Knik Arm of Cook Inlet for that habitat to be used by future salmon runs.

11. Eric Booton, TU: Thanks to Ted, and welcome to Gabe, happy Kendra is on the Waterbody Setback Advisory Board; referred to a correspondence they – TU - sent to FWC on the Eklutna River water system issue; TU and NVE and others have worked on ensuring that adequate water flows down the Eklutna River to support salmon spawning; would request that FWC write a letter to MEA supporting adequate water releases in the Eklutna supporting a connection between Eklutna Lake, the Eklutna River, and the Knik Arm for salmon spawning.

12. Page Herring, Northern District Set Netters Association.

13. Stephen Braund, Northern District Set Netters Association; would like to make comment later.

14. Kim Sollien, MSB Staff.

VII. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS

A. Staff Report – Ted gave a report.

B. Vice Chair's Report – Andy gave a report.

- a. On Chair Election: it would be important for an election for both a chair and vice chair.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. North Pacific Fisheries Management Council/NOAA Fisheries in Cook Inlet

PP: We need to keep this on future agendas so we can potentially respond once the proposed rule guiding salmon management in the Cook Inlet EEZ is published in the Federal Register.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. FWC RS 23-04 on State Legislative Priorities: Fisheries Protection

John Wood Comment: suggest you add to resolution ...WHEREAS, a current salmon task force is working on research needs/share our document. RE: John Wood; Alaska Salmon Research Task Force; Will see first draft from this group on Oct. 20, see chair Ed Farley, NOAA;

AC: Let's add this group's report, Alaska Salmon Research Task Force, to the October FWC agenda.

**TH moved to approve FWC RS 23-04; second by HD.**

**Discussion ensued:**

PP: well written

KZ: has the SHP filled in any gaps?

LE: It would be helpful to get the gap analysis online as soon as possible.

**Motion passes unanimously without opposition.**

B. BOF 2024 Planning

PP: saw this year's BOF Proposal Booklet; would ask staff to print out copies;

Bill Stoltze: could John Wood provide any advice to the FWC?

John Wood: strategically you should focus on certain on key BOF proposals and forget all the rest of the proposals; for key proposals, reach out to the opposition and try to find common ground ahead of time; key is to have data to support your positions;

Mike Wood: agrees with what John Wood says; focus on the "precautionary principle", especially in light of great change without much data to guide management;

LE: would also like a paper copy of the BOF proposal booklet; as you go through the paper copy, identify those proposal we should prioritize, support or oppose;

AC: information is on BOF website;

PP: how important is it for FWC members to be there?

JW: very important; it is also crucial to communicate to the chair of BOF of what your priorities are so they can be appropriately placed on the agenda;

LE: all these pieces are important, especially the committee work at the BOF via the "committee of the whole" process;

AC: went over the BOF meeting schedule: work session, hatchery committee...

JW: You can use the RC process to submit comments; AC: the Open Meetings Act ties our hands somewhat on this process.

Neil Dewitt: would like to see more priority on the Susitna basin and UCI rather than giving Kenai first crack at the fish;

C. Special ADFG Fishing Season Summary Meeting Planning

AC: sometimes ADFG feels that the BOF meeting process constrains when they can have this

meeting with us;

LE: maybe we should ask ADFG what months would work for them to have this meeting given the BOF demands placed on them;

**HD: Moved we have staff contact ADFG fisheries when it would work for them to hold our annual MSB fisheries meeting; LE second**

**PP: moved to amend this to have vice chair AC contact ADFG; HD second.**

**Amendment passes;**

**Amended motion passes unanimously.**

AC: How do we want to handle our questions?

PP: maybe we simply ask them our questions at the summary meeting?

LE: some questions you need to ask them ahead of time because it takes some time/data.

HD: maybe AC could add this the earlier ADFG ask covered in the immediate motion above;

AC: I think it would be very important to get questions to ADFG up front ahead of time; ADFGs written responses take time;

PP: I also think we should provide questions ahead of time, but we should also be able to ask whatever questions we see fit for dialogue;

GK: would our knowledge of the BOF proposals, and the FWC positions on them, inform our questions to ADFG? PP: They are a little bit different...

LE: used to hold these meetings at the Wasilla fire station, and we got better public attendance; maybe we should use that facility?

Stefan: we have better technology support in the Assembly Chambers, which allows for better remote participation by the public;

AC: we should look at questions further at the October meeting and approve a meeting agenda.

#### D. Special ADFG Game Season Summary Meeting Planning

HD: Talked to ADFG about any impending game issues the FWC should be aware of; found out GMU 14A moose numbers are reaching a reasonable number; the Talkeetna caribou herd has some potential issues; GMU 16 unit moose is down due to low calf recruitment, presumably from wolf/bear predation, and ADFG is considering adding wolves to their predator control program; Unit 16 bear populations are up and ADFG is concerned about that; 14A the mountain goats are good, but sheep are low - presumably due to weather; asked if there was anything the FWC could do to help ADFG? - money isn't a problem, but their biggest concern is finding qualified employees who have a conservationist versus preservationist bias; small game summary- in this area the upland game bird number is down due to a bad spring/chick survival; hares are also down due to where they are on their 10 year cycle; no major regulatory changes suggested for game; waterfowl populations nationwide are average or slightly below average; asked about game season summary meeting ADFG? - would best be in April;

**PP: moved we plan our ADFG annual game season summary meeting occur in April; LE second;**

**Motion passes unanimously.**

Gary: ADFG is actually running ads asking hunters to provide upland bird wings to them.

#### E. Waterbody Setback Advisory Board

LE: ADN had a article on this board today.

AC: would like to keep this as a reoccurring agenda item.

AC: would like Kendra to keep the FWC appraised of her work and to seek FWC advice on issues as needed;

KZ: how should I do this work for the FWC?

PP: I would think KZ can provide input to this new board without FWC input;

LE: we might want to receive the agenda from this committee as it does its work, along with the minutes of their proceedings;

PP: Our resolution on this issue does provide KZ with some direction.

#### F. FWC Chair Election

LE: are you, AC, willing to serve as chair if nominated? AC: yes, but I would like to see our fisheries managed conservatively; I do have a trip later this year so I would not be physically present for a meeting or two, so a backup would be appropriate.

LE: What others might be interested in serving as chair?

HD: I nominate PP if he would accept it; PP: I would prefer to wait until January if I decide to run;

HD: I would nominate AC as chair, and PP as vice-chair; AC and PP accepts nomination as presented;

PP: Asked for unanimous consent: granted; AC elected as chair; PP elected as vice chair, for the remainder of the 2023 terms.

#### **X. MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ted: I'd like to thank everyone on the FWC for all their excellent work; I would also like to thank former FWC member and chair, Mike Wood, for all of the excellent work he did on the FWC; I will remember you all, and I appreciate you more than I can express. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

PP: thanks for the kind words; thanks for everything.

HD: thank you; we will help Maija as we go along; I've enjoyed my time with Ted; DNR is doing some major stuff up in the Moose Range, and I would request Maija call them and find out about this and share this with FWC;

LE: thank you to everyone;

PP: thank you for all the support, we have a good history with staff support;

GK: I'm very excited to work with the FWC; I have two kids of my own and that's why I'm getting more involved, for them; I have a lot to learn so I'm going to do a lot of listening.

KZ: thanks for everyone; thanks to Andy for taking us out to fish that provided food for Chickaloon elders; and I'll pay attention to the Jonesville Public Use area in the Moose Range;

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday, October 19, 4 PM, LLCR.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

**Moved by PP; second by LE.**

**Motion passes unanimously.**

*Meeting stands adjourned at 6:41 PM*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Andy Couch, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dated

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ted Eischeid, Planning Division Staff

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dated

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH**

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer AK 99645 Ph.907.861-8606

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Gabe Kitter

*Ex officio:* Jim Sykes**MSB FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION****Memorandum**

19 October 2023

Draft Questions to date for 2023 ADF&amp;G Fishing Season Summary Meeting

**Group A: LE-**

1. Mat Su chinook salmon stocks have been a conservation concern for many years. What factors do you believe are causing this decline and what other than harvest restrictions might be employed to correct this issue? Please provide 2023 escapement counts for Mat Su chinook salmon stocks.
2. Last year, at our request, you provided unfunded research priorities for Cook Inlet commercial and Mat Su sport fish management. Are these still your priorities? If not, please provide updated research priorities for both divisions.

**Group B: AC-**

1. What is the Department's best estimate for the amount of Northern Cook Inlet sockeye salmon caught by the drift fleet for each opening in 2020, 2021, 2022, and if available 2023?
2. Using historical data, considering harvest by all other Upper Cook Inlet user groups under current fishing regulations, and with the department's current escapement goal ranges — how many Northern District set nets may realistically be fished throughout the July 20 — August 10 timeframe, if the management objective was to provide a reasonable chance of attaining at least the mid-point level of each Northern Cook Inlet sockeye and coho salmon spawning escapement goal range, while at the same time providing a full season ( June 25 — September

30) of harvest opportunity with a low probability of emergency inseason restriction after August 10 for any Northern Cook Inlet user group on most years.

3. During the past 25 years, are there any fishing seasons that achieved at least the mid-point level of each Northern Cook Inlet sockeye salmon and coho salmon spawning escapement goal? If so, which year(s) did this occur?
4. If there are fishing seasons, during the past 25 years, where at least the mid-point level of each Northern Cook Inlet sockeye and coho salmon spawning escapement goal range was attained — Did this ever occur without inseason emergency restriction (to any Northern Cook Inlet user group after August 1)? If so, which year(s)?
5. What is the Department's best estimate for the amount of Northern Cook Inlet coho salmon caught by the drift fleet for each opening in 2020, 2021, 2022, and if available 2023? Please discuss the department's best data for drift coho harvests after August 1 through season's end by emergency order.

#### **Group C: AC-**

1. During the 2023 sockeye season ADF&G did not install or staff the Judd Lake sockeye salmon weir project. What happened with the funding for that project? Since Commercial Fish did not operate Judd Lake weir in 2023 — would it be willing to fund and staff each of the 3 Susitna sockeye weir projects (Chelatna Lake, Judd Lake, and Larson Lake) in 2024?
2. Would you please provide 2023 Northern District season total Chinook, sockeye, and coho salmon harvest numbers for each commercial statistical area?
3. Does ADF&G intend to staff either Little Susitna River Public Use Facility or Susitna Landing on a similar schedule as occurred prior to this year during the 2024 season? Please explain.
4. How many Chinook salmon would ADF&G estimate were harvested from the Eklutna Tailrace/ Knik River sport fishery in 2023? From the Ship Creek sport fishery in 2023?
5. How many coho salmon would ADF&G estimate were harvested from the Little Susitna River sport fishery and Deshka River sport fishery in 2022? And in 2023? What is an average sport fishery coho salmon exploitation rate for Little Susitna River? for Deshka River?

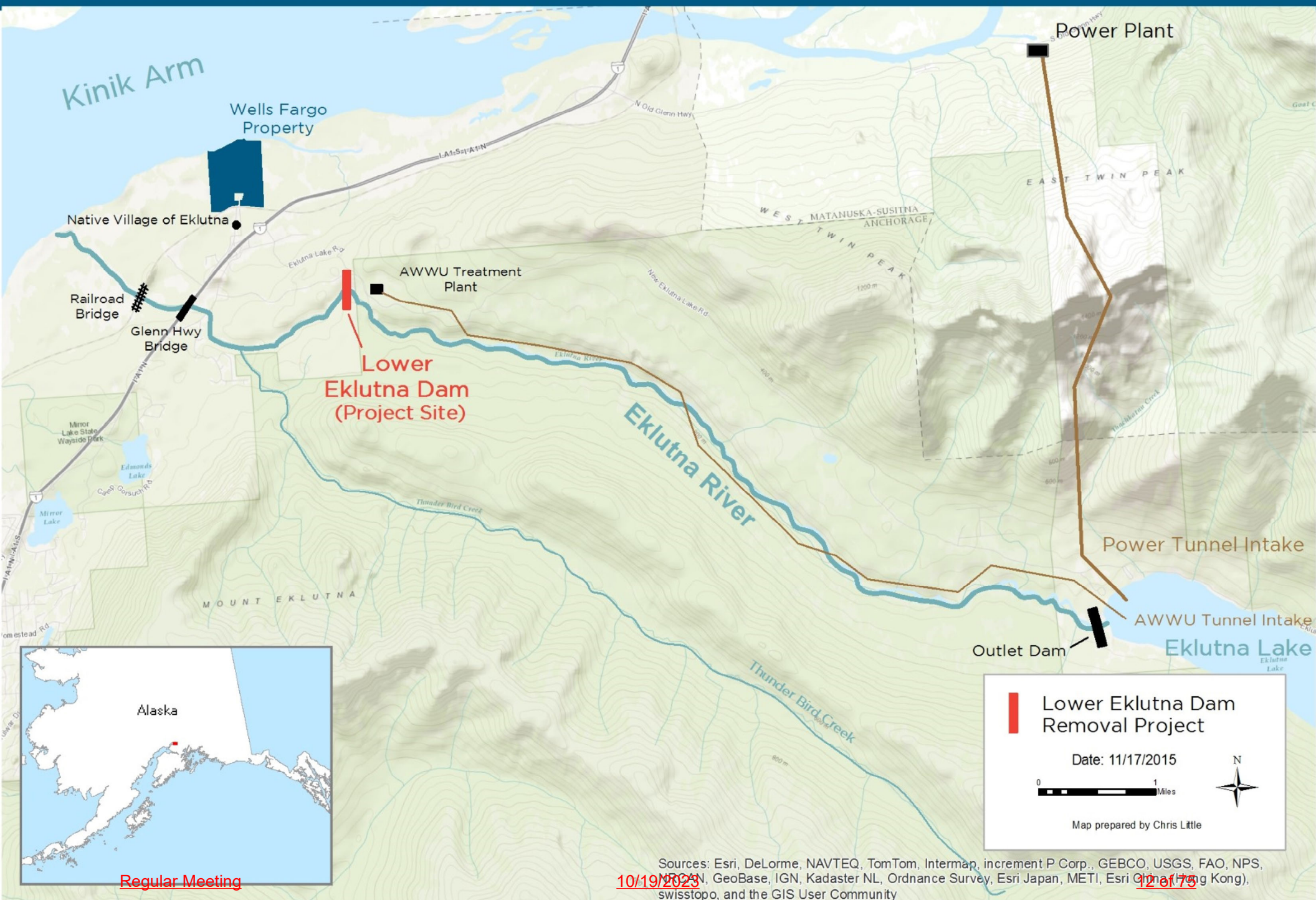


6. What is the reported permit days of effort, sockeye harvest, and coho salmon harvest from the Fish Creek and lower Susitna River personal use fisheries in 2023?

DRAFT

# Eklutna Dam Removal

THE  
CONSERVATION FUND





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## Native Village of Eklutna

Tribal Government

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### Resolution 2022-04

#### **Addendum to Resolution 2019-11**

**Łiq'a nagh qinqtudel - We are hopeful the salmon will return to us.**

**On behalf of Native Village of Eklutna people, the Traditional Tribal Council supports restoration of Eklutna River and Lake salmon habitat. This includes; 1) continuous flow in the river below the lake sufficient to support thriving salmon populations, with intermittent higher, habitat maintenance and re-creation flows, 2) salmon passage between Eklutna River and Lake, and 3) moderation of Eklutna Lake level variability, at levels sufficient to facilitate sockeye spawning.**

**WHEREAS**, Native Village of Eklutna is a distinct, independent political community and as such is qualified to exercise powers of self-governance by reason of its original tribal sovereignty as passed down from ancestors since time immemorial; and

**WHEREAS**, *Idlughet Qayeht'ana* utilized their collective indigenous sovereign powers to re-organize into a Tribal Council form of government in 1961, named "*Native Village of Eklutna*" that is neither a profit nor non-profit corporation; and

**WHEREAS**, Native Village of Eklutna is a traditional tribal government recognized by citizens, tribes, ANCSA Corporations, and others; it is federally recognized as "*Eklutna Native Village*" by the United States in 26 U.S.C. section 7871, Indian Tribal Governmental Tax Status Act of 1982, confirmed by Congress in the 1994 Tribal List Act; and

**WHEREAS**, the *Constitution of Native Village of Eklutna*, approved by the Eklutna Tribal Membership on January 27, 1996, and amended on January 29, 2000, designates the Tribal Council as the governing body, with the sovereign powers of Eklutna vested in "*the Council*" including specific and general powers; and

**WHEREAS**, NVE Resolution 2000-33 declares that Eklutna River has provided nutritional and cultural benefit to Eklutna Dena'ina throughout time immemorial, but its productivity has been degraded in recent years. And Eklutnas wish to restore the Eklutna River for fish and wildlife habitat, traditional subsistence uses, and sustainable natural resources development; and

**WHEREAS**, to thrive above Thunderbird Creek, salmon need water released continuously downriver from Eklutna Lake. Also needed are periodic larger flows to reset the current anemic single strand channel with embedded boulders, and restore off-channel habitat; and

**WHEREAS**, the largest Eklutna system fishery should be red salmon that spawn in Eklutna Lake. There is also good spawning habitat for Chinook and coho, in the river tributaries above the lake. They all need fish passage, like a fish ladder to get to and from the lake; and

**WHEREAS**, moderation and coverage of the current broad divergence area between high and low lake levels would allow sockeye to use the potentially excellent spawning habit found there; and


**WHEREAS**, new engineering of the lake outlet, dam, water release gate and a fish ladder are needed to mitigate for the above circumstances; and

**WHEREAS**, federal funding could be made available for such mitigation;

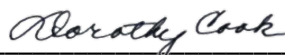
**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, on behalf of Native Village of Eklutna people, the Traditional Tribal Council supports restoration of Eklutna River and Lake salmon habitat. This includes; 1) continuous flow in the river below the lake sufficient to support thriving salmon populations, with intermittent higher, habitat maintenance and re-creation flows, 2) salmon passage between Eklutna River and Lake, and 3) moderation of Eklutna Lake level variability, at levels sufficient to facilitate sockeye spawning.

Īiq'a nagh qinqtudeĭ - We are hopeful the salmon will return to us.

By a vote of 7 for, 0 against, 0 abstained, 0 absent, this resolution was duly approved with a quorum established on this 14th day of May, 2022



Aaron Leggett, Tribal Council President



Dorothy Cook, Tribal Council Secretary



MARY PELTOLA  
ALASKA, AT LARGE

2314 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5765

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 12, 2023

Arthur Miller  
Chugach Electric Association, CEO  
5601 Electron Drive, Anchorage AK 99519-6300  
PO Box 196300, Anchorage AK 99519-6300

Dear Mr. Miller,

I write to you regarding the Eklutna River, and the requirements of the 1991 Agreement passed by Congress and led by the late Congressman, Don Young. As required by Congress, the utilities you manage are re-balancing hydropower production with the interests of the Eklutna Dena'ina and the needs of salmon. Like my predecessor, Congressman Don Young, I support the efforts of the Eklutna Dena'ina to restore their river and the salmon runs they depend upon. The Eklutna Dena'ina Village has been at its current location for over a thousand years.

In the collisions of history, Alaska Natives often came last. This is certainly true with the Eklutna Dena'ina and the Eklutna River. The Eklutna River was repeatedly dammed without consulting the Native Village of Eklutna, cutting off water to salmon and blocking access to their spawning grounds. Without water and without fish passage, the salmon in the Eklutna River dwindled, and the culture of the Eklutna Dena'ina dwindled.

I commend the people of Eklutna for their patient endurance and quiet determination to recover from the slings of history. The Eklutna Dena'ina led the removal of the Lower Eklutna River Dam, a complex and difficult project that captured national attention and broad popular, political, and financial support. That was only the first step, however.

Now we must take the next step. In the months ahead you will consider ways to mitigate the impacts of the Eklutna Hydropower Project. Built by the federal government in 1953 and sold to your utilities in 1997, the Eklutna Project never reckoned with its effects on Alaska Natives and salmon. The intent of Congress in authorizing the sale of the Eklutna Hydropower Project was clear: you must mitigate for drying up the Eklutna River for the past 70 years.

In another oversight of history, the Eklutna Dena'ina were not a party to the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement that now guides the work underway. The Eklutna Dena'ina have asked to be recognized as a formal party to the 1991 Agreement, and it is my hope that they be treated as such. To give full weight to the interests of the Eklutna Dena'ina, the Final Fish and Wildlife

MARY PELTOLA  
ALASKA, AT LARGE

2314 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

Program should have consensus support from all the signatories to the 1991 Agreement and the Native Village of Eklutna.

I encourage you to find ways to restore continuous water flows and fish passage so that salmon can swim from the ocean to Eklutna Lake. A wide variety of funding mechanisms exist to implement engineering solutions that meet these goals, and I stand ready to assist in securing federal funds as needed. I recognize that Eklutna Hydro is an important source of low-cost renewable energy, but it should not come at the expense of salmon, our ultimate renewable resource. Let's not forget what an incredible business partner the Eklutna people have been to the utilities since the passage of ANCSA and the formation of Eklutna Inc. in 1972. Since then, every time the utilities needed land for development of their infrastructure, land for powerlines and new generation stations, the Eklutna people stepped up and showed support. Now they are asking for your support.

Salmon bind us together as Alaskans. You and your utilities can be heroic here, and I encourage you to join me in stepping up to this challenge.

Sincerely,



Mary Peltola

Congresswoman for all Alaska

September 11, 2023

Ms. Samantha Owen  
Senior Regulatory and Licensing Consultant  
McMillen Jacobs Associates  
1101 Western Avenue, Suite 706  
Seattle, Washington 98104

Re: Fish and Wildlife Program preferred alternative for the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project; 1991  
Fish and Wildlife Agreement

Dear Ms. Owen:

In your capacity representing the three owners of the Eklutna Hydroelectric Project, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) herein provides you with our recommendations (enclosed) for a Fish and Wildlife Program plan (Fish and Wildlife Program) pursuant to the *1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement for Snettisham and Eklutna Projects* (1991 Agreement). The 1991 Agreement is contained in the *Divestiture Summary Report: Sale of Eklutna and Snettisham Hydroelectric Projects*<sup>1</sup>. As a party to the 1991 Agreement, we have been involved in the development of the Fish and Wildlife Program, including the study plan development, review of findings, and evaluation of alternatives for the protection, mitigation of damages to, and enhancement of fish and wildlife. The process established by Anchorage Municipal Light and Power, Chugach Electric Association, and Matanuska Electric Association, owners of the Eklutna Project (collectively, the “Owners”), has been consistent with the intent of the 1991 Agreement provisions and inclusive of significant stakeholders who are not parties. Our recommendations include an incremental approach to mitigation to address project related impacts on in-river flow, habitat, and fish passage.

The 1991 Agreement was established based on the Federal divestiture of the Eklutna and Snettisham Hydropower Projects. Sale of the Alaskan hydropower projects managed under the Alaska Power Administration was proposed in 1986. The proposal sought to end the Federal power program in Alaska that operated the Eklutna and Snettisham Hydropower Projects. In the development of legislation to authorize the sale in 1989, concerns were raised about post-sale management of fish and wildlife resources. Specifically, the review process identified loss of a sockeye salmon run that once spawned in Eklutna Lake<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Alaska Power Administration. 1992. Divestiture Summary Report: Sale of Eklutna and Snettisham Hydroelectric Projects, U.S. Department of Energy. April 1992. Page 10, Informal Consultation with NMFS, [Brad] Smith, December 4-6, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Idib.



This loss of sockeye in the Eklutna Lake and the interests of State and Federal resource agencies to mitigate project-related effects to fish and wildlife led to the 1991 Agreement between the “Purchasers” (now the Owners), the State of Alaska, and the Departments of Interior and Commerce for the protection, mitigation, and enhancement of fish and wildlife resources affected by Eklutna and Snettisham Hydroelectric Projects.

The 1991 Agreement outlines a process of consultation, studies, and public involvement for the development of a Fish and Wildlife Program. The Fish and Wildlife Program development requires oversight and final approval by the Governor of Alaska. The Fish and Wildlife Program must be implemented by the Owners at their expense<sup>3</sup>. Federal and State resource agencies concluded that the measures outlined in the 1991 Agreement would provide a process similar to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing process under the Federal Power Act. The parties suggested that the proposed arrangements of the 1991 Agreement would function “*at least as well as Federal regulation for the intended purpose of mitigation and enhancement of affected fish and wildlife resources*”, and therefore, sufficient to restore and maintain habitat<sup>4,5</sup>. Therefore, the Federal licensing process under the Federal Power Act, as administered by the FERC, was deemed not needed<sup>6</sup>. This agreed-upon exemption from the Federal Power Act requirement to obtain a FERC license was thought to save the purchasers - and their customers - hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual fees<sup>7</sup>.

Since the 1991 Agreement was signed, many changes have occurred that influence the potential scope of mitigation and restoration efforts on the Eklutna River and Eklutna Lake. The State regulatory authority for actions impacting anadromous fish habitat changed from the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in 2008. Surveys of the Eklutna River completed to update ADF&G’s Anadromous Waters Catalog between 1997 and 2023 indicated the presence of all 5 species of Pacific salmon. We recently completed a Government-to-Government consultation with the Native Village of Eklutna (NVE) regarding this hydroelectric project. Assessments completed by the NVE documented the presence of four resident fish species along with Pacific salmon.

<sup>3</sup> 1991 Agreement. *See also* Alaska Power Administration. 1992. Environmental Assessment: Submittal of a Legislative Proposal to Congress for the sales of the Eklutna and the Snettisham Projects. March 1992. (DOE/BA--0614). Contained within the Divestiture Summary Report: Sale of Eklutna and Snettisham Hydroelectric Projects, Alaska Power Administration, U.S. Department of Energy, April 1992.

<sup>4</sup> idib

<sup>5</sup> The 1991 Agreement cannot function “*at least as well*” as federal regulation because it does not include fish passage provisions provided under Section 18 of the Federal Power Act, whereby the FERC “*shall require the construction, maintenance, and operation by a licensee at its own expenses of such... fishways as may be prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Commerce, as appropriate.*” 16 U.S.C. § 811. Absent this statutory authority, Federal resource agency parties to the Agreement cannot mandate fish passage measures necessary to mitigate direct project related impacts.

<sup>6</sup> Alaska Power Administration. 1992.

<sup>7</sup> House Report 104-187. Alaska Power Administration Sale Act. July 1995.



Between 2000 and 2022, the NVE Tribal Council published multiple resolutions expressing their interest to restore the salmon runs that historically returned to the Eklutna River, with a particular emphasis on restoring the sockeye salmon run. Traditional Ecological Knowledge provided by NVE indicates that the Eklutna River sockeye run was extirpated following the construction of the lower dam in 1929. With the removal of the lower dam in 2018, NVE has resolved to work towards restoring the passage of sockeye to Eklutna Lake. NVE strongly desires to be recognized as a party to the 1991 Agreement. To date, NVE has not been recognized as a party to the agreement but included in the study plan and review of findings processes ahead of the public review.

A pervasive factor influencing the decision making process for fisheries and habitat is climate change. The *Fourth National Climate Assessment for Alaska*<sup>8</sup> indicates, among other findings, that the state has been warming twice as fast as the global average since the middle of the 20th century and that average annual precipitation increases are projected for all areas of the state. A recent climate change downscaling model for a proposed high latitude hydropower project<sup>9</sup> indicates a trend of significantly warmer temperatures in summer (1.0-1.7 °C) and winter (2-3 °C) for 2040-2060. Precipitation trends identified in this model indicate slightly higher precipitation in summer (5-15%) and winter (10-15%). The modeled and observed climate related trends demonstrate implications for the Eklutna Hydropower Project operations and mitigation efforts of the Fish and Wildlife Program, specifically related to water control. Warming trends and increased precipitation will influence the impoundment level throughout the year, potentially leveling the flow duration curve, and will likely increase the potential for uncontrolled spill at the existing dam. Our recommendations take this future trend into consideration to build resilience for the habitat, fisheries, and infrastructure.

Our enclosed recommended mitigation measures address the direct project related impacts associated with water flow in the river, as well as the effects on anadromous fish associated with historical dam construction in the watershed. Our recommendations are based on information derived from the 1991 Agreement planning process, which included two years of studies and a review of alternatives proposed by parties and other stakeholders. This planning process was well organized, inclusive, and informative. Our recommendations also reflect the results of our consultation with the NVE, and we note that the restoration of fish and wildlife to the Eklutna River and Lake is the guiding interest of the NVE in support of their cultural way of life and for providing subsistence harvest for their people.

<sup>8</sup> USGCRP, 2018: *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II*. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, 1515 pp. doi: 10.7930/NCA4.2018.

<sup>9</sup> The Nuyakuk Hydropower Project on the Nuyakuk River is located approximately 330 miles southwest of the Eklutna Lake. The downscaling model encompassed an area surrounding the Wood-Tikchik State Park.

The 1991 Agreement includes an equal consideration clause stating, *“In order to ensure that Eklutna [is] best adapted for power generation and other beneficial public uses, the Governor shall give equal consideration to the purposes of efficient and economical power production, energy conservation, the protection, mitigation of damage to, and enhancement of fish and wildlife (including related spawning grounds and habitat), the protection of recreation opportunities, municipal water supplies, the preservation of other aspects of environmental quality, other beneficial public uses, and requirements of state law.”* We considered this equal consideration provision in the development of our recommendations. Lastly, we reviewed supporting documents associated with the 1991 Agreement, including the Divestiture Summary Report, the 1992 Environmental Assessment, and 1995 House Report.

The 1991 Agreement states the parties entered into the agreement *“...regarding protection, mitigation of damages to, and enhancement of fish and wildlife (including related spawning grounds and habitat) affected by hydroelectric development of the Eklutna and Snettisham Projects.”* This statement generally addresses the impetus for the 1991 Agreement; however, this statement leaves the goals and objectives of the Fish and Wildlife Program open to interpretation. The NVE provided a resolution<sup>10</sup> stating their interests for a continuous flow of water in the river below Eklutna Lake sufficient to support thriving salmon populations; intermittent habitat maintenance and recreation flows; salmon passage into Eklutna Lake; and moderation of Eklutna Lake level variability at levels sufficient to facilitate sockeye spawning. We support those goals as a means to outline objectives of the Fish and Wildlife Program plan to mitigate project related impacts on public trust resources.

The staged implementation approach outlined in our recommendations is based on the Owners’ ability to immediately introduce water to the river through existing infrastructure and the time needed to take more substantial action in support of the above stated objectives. The 1991 Agreement stipulates that the Owners will begin the process to develop the Fish and Wildlife Program no later than 25 years after the Transaction Date (1997); begin implementing all provisions no later than 30 years after the Transaction Date; and complete all provisions no later than 35 years after the Transaction Date. This establishes a 5-year window to complete the Fish and Wildlife Program should implementation begin at the 30-year mark<sup>11</sup>. This provision is overly restrictive when considering the potential for large-scale infrastructure modification needed to mitigate all project-related effects. This brief time frame to implement Fish and Wildlife Program measures is further restrictive given the provision that the 1991 Agreement shall *“...remain in full force and effect so long as that project remains in operation.”* For comparison, the 5-year implementation window is inconsistent with the typical implementation of mitigation measures at federally licensed hydropower projects.

<sup>10</sup> Native Village of Eklutna Tribal Government Resolution 2022-04, Addendum to Resolution 2019-11. May 14, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> The Owners are currently on track to begin implementation ahead of schedule, allowing for a longer window to complete the Program; however, that may only add 1-2 years.

As is common with federally licensed hydropower projects, the process to complete mitigation measures can be lengthy, particularly for substantial or intensive infrastructure actions. It is common for provisions of settlement agreements or FERC license requirements to take 10 to 15 years to complete. Permitting, design, and construction alone can span many years beyond a 5-year window. Furthermore, typical mitigation measures required as FERC license articles and within settlement agreements consider adaptive management. Implementation of mitigation measures often requires modification based on studies. Generally, that process can take 3 to 5 years or more depending on the complexity.

As resource managers, we recognize the balance between the need to mitigate habitat and fisheries impacts, build climate related resilience, allow time for fish runs to recover, and allow for the time necessary to implement those measures. In the spirit of emulating the FERC licensing process, a staged implementation with adaptive management should be given due consideration.

We appreciate the extensive work and coordination that went into the planning process. Please contact Sean McDermott ([sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov](mailto:sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov)) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Jonathan M. Kurland  
Regional Administrator

cc: Marc Lamoreaux, NVE, [marcl@eklutna.org](mailto:marcl@eklutna.org)  
Brenda Hewitt, NVE, [bhewitt@eklutna.org](mailto:bhewitt@eklutna.org)  
Carrie Brophil, NVE, [cbrophil@eklutna.org](mailto:cbrophil@eklutna.org)  
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Sean Ellenson, McMillen Corp, [ellenson@mcmillencorp.com](mailto:ellenson@mcmillencorp.com)  
Austin Williams, TU, [austin.williams@tu.org](mailto:austin.williams@tu.org)  
Brad Meiklejohn, Conservation Fund, [bmeiklejohn@conservationfund.org](mailto:bmeiklejohn@conservationfund.org)

Enclosure: National Marine Fisheries Service recommended mitigation measures for the Eklutna Hydropower Project Fish and Wildlife Program under the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement

## Enclosure

### National Marine Fisheries Service recommendations for the Eklutna Hydropower Project Fish and Wildlife Program under the 1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement

September 11, 2023

The recommended measures outlined below are intended to inform the development of a Fish and Wildlife Program (Fish and Wildlife Program) pursuant to the *1991 Fish and Wildlife Agreement for Snettisham and Eklutna Projects* (1991 Agreement). The overarching goal of these recommended measures is to support functioning, resilient, and sustainable salmon habitat in the Eklutna River and Lake. The objectives of these recommended measures include:

- Restore wild sockeye salmon runs by implementing safe and effective fish passage at the outlet dam.
- Reestablish the Eklutna River hydrology through year-round instream flows that provides in-river and side channel habitat connectivity, fish passage through natural barriers, and provide functional overwintering habitat.
- Reestablish channel maintenance flows that maintain bedform diversity and sediment continuity and modify barriers created from natural rockfalls.
- Restore and enhance instream, off-channel, and lake habitat for fish and wildlife to be in balance with watershed hydrology and sediment loads so that there is channel complexity, floodplain and wetland connectivity, and riparian function.
- Improve water quality at the lake by implementing measures to stabilize banks.
- Enhance spawning and rearing habitat based on functional deficits.
- Modify stream crossing structures that promote stream functionality.
- Facilitate adaptive management and monitoring to maximize the benefits of the implemented mitigation measures.

These objectives support the goals outlined in the Native Village of Eklutna's Tribal Government Resolution 2022-04<sup>12</sup>. The measures are divided into actions that can occur within the implementation window established within the 1991 Agreement and long-term actions that will require additional time to implement and complete. To support maximum benefit of the measures, we recommend an adaptive management approach that includes on-going coordination with the parties and NVE, development of studies evaluating implemented measures, and a process of adopting modifications to those measures.

#### 1. Immediate Action

Immediate actions can be implemented and completed within the five-year period as provided in the 1991 Agreement. These recommendations should be implemented in conjunction with an adaptive management strategy that allows for adjusting the flow regime based on new information and monitoring results.

<sup>12</sup> Native Village of Eklutna Tribal Government Resolution 2022-04, Addendum to Resolution 2019-11. May 14, 2022.

**a. Seasonal Flow**

Current Project operations prevent the discharge of water from Eklutna Lake into the Eklutna River, drying the upper river reach and reducing the habitat functions and values throughout the river. Therefore, water should be returned to the river in two stages. First, the maximum feasible flow should be discharged annually into the Eklutna River from the existing Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) portal located below the existing dam. This flow should be provided for the entirety of the year. Seasonal flows from the AWWU portal should continue until a fixed-wheel gate can be installed at the existing dam. The new gate should provide greater water control and improve the ability to mitigate flow related impacts. Second, after the new gate is installed and operational, the seasonal flows should be to provide through the AWWU portal and the new gate, increasing the combined riverine discharge to:

- 160 cubic feet per second (cfs) from June through October; and
- 75 cfs from November through May.

This schedule for year-round instream flow regime provides spawning and rearing habitat, connectivity to off-channel habitat, and allows fish passage around instream barriers. Unknown variables remain, such as how the channel geometry will change with the new flow regime, how current and future obstructions from rock fall will affect fish passage, which measures for downstream fish passage will be most effective, and how flows will influence anchor ice formation in the channel. The above listed flow regime should be implemented in conjunction with an adaptive management strategy that allows for adjusting the flow based on new information and monitoring results.

**b. Channel Maintenance Flow**

A channel maintenance flow to support habitat diversity and complexity in the Eklutna River should consist of a discharge of 700 cfs released at the dam and may include inflow from the AWWU portal. This channel maintenance flow should occur in 3 of every 10 years to emulate natural events from rainfall and glacial release observed on other Alaskan rivers. The hydrograph of the channel maintenance flow should be shaped such that it is extended at the peak and has a longer tail. A longer (possibly 7 day) initial peak flow should be considered to facilitate an initial channel 'reset'. This mitigation measure should be implemented in conjunction with an adaptive management strategy that allows for adjusting the flow regime based on monitoring results.

**c. Adaptive Management Planning**

Consistent with Federal license requirements for many hydropower projects, we recommend the incorporation of an adaptive management approach to implementing the mitigation measures. The river has not experienced a consistent flow of water since the Federal project was completed, or the presence of salmon, in nearly 100 years. While the completed studies and modeling efforts were informative for this process, we fully expect the river to change in unpredicted ways. The goal of an adaptive management program is to maximize the effectiveness of the mitigation measures by identifying desired outcomes; facilitate a proactive response to changes in the river once implementation of the Fish and Wildlife Program begins; design and review monitoring studies to determine if the selected mechanisms are effective; and adjusting the Fish and Wildlife Program based on study results. Continuation of the existing technical working group could be the basis for this recommendation.

#### **d. Additional Mitigation and Enhancement Measures**

We support implementation of additional mitigation and enhancement measures to offset project related impacts, including:

- Partial lakeside trail repairs to protect habitat quality and recreational use;
- Improvements to or replacement of the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility bridge(s), as appropriate, to support effective habitat improvements and infrastructure resilience under the new flow regime; and
- Habitat restoration in response to the future in-river flow regimes.

### **2. Long-term Actions**

Long-term actions will require implementation and completion outside the implementation period provided in the 1991 Agreement. These recommendations should be implemented in conjunction with an adaptive management strategy that allows for consultation with the parties and the Native Village of Eklutna.

#### **a. Replacement Dam**

We recommend replacing the existing dam with a new structure at the existing site. The new structure should include a water control gate that can regulate flow and manage high-inflow events. The new dam should also incorporate upstream and downstream fish passage facilities. This measure addresses the historical loss of anadromous fish spawning and rearing habitat associated with water resources development while maintaining year-round power generation. The capital expenditure estimates for this measure are substantial and the time for implementation will be lengthy. Therefore, we support a Fish and Wildlife Program that includes time and opportunities for gathering public and financial support with the option.

#### **b. Upstream Fish Passage**

An upstream fishway should be installed to address the historical loss of anadromous fish spawning and rearing habitat associated with water resources development. The fish ladder could be designed to include a nature-like fishway entrance, to the extent practicable, leading to a technical fishway with variable elevation exits. The fish ladder could incorporate design features to facilitate year-round instream flows and also minimize the loss of year-round power generation.

#### **c. Downstream Fish Passage**

A downstream fish passage facility should be installed to attract, capture, and pass outmigrating fish. This facility should include a combination of gate operations to create attraction flows and collection facilities. Alternatively, downstream fish passage could be provided via spill events and during continuous water release through the fish ladder or the new gate, as appropriate, if sufficient attraction flows can be induced.

The final design should minimize loss of hydropower generation, minimize water level fluctuation to provide consistent spawning habitat for the resident kokanee salmon (non-anadromous sockeye salmon), as well as lake-spawning anadromous salmon once fish passage to the lake is restored, and consider the potential effects of ice on operations.

**d. Fishway Design Review**

Continuing the collaborative approach used to date, and consistent with typical Federal license requirements, the Owners should provide fishway design plans to the resource agencies for review. We recommend a review process that encompasses the conceptual design and iterative design stages. Once the fishway is constructed, final as-built drawings that accurately reflect the project as constructed should be made available.

**e. Seasonal Migration Windows**

Fishways should be operational during the migration windows for each life stage of Pacific salmon identified using the facilities. The timing of Pacific salmon migration varies across Alaska's regions. Site specific migration data are lacking for the Eklutna River. As mitigation measures are implemented and Pacific salmon return to the river, data should be collected on the timing of migration. These data will inform the operation of fishway facilities.

**f. Fish Passage Performance Metrics**

The degree to which the fish passage facilities are considered safe, timely and effective should be evaluated based on performance criteria. Fishways (upstream and downstream) must operate in a way that supports a sustainable run. Performance standards typically address survival of adult and juvenile salmon past a project within a specified timeframe. In the event that monitoring results indicate that fishways at the project do not meet the performance criteria, operational and structural modifications should be implemented as part of an adaptive management strategy.



Municipal Clerk's Office  
**Amended and Approved**  
Date: **September 27, 2022**

Submitted by: Assembly Vice-Chair  
Constant, Assembly Members  
Cross, Dunbar and  
Quinn-Davidson  
Prepared by: Legislative Services  
For reading: September 13, 2022

**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**  
**AR No. 2022-262, As Amended**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY IN SUPPORT  
OF EFFORTS TO RESTORE THE EKLUTNA RIVER.**

---

**WHEREAS**, the Native Village of Eklutna is the oldest and largest Dena'ina settlement in the Municipality of Anchorage; and

**WHEREAS**, the Native Village of Eklutna is a Federally recognized Tribe with all of the attached responsibilities, powers, and obligations of a Sovereign, also being recognized by the State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage, and having a government to government relationship with both the Federal government and the government of the Municipality of Anchorage; and

**WHEREAS**, the Eklutna River historically was a major subsistence and cultural resource for the Native Village of Eklutna; and

**WHEREAS**, the Eklutna River watershed has been in a badly degraded condition since 1929 due to hydropower dams and water diversions; and

**WHEREAS**, a principal impact from hydropower development in the Eklutna watershed is the loss of the Eklutna River's salmon runs; and

**WHEREAS**, the Eklutna River still supports five species of salmon, including Cook Inlet king salmon and sockeye salmon, though in greatly diminished numbers from historical levels; and

**WHEREAS**, Eklutna Incorporated, the village corporation for Eklutna, is the largest landowner in the Municipality of Anchorage and owns most of the land along the Eklutna River and around Eklutna Lake; and

**WHEREAS**, the Native Village of Eklutna and Eklutna Inc. have made substantial contributions to the development of the Municipality of Anchorage providing land for school sites, highways, railroads, powerlines and rights-of-way; and

**WHEREAS**, The Native Village of Eklutna, Eklutna Inc., and The Conservation Fund collaborated on a \$7.5 million project to dismantle the Lower Eklutna River dam; and

**WHEREAS**, sediments accumulated behind the Lower Eklutna River Dam remain in the river channel due to low water flow conditions; and



1  
2 **WHEREAS**, little to no water flows out of Eklutna Lake into the Eklutna River  
3 because of water diversions for the Eklutna Power Project; and  
4

5 **WHEREAS**, restored instream flow is necessary to flush the accumulated sediments  
6 downstream and allow for the recovery of salmon habitat; and  
7

8 **WHEREAS**, stabilized lake levels and fish passage for upstream and downstream  
9 migrating salmon to and from Eklutna Lake would restore important spawning and  
10 rearing habitat for salmon; and  
11

12 **WHEREAS**, the Municipality of Anchorage retains a majority interest (52%) in the  
13 Eklutna Power Project; and  
14

15 **WHEREAS**, the Municipality of Anchorage, ~~[along with]~~ Chugach Electric  
16 Association (CEA), and Matanuska Electric Association (MEA), are **parties to the**  
17 **1991 Agreement with the State of Alaska and federal agencies to study [legally**  
18 **obligated to mitigate for]** the impacts of the Eklutna Power Project to fish and  
19 wildlife, **examine and develop proposals for the protection, mitigation, and**  
20 **enhancement of fish and wildlife affected by such hydroelectric development**  
21 **(the “1991 Agreement”), and prepare a Fish and Wildlife Program for the**  
22 **Governor;** and  
23

24 **WHEREAS**, the restoration of instream flow to the Eklutna River and restored fish  
25 passage to and from Eklutna Lake are the most desirable forms of mitigation for  
26 impacts caused by the Eklutna Power Project; and  
27

28 **WHEREAS**, an experimental three-week period of flushing flows in September 2021  
29 allowed for some sediment transport and re-establishment of the river channel,  
30 allowing for more meaningful study results and better mitigation design; and  
31

32 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries  
33 Service, Trout Unlimited, the Native Village of Eklutna, Eklutna Inc. and The  
34 Conservation Fund requested another period of restored instream flow in 2022; and  
35

36 **WHEREAS**, the request for restored instream flow in 2022 was denied by the  
37 Eklutna Power Purchasers; and  
38

39 **WHEREAS**, the Anchorage Assembly supported restoration of the Eklutna River  
40 with the passage of AR 2017-324 titled “A Resolution in Support of Efforts to Restore  
41 the Eklutna River”; and  
42

43 **WHEREAS**, the Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission of the  
44 Municipality of Anchorage supported restoration of the Eklutna River with the  
45 passage of Resolution WNRC 2019-03 titled “A Resolution Regarding Restoration  
46 of the Eklutna River”; and  
47

48 **WHEREAS**, the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) supported restoration of the  
49 Eklutna River with passage of Resolution 20-17 “to restore traditional rivers and

streams for fish and wildlife habitat...in particular, the efforts of tribes like the Native Village of Eklutna"; and

**WHEREAS**, the Traditional Tribal Council of the Native Village of Eklutna supported restoration of Eklutna River and Eklutna Lake with the passage of Resolution 2022-04 for "1) continuous flow in the river below the lake sufficient to support thriving salmon populations, with intermittent higher, habitat maintenance and re-creation flows, 2) salmon passage between Eklutna River and Lake, and 3) moderation of Eklutna Lake level variability, at levels sufficient to facilitate sockeye spawning"; now, therefore

THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RESOLVES:


**Section 1.** The Assembly recognizes that restoration of the Eklutna River, including allowing salmon passage the length of the Eklutna River, to and from Eklutna Lake, and into headwater tributaries, will benefit the Native Village of Eklutna and residents of the Municipality of Anchorage and is a priority of the Municipality **in a manner consistent with the requirements of the 1991 Agreement.**

**Section 2.** The Assembly [~~Municipality of Anchorage~~] commits to the restoration of the Eklutna watershed, including providing instream flow and fish passage the length of the Eklutna River and into Eklutna Lake and requests that, Chugach Electric Association, and Matanuska Electric Association commit as well.

**Section 3.** The Assembly ~~commits~~**directs the Municipality of Anchorage** to work collaboratively with the Native Village of Eklutna, Eklutna Inc., the Eklutna Power Purchasers, and state and federal resource agencies to restore the Eklutna River as soon as possible.

**Section 4.** This resolution shall be effective upon passage and approval.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this 27th day of September, 2022.



Chair

ATTEST:



Municipal Clerk

September 12, 2023

Board of Directors  
Chugach Electric Association  
5601 Electron Way  
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

RE: Eklutna Hydro Mitigation

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of the Board,

We are writing to encourage you to increase your engagement with the Eklutna hydroproject mitigation process. We are grateful for your interest in the topic to date and we request your direct involvement in the process at this critical juncture.

Here are the reasons we feel strongly that the Board's action is needed:

- The Eklutna Hydroelectric Project Owners (CEA, MEA, and MOA) are set to release a Draft Fish and Wildlife Program in October 2023.
- This Draft represents a position statement of CEA and, hence, the CEA Board.
- The Draft will identify the AWWU Portal Option as the Eklutna Owners' Preferred Alternative.
- The AWWU Portal option would leave ~1 mile of dry riverbed, fail to reconnect Eklutna River to Eklutna Lake, and will not mitigate the principal harms identified in the 1991 Agreement ("loss of a Sockeye salmon run.")
- The two federal signatories (FWS and NOAA Fisheries), the Native Village of Eklutna, Eklutna Inc., Trout Unlimited, the Alaska Center, and The Conservation Fund agree that Eklutna River must be connected to Eklutna Lake for fish passage and continuous water flow.
- The Eklutna Owners and their consultants (McMillen) have not attempted to reconcile the differences between the parties as is required by the 1991 Agreement. We think this should be done prior to the release of the Draft Fish and Wildlife Program.
- Cost estimates prepared by McMillen are unreliable. For instance, Eklutna Inc. estimates that the Replacement Dam construction costs, providing fish passage, to be tens of millions of dollars less than the figure asserted by McMillen. We believe an independent financial analysis should be conducted of the leading alternatives.
- Significant concerns have been raised about whether and how an AWWU Portal would affect safety, stability, and operations for Anchorage's drinking water system. Periodic

maintenance of the AWWU system requires regular shutdowns that would result in fish strandings. We believe that the AWWU Portal option should be reviewed by an independent engineer for issues of safety, integrity, and feasibility.

- It is our collective opinion that the analysis by McMillen significantly understates the potential spawning and rearing habitat for sockeye salmon and other species in Eklutna Lake and its tributaries, dramatically skewing the cost/benefit analysis.
- Approximately 2/3rds of the Eklutna system would benefit from restored fish passage and require no further restoration. This includes the entirety of Eklutna Lake and its tributaries, which would be the most productive habitats in the system.
- McMillen asserts that the existing landlocked salmon in Eklutna Lake are malnourished because of inherent low primary productivity. It is likely that the lack of marine nutrients that would be imported by returning salmon is depressing this productivity and holding these fish back.
- The fundamental issue of environmental justice to the Eklutna Dena'ina has been substantially devalued in the 1991 Agreement process.

Many of these deficiencies in the 1991 Agreement process to date can and should be addressed before the release of the Draft Fish and Wildlife Program. Our request has been echoed by the federal resource agencies. Please see the letter, attached here, from NOAA Fisheries for an in-depth analysis of the 1991 Agreement process.

This is the only opportunity in our lifetimes to demonstrate that Eklutna hydro power can co-exist with salmon and make amends for nearly a century of cultural and environmental neglect.

We encourage the Board of Directors to get more directly involved now rather than waiting until April 2024. With your input we recommend that the Draft Fish and Wildlife Program include fish passage and continuous flow of water between Eklutna River and Eklutna Lake.

Sincerely,

The Native Village of Eklutna  
Eklutna Inc.  
Trout Unlimited  
The Alaska Center  
The Conservation Fund



ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES  
2020 ANNUAL CONVENTION  
RESOLUTION 20-17

TITLE: RESTORATION OF TRADITIONAL SALMON HABITAT

WHEREAS: The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native organization in Alaska, and its membership includes 168 federally recognized tribes, 166 village corporations, 8 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs; and

WHEREAS: The mission of AFN is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic, and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community; and

WHEREAS: AFN supports food security and recognizes the cultural and religious role that Salmon plays in Alaska, advancing the cultural, economic, political, and general welfare of Alaska Natives with the protection of Native food security and subsistence rights and uses among its highest priorities; and

WHEREAS: throughout Alaska, rivers and streams have provided nutritional and cultural benefit to Alaska Native people throughout time immemorial, but in many cases, the productivity of salmon-producing rivers and streams has been degraded over the years through human development of hydroelectric projects and other projects which alter the natural flow of Alaska rivers for uses besides traditional salmon production; and

WHEREAS: Alaska Native people wish to restore the traditional rivers and streams for fish and wildlife habitat, traditional subsistence uses, and sustainable natural resources development; and also believe that the communal harvesting efforts and the sharing and preservation of resources like Alaska Salmon stocks are fundamental values that served to unify Natives; and

WHEREAS: our harvest and utilization of natural resources are vital to our communities' social and economic well-being and the survival of Alaska Native cultures; and

WHEREAS: many Alaska Tribes are used to working with others, including resource management agencies, conservation organizations, and electrical power utilities, to restore traditional salmon runs by river and stream restoration projects, including the return of water to river and lake systems, where water has been diverted for electricity generation and secondarily for water consumption needs; and

WHEREAS: the leaving of insufficient water flows for salmon in such river and stream systems makes them insufficient to support runs of Alaska salmon; and,

WHEREAS: the Eklutna River is just such an example of a river and lake systems in Southcentral Alaska where the traditional Tribe has been working to achieve salmon restoration and has affirmed, supported, and authorized studies to inform and to conduct restoration and enhancement of salmon habitat, and other processes to promote the natural productivity, cultural value, and appropriate uses of the Eklutna River; and

WHEREAS: Salmon have been the most important nutritional and cultural natural resource for Alaska Natives like the Eklutna people who work with others, including ANCSA Regional and Village corporations, conservation organizations, resource management agencies, and the power companies, to restore Eklutna River salmon runs by restoring water to the River from Eklutna Lake, where it is diverted for electricity generation and secondarily for Anchorage water needs leaving insufficient flows for salmon in a salmon system which once supported a run of red salmon.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Federation of Natives, meeting in its 2020 Annual Convention, supports efforts to restore traditional rivers and streams for fish and wildlife habitat, traditional subsistence uses, and sustainable natural resources development, and in particular, supports tribes like Native Village of Eklutna, which is actively engaged with stakeholders and policymakers to restore the Eklutna River for salmon habitat.

SUBMITTED BY: NATIVE VILLAGE OF EKLUTNA

COMMITTEE ACTION: DO PASS

BOARD ACTION: ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 8, 2020

STATE OF ALASKA, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF MINING, LAND & WATER  
LAND CONVEYANCE SECTION

**Status Update for Beaver Meadows Subdivision, Preliminary Decision – ADL 233752**

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW), Land Conveyance Section (LCS) will not extend the public comment period for the Beaver Meadows Subdivision and Mineral Order, therefore the comment period will end on Wednesday August 30, 2023, as scheduled. Based on input received through this public notice process and ongoing work by agency staff, LCS does not intend to issue a Final Finding and Decision at this time. LCS intends to review the comments received and complete additional research. At a later date, DNR may issue a Final Finding and Decision approving the project as proposed, modify the project and approve the project with modifications in a Final Finding and Decision, or issue an Amended Preliminary Decision with another minimum 30-day public comment period.

If a Final Finding and Decision is issued, LCS will send a copy of the decision and mineral order to any individual or agency who provided timely comment on the Preliminary Decision.

LCS intends to continue public engagement about the proposed project to discuss the project status, additional findings, and receive additional information about the proposed project. LCS will schedule and provide a separate notice of those meetings at a later date.

STATE OF ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF MINING, LAND AND WATER

**PRELIMINARY DECISION**  
**Beaver Meadows Subdivision – ADL 233752**

**Proposed Land Offering in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough**  
*AS 38.05.035(e), AS 38.05.045*

**RELATED ACTION:**  
**Proposed Mineral Order (Closing)**  
*AS 38.05.185 and AS 38.05.300*

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ENDS 5:00PM, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30, 2023**

**I. Proposed Action(s)**

*Preliminary Decision: Beaver Meadows Subdivision - ADL 233752*

*Attachment A: Vicinity Map*

*Attachment B: Public Notice*

*Public is also invited to comment on the proposed related action:*

*Draft Mineral Order (Closing) MO 1261.*

Primary Proposed Action: The primary proposed action of this Preliminary Decision of the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW), Land Conveyance Section (LCS) is to offer for sale State-owned land within the identified project area. If approved, surveyed parcels will be offered for sale.

LCS proposes to sell land within the Beaver Meadows Subdivision project area for the purpose of providing land for settlement by developing a subdivision of no more than 105 parcels varying in size no smaller than one nominal acre (40,000 sq. ft.). Subdivision design may include additional tracts, as necessary. The project consists of approximately 350 acres of the 704-acre project area, identified for disposal by this proposed action. The project area may be subdivided and offered in multiple stages.

After consideration of public comment, the size and boundaries of the project area will be described in a subsequent Final Finding and Decision (FFD), if the project proceeds to that step. Additional adjustments may be made prior to survey/subdivision, as described in the applications to the platting authority, as needed to reserve areas for public use, minimize conflicts between uses, or ensure compliance with platting requirements. Although actions under this proposal are limited to the stated maximums, additional offerings may be authorized under future proposals, which could increase the density of privately-owned parcels within, adjacent to, or near the project area.

Proposed Related Action: This related action will be developed separately, however; public notice is being conducted concurrently.



*Mineral Order (Closing)*: DNR proposes to close the project area to new mineral entry. There are no mining claims within the project area. Refer to the Mineral Activity and Order(s) subsection of this document for more information on this proposed related action.

This related action will be developed separately. However; approval of the proposed actions are dependent upon one another in that one action will not proceed without approval of all actions.

Public Notice of Proposal: In accordance with AS 38.05.945 *Notice*, during a period of at least 30 consecutive days, the public will have the opportunity to submit written comment on this proposal. Public notice for all actions is being conducted concurrently.

Public Meeting: LCS will be holding a public meeting to discuss the proposal and share information about the project area. The public meeting will be held from 5 to 7 pm on Tuesday August 22, 2023, at the Big Lake Lions Club, 2942 Lions Circle, Big Lake, AK.

See **Section XVII. Submittal of Public Comments** at the end of this document and *Attachment B: Public Notice* for details on how to submit a comment for consideration. If, after consideration of timely, written comments, LCS moves forward with the proposal, a FFD will be issued.

## **II. Method of Sale**

LCS proposes to offer for sale land within the project area as described herein, through a future offering under AS 38.05.045 *Generally*.

Parcels offered through this action are offered fee-simple for the surface estate only. For more information about the land sales program, please visit <http://landsales.alaska.gov>.

## **III. Authority**

DNR has the authority under AS 38.05.045 *Generally* to sell State-owned land if, on preparation and issuance of a written finding, it is determined to be in the best interest of the State, as required by AS 38.05.035(e) *Powers and Duties of the Director*. Article VIII, Section 1, of the Constitution of the State of Alaska states "It is the policy of the State to encourage the settlement of its land and the development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest." In addition, if it is deemed appropriate, DNR has the authority to develop and offer parcels larger than 5 acres under the allowances listed in AS 38.04.020(h) *Land Disposal Bank*.

For related actions, AS 38.05.300 *Classification of Land*, and AS 38.05.185 *Generally* allow for mineral orders.

## **IV. Administrative Record**

The project file, Beaver Meadows Subdivision - ADL 233752, constitutes the administrative record for this proposed action. Also incorporated by reference are:

- Southeast Susitna Area Plan for State Lands (SSAP, adopted 2008) and associated land classification files;

- *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 2022*
- *Alaska Department of Fish and Game Catalog of Waters Important for the Spawning, Rearing, or Migration of Anadromous Fishes;*
- *Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Development Plan, 2005 Update;*
- *Matanuska-Susitna Borough 2022 Subdivision Construction Manual;*
- *Big Lake Community Council Area Comprehensive Plan Update 2009;*
- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory;*
- *USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service Custom Soil Report for this project, dated January 31, 2022; and*
- DNR case files: State selection files SCH-41 and GS 1387; access easements ADL 34585, ADL 42395, ADL 59061, ADL 76020, ADL 226623, and ADL 227463; utility easements ADL 49546, ADL 227279, and ADL 231195; reservations of water LAS 11975 and LAS 30212; inter-agency management agreements ADL 67519 and ADL 50071; Oil & Gas Lease Sale Tract C10692; trespass ADL 218052 and ADL 224968; and, other cases, documents, reports, etc. referenced herein.

#### **V. Scope of the Proposal**

The scope of this proposal, under the statutes described in the preceding **Section III**.

**Authority**, is limited and specific to LCS's proposal to offer State-owned land within the defined project area for disposal and to conduct the proposed mineral order as described herein. The scope of this proposal does not include the control of post-patent use and LCS does not intend to impose deed restrictions for this purpose. The subdivision may be conducted in multiple stages.

#### **VI. Location**

The project area is located within DNR's Southcentral Region, approximately 1.5 miles west, southwest from the City of Houston, and 1/2 mile north of the Big Lake roundabout, within Sections 16 and 17, Township 17 North, Range 3 West, Seward Meridian, within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB). The project area consists of approximately 704 acres with only approximately 350 acres proposed for development through this action.

The project area is within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and is subject to the borough's platting authority.

*Native Regional and Village Corporations:* The project area is within the boundaries of the Cook Inlet Regional Corporation. The villages of Alexander Creek, Eklutna, and Knik are within 25 miles of this proposed action and notice will be sent to Alexander Creek, Incorporated, Eklutna, Incorporated, and Knikatu, Incorporated Village Corporations, as well as the Native Village of Eklutna and Knik Tribal Councils.

#### **VII. Property Description**

Section 16, excluding Government Lots 1 and 2, N1/2 NW1/4, Rocky Lake Alaska Subdivision, filed as Plat 67-2230 in the Palmer Recording District on September 28, 1967, and Parcel 1 of Amended Plat 2007-1 Recorded in the Palmer Recording District on January 3, 2007, And

the S1/2 of Section 17, excluding SW1/4 SW1/4 within Township 17 North, Range 3 West, Seward Meridian, Alaska, according to the plat approved by the U.S. Surveyor General's Office on November 29, 1915, containing 704 acres, more or less, as depicted on Attachment A: Vicinity Map.

#### **VIII. Title**

Title Report No. 22356, current as of April 21, 2022, indicates the State of Alaska holds fee title to the land and mineral estate within the project area under Patents 1224981 and 50-68-0271, dated January 19, 1962, and June 19, 1968. The applicable State case file is SCH 41 and GS 1387. The parcel is subject to the reservations, easements and exceptions contained in the federal patent including any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of courts; and there is reserved from the lands hereby granted:

##### *State Reservations of Title:*

*Retention of and Access to Mineral Estate:* In accordance with *Section 6 (i) of the Alaska Statehood Act* and *AS 38.05.125 Reservation [of Rights to Alaska]*, the State retains ownership of the mineral estate that may be in or upon the land that it sells. This retention is for all minerals, including both locatable minerals (such as gold, copper, and silver, etc.), and leasable minerals (such as oil, gas, coal, etc.).

The State and its successors reserve the right to enter onto the land for the purposes of exploring for, developing, and producing these reserved mineral resources. Access reserved to these retained interests is superior to any and all surface uses. The State may also lease these retained interests to mineral developers or allow mining locations to be staked. However, *AS 38.05.130 Damages and Posting of Bond* also provides that the land estate owner will be compensated for damages resulting from mineral exploration and development.

*Navigable Waters:* Per *AS 38.05.126(b) Navigable and Public Waters*, "...the State has full power and control of all of the navigable or public water of the state, both meandered and unmeandered, and the State holds and controls all navigable or public water in trust for the use of the people of the state." This trust is in accordance with the principles of the Public Trust Doctrine, which are included in Article VIII, Section 14 of the Constitution of the State of Alaska and protected in the United States Constitution. It is vested in the title to this land, is not transferable, and the State's title to submerged lands under navigable waters cannot be relinquished by a transfer of the property. In holding with this concept, navigability determinations are made and access will be reserved per *AS 38.05.127 Access To and Along Public and Navigable Water*. For more information, see **Section XIII. Access To, Within, and Beyond Project Area**.

The Bureau of Land Management administratively determined in a Decision, dated September 19, 1986 that there are no navigable water bodies within this township for title purposes.

Where they exist within the project area, State third-party interests will be described in land sales brochures.

## **IX. Physical Characteristics and Hazards**

Information about the project area is based on internal research, information received during agency review, and by-road field inspections conducted on June 16, 2019, March 29, and 31 and May 14, 2022. This is by no means a complete description of the project area and if this proposal is approved and the area offered for sale, it will be the responsibility of interested parties to inspect individual parcels prior to purchase to familiarize themselves with the physical characteristics of the land.

***Terrain and Major Features:*** Generally flat, ranging in elevation between 156 and 160 feet above sea level in the southern portion of the project area along West Rocky Street and West Dawson Street. The northern portion along West Lakes Boulevard has more elevation and rolling hills ranging in elevation from 160 to 180 feet above sea level. Meadow Creek bisects the project area in an east to west direction. The project area consists of vegetated upland areas interspersed with palustrine wetlands.

***View:*** The views are local and of the creek, higher elevations may have mountain views of the Chugach Mountains, Hatcher Pass, and Mount Susitna.

***Vegetation:*** The vegetation is a mix of aspen, spruce, and birch on the higher ground with black spruce, shrubs, and brush on the lower elevations and along the creek. Most of the area was burned in the 1996 Miller Reach Fire and is regenerating with aspen, birch, and spruce.

***Soils:*** Soils within the project area consist of well drained, silty soils on nearly level to rolling terrain, with approximately 50 percent of the project area being interspersed with poorly drained muskegs of poorly drained organic soils. There is no known permafrost within the project area.

***Wetlands:*** Freshwater emergent wetlands and freshwater forested/shrub wetlands may exist adjacent to the creeks and throughout the project area. The project area consists of vegetated upland areas interspersed with palustrine wetlands. Subdivision design will account for wetland areas as appropriate. Dredging or filling of wetlands may require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

***Geologic Hazards:*** Geologic hazards are common throughout Alaska. Should any geologic hazards be discovered in the development of this proposal, information will be included in offering materials. No geological hazards were identified during any of the field inspections.

***Fire Information:*** Pursuant to observations from the field inspections and information received from the Division of Forestry, fire risk in the area is likely not high. Fire history and observations indicate that most of the area was burned in the 1996 Miller Reach fire. The project area is within the Central Mat-Su Fire Service Area #130 and West Lakes Fire Station 8-1 is located in Big Lake on South Big Lake Road.

Potential for wildland fire is high in Southcentral Alaska and other certain parts of the state. Landowners with structures are encouraged to follow the Alaska Wildland Fire

Coordinating Group *Firewise Alaska* recommendations. Offering materials include information regarding wildland fire prevention.

Fire management options and policies for the area are identified in the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan available from DNR Division of Forestry. The current fire management option for the project area is "Critical." The policy on areas with the "Critical" management option reads, "The highest priority for suppression actions. Lands in wildland urban interface and other densely populated areas where there is an immediate threat to human life, primary residences, inhabited property, community-dependent infrastructure, and structural resources designated as National Historic Landmarks should be considered for the Critical Management Option. This classification is applicable to an entire village or town as well as a single inhabited structure." It also states that there is no guarantee of protection from wildfire in any management option. It is the responsibility of landowners to mitigate and minimize risk to their property before it becomes threatened by a wildfire.

*Flood Hazard:* The project area is within FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map Community Panels 02170C8005E and 02170C8015E, (2011 Not Printed). The project area is within flood zones D, defined as an area of undetermined flood hazard, and X, defined as an area of minimal flood hazard. There is potential for seasonal flooding and erosion of parcels adjacent to water bodies, especially in low-lying areas.

*Water Resources:* All surface and subsurface waters on all lands in Alaska are a public resource, subject to appropriation in accordance with the Alaska Water Use Act (AS 46.15). There are several water rights in the vicinity but outside of the project area. They are mostly associated with private landowners of the Rocky Lake Subdivision in Section 16. Information from well logs indicates that well depths in the vicinity typically range from 40 to 70 feet. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) holds a Certificate of Reservation on the first 4.7 miles of Meadow Creek, which covers the entire project area. Potential water sources in the area include hauling water or drilled well. Water quality is unknown. Additional information on wells, water quality, and drinking water may be obtained from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

*Utilities:* This area is currently served by Matanuska Electric Association, Inc. (MEA), ENSTAR Natural Gas Company, and Matanuska Telephone Association, Inc (MTA).

*Waste Disposal:* The MSB operates a Transfer Station and recycle center in Big Lake along West Hollywood Road. All on-site wastewater disposal systems must meet the regulatory requirements of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

**X. Background**

The project area was identified in the Southeast Susitna Area Plan as settlement lands. The project area consists of all of management unit H-18, excluding the 40-acre parcel in Section 20 that has limited access, and the existing Rocky Lake Subdivision in Section 16. The Big Lake Fish Hatchery, which is within the project area along Beaver Lake Road, was conveyed into private ownership. The purchaser has submitted a land sale nomination form for the lands adjacent to the hatchery. Right of ways for access, and utility easements exist throughout the project area. Public easements have been issued for Beaver Lake Road (ADL 59061), W Dawson Drive (ADL 34585), and W Lakes Boulevard (ADL 76020). Public easements have been issued to Matanuska Telephone Association along W Dawson Drive and W Lakes Boulevard (ADL 231195 and ADL 227279). At the west end of Dawson Street there are two public access easements from Dawson Street to private property (ADL 227463 and ADL 226623), and a public utility easement issued to Matanuska Electric Association (ADL 49546). Additionally, there is an undeveloped access easement heading west from the Rocky Lake Subdivision (ADL 42395).

There are no known third party conflicts, and no known uses of the land within the project area. There has been garbage and yard waste dumped in the project area. LAS indicates a 1984 trespass (ADL 218052), by an adjacent landowner, involving gravel removal, timber clearing, and wetlands dumping near the end of West Dawson Street. LAS also lists a 1989 application received from the above adjacent landowner, for the upgrading of an existing road. The application became a trespass (ADL 224968) in 1992 when the applicant did not submit an as-built as required. There is also trespass trash in the project area adjacent to Lot 4 of Block 2 in the Rocky Lake Alaska Subdivision. The Department of Fish and Game has two Reservations of Water on Meadow Creek within the project area (LAS 11975 and LAS 30212).

The project area is currently vacant land that has Meadow Creek, an anadromous stream flowing through it. Meadow Creek is a popular fishing area for trout. The management intent of the SSAP calls for the protection of anadromous streams and buffering from adjacent residential structures. Subdivision design will incorporate a minimum 200-foot buffer of retained land (protection area), adjacent to each side of Meadow Creek. Additional lands within the area of the Meadow Creek floodplain and its adjoining wetlands will be retained in accordance with the area plan. Ryan's Creek in the northeast corner of Section 16 will have a minimum 150-foot protection area on each side. During agency review, ADF&G noted that there is an unnamed stream in Section 17 that was planned to be investigated for the presence of juvenile Coho salmon during the summer of 2022. ADF&G completed the investigation and found juvenile Coho salmon in the stream. If any parcels are located along the stream, subdivision design will implement ADF&G's recommended minimum building setback of 100-feet and provide a 50-foot-wide public access easement along each side of the stream. However, during field investigations by LCS staff the area along the unnamed stream in Section 17 was found to be likely too low for development, and will likely be retained.

The federal government patented or tentatively approved lands in the vicinity to the State of Alaska and private homesteaders. The private properties surrounding the project area were acquired from federal, state, and municipal governments. When the MSB incorporated, they selected portions of State land as a part of their municipal entitlement. Some of the lands acquired from the federal government to private individuals were later subdivided and sold.



Big Lake is an area of the State where multiple offerings occurred in the past, and the methods of offerings were variable and widespread in the region. Prior State land offerings near the project area consisted of oddlots (1968 to 1978), open-to-entry (OTE) (pre-1978), remote (circa 1982), preference rights (1980s), public and charitable (circa 1980), and agricultural sales (1980s). Surrounding the project area, oddlot, OTE and preference right sales were conducted. Remote land offerings were offered on the north side of Big Lake, directly north and west of the project area. Agricultural sales were widespread in the region.

South of the project area along the north side of Rocky Lake, the State offered lots for sale in the Rocky Lake Alaska Subdivision. Tracts A & B of that subdivision lie along the east side of the subdivision and are part of the Rocky Lake State Recreation Site (ADL 67519 and ADL 50071). East of the project area is the Big Lake Heights Subdivision with lot sizes of one acre or less. North of Big Lake Heights and along the north side of the project area there are several larger parcels that have been conveyed to the MSB under municipal entitlement. The SW1/4 SW1/4 of Section 17 which is outside the project area is classified as public recreation-dispersed and is to be retained in public ownership. West Dawson Drive runs through the SW1/4 SW1/4 of section 17 to Meadow Creek in Section 19. In Section 20, just South of the project area, there are several smaller parcels along the shore of Big Lake. The NE1/4 NE1/4 of Section 20, which is part of management unit H-18, will be withheld from this offering due to limited access. The greater surrounding area is more developed, consisting of smaller residential and recreational condos, cabins, and homes that affront Big Lake and other nearby lakes.

The 2019 and 2022 field inspections assessed the topography, vegetation, and access to the project area. The southern portion of the project area is mostly flat with local views. The northern portion has a little more elevation in areas and views of the Chugach Mountains, Mount Susitna and Hatcher Pass may be possible. Young aspen, spruce, and birch are regenerating on most of the project area, which was burned during the 1996 Miller Reach Fire. The lower areas and areas along the creeks are mostly open with lowland shrubs, grass, and black spruce. Access to the project area from milepost 52.5 of the Parks Highway is via Big Lake Road to South Beaver Lake Road, a blacktop road, which runs north through the eastern portion of the project area. West Rocky Street, West Dawson Drive, both gravel roads, and West Lakes Boulevard, a blacktop road, provide access to the western portion of the project area. The portion of the project area east of South Beaver Lake Road is approximately 155 acres in size and separated into two parcels by Meadow Creek, which flows east to west through that area.

The soils comprising the higher elevations of the project area primarily consist of silt loam. Organic soils exist in the lower areas and adjacent to the creeks. According to the USDA Web Soil Survey, Class IV, VI, VII and VIII nonirrigated capability class soils are within the project area. These soils are considered to have limitations that restrict or make the soils less suitable for agricultural use. Consistent with surrounding land use, the Beaver Meadows subdivision project area provides better recreational/residential opportunity use than agriculture.

The building setbacks and protection areas along Meadow and Ryan's Creek will impact subdivision design by reducing the available area for sale. Parcels larger than 5 acres may be necessary to increase the return to the state from the sale of the parcels, allow for flexibility during survey, comply with municipal ordinances, minimize adverse effects on wildlife, fishery, public recreation, or to minimize adverse effects on other residential uses in the area. Per AS

38.04.020 the commissioner may determine parcels over 5 acres appropriate for things such as topography, soils, maximize return, etc.

Subdivision design will utilize the existing road access along West Rocky Street, West Dawson Drive and West Lakes Boulevard. To be consistent with the surrounding land use, take advantage of the terrain, existing roads, and avoid the protection areas, design may include parcels of variable size designed to fit where opportunity, MSB code, and terrain allow. East of South Beaver Lake Road there are two larger parcels that may require road construction in order to provide the best return to the State and maximize the opportunity for the local community.

Developing the project area will help provide residential/recreational parcels in an area with a high demand for building lots, may help reduce garbage and trash dumping, provide tax base for the MSB, and protect fish and wildlife habitat with retained lands.

## **XI. Planning and Classification**

The project area is within Southeast Susitna Area Plan (SSAP, adopted 2008), Houston Region, Unit H-18. Lands within this unit are currently designated Settlement, and classified Settlement Land under Land Classification Order No. SC-08-001. The project area consists of that portion of the management unit in Section 16 and Section 17, excluding the Rocky Lake Subdivision. LCS reviewed the general management intent of the area plan, and management unit H-18 for consistency with the proposed offering.

*Unit H-18 Considerations:* Portions of this unit are appropriate for land disposal during the planning period. Development within the area of the Meadow Creek floodplain and its adjoining wetlands shall be avoided. Protect anadromous stream and provide buffering from adjacent residential structures. Maintain a 200' protection area adjacent to Meadow Creek. Subdivision design will incorporate a 200-foot retained buffer on each side of Meadow Creek and a 150-foot retained buffer on each side of Ryan's Creek. The majority of parcels will be separated from existing private properties by roads or retained areas. The parcels adjacent to Big Lake Heights Subdivision will be separated by a section line easement which will preclude building within the easement and provide buffering from existing adjacent residential structures.

*Area-wide Considerations:* LCS reviewed the area plan's guidelines in Chapter 2 Areawide Land Management Policies. LCS will incorporate these considerations into the design and development of the project. Lands to be retained in public ownership, conditions, and reservations will be included on the plat and in offering materials as appropriate. Specific area-wide management intent and management guidelines affecting this proposal are discussed below.

Coordination and Public Notice: Management guidelines provide that public notice will be given for the disposal of land as required under AS 38.05.945 *Notice*, and recommends coordination with the borough, landowners, and other affected parties. Public notice is being issued for these proposed actions in accordance with AS 38.05.945. The *Big Lake Comprehensive Plan Update (adopted 2009)*, The *Big Lake, Lake Management Plan (1998)*, *Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Development Plan (2005 Update)*, zoning ordinance and platting requirements have



been taken into consideration, and State subdivision plats will comply with borough platting requirements per AS 38.04.045(b). Refer to Attachment B: Public notice and **Section XVII. Submittal of Public Comments** for more information.

**Cultural Resources:** Management guidelines provide that if determined by the Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) during an agency review of a proposed land disposal that a cultural survey may be required, further coordination between OHA and DMLW prior to the land disposal is warranted. Cultural surveys should be considered where OHA reported sites exist or where there is a high potential for such sites to exist. During agency review OHA recommended a Cultural Resource Survey be conducted prior to disposal. LCS is coordinating with OHA to complete a cultural survey prior to development, and will coordinate with OHA to avoid or mitigate any cultural resources in the design and development of this project. Offering materials will include information regarding informing OHA if any cultural resources are discovered.

**Fish and Wildlife Habitat:** In Chapter 2, *Fish and Wildlife Habitat* management guidelines, there were no applicable management guidelines specific to Management Unit H-18. LCS will protect fish and wildlife habitat by retaining buffers along Meadow Creek and Ryan's Creek as described. See **Section X. Background** for more information.

**Forestry:** Management guidelines provide that land conveyed out of state ownership for the purpose of settlement shall not be used for commercial timber harvest and sale. The timber present within the project area was burned in the 1996 Miller Reach fire and although regenerating, is not marketable at this time, and commercial forestry operations are not anticipated.

**Material Sites:** Management guidelines provide that generally, if a settlement area contains sand and gravel deposits, rock sources or other similar, high value material resources, a pit area should be identified during subdivision design and retained in state ownership for future use. Although the project area may contain gravel resources, the gravel resource potential has been determined to be low value, and there are several public and private gravel resources developed within the area. Given the physical conditions of the project area, the development of the surrounding area, and the proximity to other material sources, LCS does not propose to retain a gravel pit.

**Settlement:** Management guidelines pertaining to settlement include planning and coordination regarding local governments; local plans, and access; protection of life and property; protection of resources such as sensitive areas, habitat, scenic features, and other resources, enhancement of other resources; and design. Management guidelines also provide that design should retain appropriate green belts, public-use corridors, water supply areas, riparian and coastal buffer areas, material sites, roads, and other public facilities, as well as other open space to create a desirable land use pattern in developing areas and to protect or maintain important uses and values. This proposal has considered these guidelines as addressed throughout this document.

**Shorelands and Stream Corridors:** Management guidelines provide for the reservations of easements and retention of State-owned buffers adjacent to waterbodies, and high-value wetlands. Meadow and Ryan's Creek are high-value waterbodies within the project

area. If other public waterbodies are identified within the project area, they will be subject to the applicable reservations. Refer to the Easements, Setbacks and Reservations subsection for more information.

**Subsurface Resources:** The SSAP recommends closing mineral entry if an area is being considered for disposal for the purposes of settlement or other forms of development that would be inconsistent with mining activity. LCS proposes to close the project area to new mineral entry via MO 1261. Refer to the Mineral Activity and Order(s) subsection for more information.

The proposed offering is consistent with area-wide land management policies and general management intent of the SSAP and specific management unit.

Mineral Activity and Order(s): The entirety of the project area (approximately 704 acres) will be closed to new mineral entry if the mineral order is approved in accordance with *AS 38.05.185 Generally* and *AS 38.05.300 Classification of Land* for a land disposal. The proposed mineral order, if approved, will close the area to new mineral entry only and will not affect current existing mining claims. Closing the entire area to mineral entry is consistent with the management intent of the SSAP.

Mineral orders which close an area to mineral entry, close the applicable area to new exploration and development of locatable minerals. Such mineral orders do not apply to leasable minerals (such as: oil, gas, coal, etc.), or exploration licensing for such, nor do they preclude reasonable surface access to these resources. However, *AS 38.05.130 Damages and Posting of Bond* stipulates that the land estate owner will be compensated for damages resulting from exploration and development.

Mining activity for locatable minerals would be incompatible with the past, current, and proposed land estate uses for land disposals. To allow new mineral location within the boundaries of the parcels encompassed by this decision could create serious conflicts between land estate and mineral estate users. The SSAP recommends closing land to mineral entry if an area is being considered for disposal for the purposes of settlement or other forms of development that would be inconsistent with mining activity.

Local Planning: The project area is within the MSB and property purchased through this proposed offering will be subject to the applicable zoning, ordinances, and restrictions of the borough. The project area is within the boundary of the MSB Comprehensive Development Plan and the 2009 Big Lake Comprehensive Plan Update. Review of those plans did not indicate any conflicts with the proposed State land disposal.

## **XII. Traditional Use Finding**

The project area is located within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) and a traditional use finding is therefore not required per *AS 38.05.830 Land Disposal in the Unorganized Borough*. However, information on current or traditional use is welcomed and can be given during the public comment period. See **Section XVII. Submittal of Public Comments** at the end of this document and *Attachment B: Public Notice* for details on how to submit comment.

**XIII. Access To, Within, and Beyond Project Area**

Access to the project area is road access near milepost 52 of the Parks Highway to Big Lake Road to South Beaver Lakes Road and West Lake Boulevard. Access within and beyond the project area is via South Beaver Lake Road, West Lakes Boulevard, West Rocky Street, West Dawson Drive, West Loon Nest Lane, and South Inheritance Circle. LCS may, as necessary, dedicate additional access within the project area. The project area is within the Big Lake Road Service Area #21. Subdivision design will take into account topography and access to lands beyond the project area and within the project area boundaries. The project area is subject to the platting authority of the MSB. Approval of platting actions and dedication of rights-of-way will require separate processes and public notices through the borough.

*Access To and Along Public or Navigable Waters:* In accordance with AS 38.05.127 *Access To Navigable or Public Water*, DNR will determine if a water body is navigable or public and establish easements or rights-of-way as necessary to ensure unobstructed access to and along the body of water. Regulations dictating the creation of easements or rights-of-way under this statute include 11 AAC 51.035 *Determination of Navigable and Public Water*, and 11 AAC 51.045 *Easements To and Along Navigable and Public Water*, and 11 AAC 53.450, *Buffer Strips, Reserved Areas, and Public Easements*.

For the purposes of AS 38.05.127:

- navigable waters are generally lakes larger than 50 acres in size or streams larger than 50 feet in average width;
- public waters are generally lakes larger than 10 acres in size or streams larger than 10 feet in average width; and
- waters may be determined public or navigable consistent with AS 38.05.965 (21) *Definitions*.

Meadow Creek and Ryan's Creek in the northeast corner of Section 16 are anadromous water bodies and have been determined to be public within the project area. LCS will retain a 200-foot protection area on each side of Meadow Creek and a 150-foot protection area on each side of Ryan's Creek. There is an unnamed stream in Section 17 in which ADF&G did find anadromous fish, and it has been determined to be a public water body. Parcels will be subject to access reservations in accordance with AS 38.05.127 *Access to Public or Navigable Water*, and a 100-foot building setback from the OHW of this stream and any additional water bodies identified as public or navigable prior to completion of survey in accordance with the SSAP.

*Building Setbacks From Public or Navigable Water:* If subdivision is deemed feasible, LCS proposes to place a note on the final survey plat describing a building setback upland from the OHW of public or navigable water to protect access, fish and wildlife habitat, and personal property. Structures and subsurface sewage disposal systems will not be permitted within the building setback, except for utilities, water-dependent structures whose purpose is access to or across the stream or lake, or minor accessory structures for uses that must be in or adjacent to the water body in order to function.

*Easements, Setbacks, and Reservations:* Subdivision design may include a variety of easements, setbacks, and retained lands, which will be identified on the subdivision plat and included in related documents. Standards for easements are provided in

11 AAC 51.015 or by local platting ordinances. Final width and location of easements and reservations will be determined as part of the local platting process, which will include an additional opportunity for public participation.

Parcels and subdivision design may be subject to a variety of reservations or restrictions where appropriate:

- public access easements;
- utility easements;
- a 50-foot-wide section-line easement on each side of surveyed or protracted section-lines on State-owned land in accordance with *AS 19.10.010 Dedication of Land for Public Highways* and *11 AAC 51.025 Section-line Easements*; section-line easements may be vacated under *AS 19.30.410 Vacation of Rights-of-Way* and *11 AAC 51.065 Vacation of Easements* as part of the subdivision development;
- a 50-foot continuous easement upland from the OHW of public or navigable water bodies in accordance with *AS 38.05.127 Access To Navigable or Public Water*;
- a minimum 100 foot building setback from the OHW of public or navigable water bodies, in accordance with the area plan;
- a 5-foot survey easement from the nearest practical point on the property boundary to control monuments within the parcel and an easement with a radius around the control monument, and as applicable, a 5-foot direct line-of-sight easement from the control station to an azimuth mark or other control monument;

Where appropriate, reservations and restrictions will be depicted on the plat and described in plat notes.

*Retained Lands:* DNR intends to retain those lands adjacent to Meadow Creek and Ryan's Creek to protect the fish and wildlife habitat. A minimum 200-foot protection area adjacent to each side of Meadow Creek and a minimum 150-foot protection area adjacent to each side of Ryan's Creek will be retained. Lands too wet to develop may also be retained. DNR DMLW will coordinate with DNR Office of History and Archaeology to retain as appropriate any cultural resources identified in the project area.

#### **XIV. Hazardous Materials and Potential Contaminants**

During ground field inspections conducted on June 16, 2019, March 29 & 31, and May 14, 2022, field staff did not observe any environmental hazards within the project area. Trash was observed at the trails off Dawson Drive. South of West Lakes Boulevard an old truck camper and household trash were found along the trails. There are no known environmental hazards present within the project area; however, the State makes no representations and no warranties, express or implied, concerning the existence or absence of any hazardous substances, hazardous wastes, contaminants, or pollutants on the land here proposed for conveyance. The State further assumes no liability for the removal of hazardous substances, hazardous wastes, contaminants, or pollutants, nor for the remediation of the site should such substances eventually be found. Interested parties are encouraged to inspect the property and familiarize themselves with the condition and quality of the land prior to bid or application submittal.

LCS recognizes there are potential future environmental risks when previously vacant land is occupied. Many of the activities increasing these potential risks are regulated by other agencies, such as the regulation of septic system installation by the State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation. This risk is no greater than when vacant private land undergoes development. Given that this land was specifically designated Settlement for transfer into private ownership and given the high degree of interest from both the legislature and citizens in transferring State-owned land into private ownership, LCS is of the opinion that the benefits of offering the land outweigh the potential risks.

#### **XV. Survey, Platting, and Appraisal**

After evaluating public comment and the conditions of the land, DNR will determine if it is in the State's best interest to offer the proposed project area. In order to offer the property, a combination of survey, subdivision, and/or platting actions may be required.

This proposed project area is located within the MSB Borough, and therefore survey and platting will be subject to the relevant subdivision standards. The borough's platting requirements provide for separate public notice periods and processes for platting actions. These additional opportunities for public involvement occur after DNR issues a Final Finding and Decision, if this proposed action is approved.

In accordance with *AS 38.05.840 Appraisal*, an appraisal meeting DNR standards will be required within two years of the date fixed for the sale of any parcel developed under this proposed action. Even though the sale of project area parcels in multiple offerings over time will mitigate "flooding" the market, the two-year appraisal requirement must still be followed.

Project research and development includes consideration of economic factors utilizing market data and project development costs compiled by DNR DMLW staff, to evaluate the economic feasibility of a project. Since it commonly takes several years for the project development process, *AS 38.05.840* ensures the current market conditions are addressed in order to obtain a realistic minimum bid or purchase price for the sale of State land.

#### **XVI. DMLW and Agency Review**

Information and comments received from multiple sections within DMLW prior to and during agency review have been considered and included in the preparation of this preliminary decision. Agency review was conducted from March 2, 2022, through March 23, 2022. Comments pertinent to this proposed action received during agency review have been considered and addressed below. Additional timely comments received during the Public Notice period will be considered and addressed in a subsequent Final Finding and Decision, if one is issued.

DNR DMLW LCS received brief comments of non-objection from the following agencies:  
*Mental Health Trust Land Office.*

*DNR DMLW LCS Response:* LCS appreciates your review of the proposal.

*DNR Division of Oil and Gas (DOG) Comment:* DOG did not have any objection to the proposal and stated that they did not have any third-party authorizations or pending applications or activity in the vicinity of the project area. DOG also asked that LCS inform



applicants that the State reserves oil, gas, minerals, fissionable material, geothermal resources, and fossils that may be in or upon the land that it conveys, as well as reserving the right to enter the land for purposes of exploring for, developing, and producing these mineral resources. A mineral order closing the area to locatable mineral entry, if any, does not apply to leasable mineral resource exploration, development, or production.

*DNR DMLW LCS Response:* LCS appreciates your review of our proposal. Sales brochures will inform applicants that the State of Alaska retains ownership of the mineral estate of the land that it sells, and reserves the right enter onto the land for the purposes of exploring, developing, and producing any mineral resources. The sale brochure will also inform applicants that mineral orders do not apply to non-locatable minerals or the exploration, development, or production of such.

*Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Comment:* The DOT&PF did not anticipate any impacts to Big Lake Road from the proposal and suggested that DNR coordinate with the MSB on potential impacts to Beaver Lake Road.

*DNR DMLW LCS Response:* LCS appreciates your review of our proposal, LCS will coordinate with the MSB to mitigate impacts to the roads within the project area.

*Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) Comment:* ADF&G reviewed the proposed subdivision and recommended that LCS coordinate with the ADF&G Section in the Palmer Habitat office who will be investigating a small stream (AWC# 247-50-10330-2050-3011) in the summer of 2022 that flows southerly into Meadow Creek from W Lakes Blvd to determine if it provides habitat for juvenile Coho salmon. Should fish be found ADF&G recommends either retention of the lands along the stream in State ownership, or at a minimum, reservation of a 100-foot building setback and a 50-foot public access.

*DNR DMLW LCS Response:* LCS appreciates your review of our proposal, LCS has coordinated with the Palmer Habitat Office on the findings of the unnamed stream investigation. Subdivision design will incorporate a minimum 100-foot building setback and 50-foot-wide public access along each side of the unnamed stream as appropriate.

*Alaska Division of Forestry (DOF) Comment:* The DOF had no objection to the proposed project, but recommended that development plans include Firewise mitigations, defensible space, and emergency access and egress. DOF also recommended that LCS provide interested parties information on how to handle live spruce harvested in a manner that reduces habitat for spruce beetle.

*DNR DMLW LCS Response:* LCS appreciates your review of our proposal. Due to the Miller Reach fire, there should be very little live spruce in the project area. Subdivision design will consider Firewise guidelines and sales materials will inform potential purchasers about Firewise information.

*Alaska Division of Parks & Recreation, Office of History & Archaeology (OHA) Comment:* OHA indicated that there may be cultural resource sites within the project area and a cultural resource survey was recommended. OHA also recommended reaching out to the Knik Tribal Council and/or the Chickaloon Village Tribal Council to see what information they may have on the project area.

*DNR DMLW LCS Response:* LCS appreciates your review of our proposal. LCS has coordinated with OHA to complete a cultural resource survey. LCS did reach out to the Knik Tribal Council and Chickaloon Village Tribal Council as recommended and did not receive a reply.

The following agencies or groups were included in the agency review, but no comment was received:

- Department of Environmental Conservation;
- Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development;
- Department of Natural Resources;
  - Division of Agriculture;
  - Division of Parks and Recreation;
  - Office of Project Management and Permitting;
  - Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys; and
  - State Pipeline Coordinator's Section;
- Alaska Association of Conservation Districts;
- Alaska Soil, Water Conservation Districts;
- Alaska Railroad; and
- University of Alaska;

#### **XVII. Submittal of Public Comments**

**See Attachment B: Public Notice for specific dates and conditions.**

Pursuant to *AS 38.05.945 Notice*, LCS is issuing public notice inviting comment on this Preliminary Decision, and draft mineral order.

In accordance with *AS 38.05.946(a) Hearings*, a municipality or corporation entitled to receive notice under *AS 38.05.945(c)* may hold a hearing within 30 days after receipt of the notice. If a hearing is held, the Commissioner (or representative) shall attend the hearing. The Commissioner has discretion whether to hold a public hearing.

LCS will consider all timely, written comments received. If analysis of such comments indicates the need for significant changes to the Preliminary Decision, or draft mineral order, additional public notice for the affected lands will be given. Reducing the amount of land offered and making minor changes to any of the proposals will not be considered significant changes requiring additional public notice.

If the proposals are approved and no significant change is required, the Preliminary Decision, and draft mineral order including any deletions, minor changes, and summary of comments and LCS responses will be issued as a subsequent Final Finding and Decision, and Mineral Order 1261 without further notice. All related actions will be developed separately. However, approval of any action is dependent upon one another. One action will not proceed without approval of all actions.

Only persons from whom LCS receives timely, written comment during the identified comment period will be eligible to file a request for reconsideration of the Final Finding and Decision, and

Mineral Order 1261. Upon approval and issuance of a Final Finding and Decision these actions, a copy of the decision and order will be made available online at <http://landsales.alaska.gov/> and sent with an explanation of the request for reconsideration process to any party who provides timely written comment.

LCS is prepared to accommodate individuals with disabilities by providing auxiliary aids, services, or special modifications in order to participate in this review. Individuals who may need such assistance should contact the Department's Public Information Center. For more information refer to *Attachment B: Public Notice*.

**DEADLINE TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENT IS  
5:00 PM, WEDNESDAY AUGUST 30, 2023**

**XVIII. Alternatives and Discussion**

LCS is considering the following alternatives:

Alternative 1: (Preferred) Survey and plat a subdivision consisting of up to 105 parcels varying in size, no smaller than one nominal acre (40,000 sq. ft) and offer those parcels for sale. The development and offering of these parcels may be completed in multiple stages. This proposal includes a mineral order.

Alternative 2: (No Action) Do not offer this project area for private ownership. Retain the land in State ownership.

Article VIII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution states, "it is the policy of the State to encourage the settlement of its land and the development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest." Furthermore, *AS 38.05.045 Generally* has placed this charge with DNR, and the legislature has provided funding to administer the land sale program.

Alternative 1 provides a method for DNR to meet the obligations laid out in the Constitution and statute, while maximizing public interest. This offering provides an opportunity for the public to obtain land for settlement in a desirable area. This proposal, if approved in a subsequent Final Finding and Decision, will allow LCS to create and design a subdivision which will provide for the best use and development of the land and financial return to the State. Alternative 1 provides the greatest opportunity for more Alaskans to purchase land within this area. Due to the unique recreational and community amenities of the area, location relative to the communities of Big Lake and Wasilla, and the proximity to existing residential private property, the project area is better suited to subdivision prior to offering. Alternative 1 is preferred.

The related action is necessary to allow for the offering of the project area. The primary action and related action are dependent upon one another, and if DNR does not approve the project, the related action will not be processed.

Alternative 2 does not meet the legislative and public desire for DNR to offer State-owned land for private ownership. Retention of this land would inhibit DNR from meeting its constitutional, statutory, and legislative goals. Not offering the project area would deny many Alaskans the



opportunity to obtain land in an area that is suited to settlement and consistent with the surrounding development. Alternative 2 is not preferred.

For the aforementioned reasons, Alternative 1 is the preferred alternative.

Recommendation follows.

**XIX. Recommendation**

This Preliminary Decision for the proposed disposal of State lands, and Mineral Order 1261 described throughout this document and its attachments are consistent with the overall management intent for State-owned land. Alternative 1 is the preferred alternative because it provides the maximum opportunity for offering State land to the public and helps meet the mission of the land sales program. The Preliminary Decision described above, as represented by the preferred alternative, has been reviewed and considered. I find that the recommended action may be in the best interest of the State and that it is hereby approved to proceed to public notice.

This is a Preliminary Decision, and analysis of subsequent public review may result in changes to the preferred alternative of the proposed disposal of State lands, and/or Mineral Order 1261. If the decision is approved, the Mineral Order 1261 will accompany and precede any Final Finding and Decision issued.

Signature on file

Prepared by: Terry Hess  
Natural Resource Specialist III  
Land Conveyance Section  
Division of Mining, Land and Water  
Department of Natural Resources  
State of Alaska

July 19, 2023

Date

Signature on file

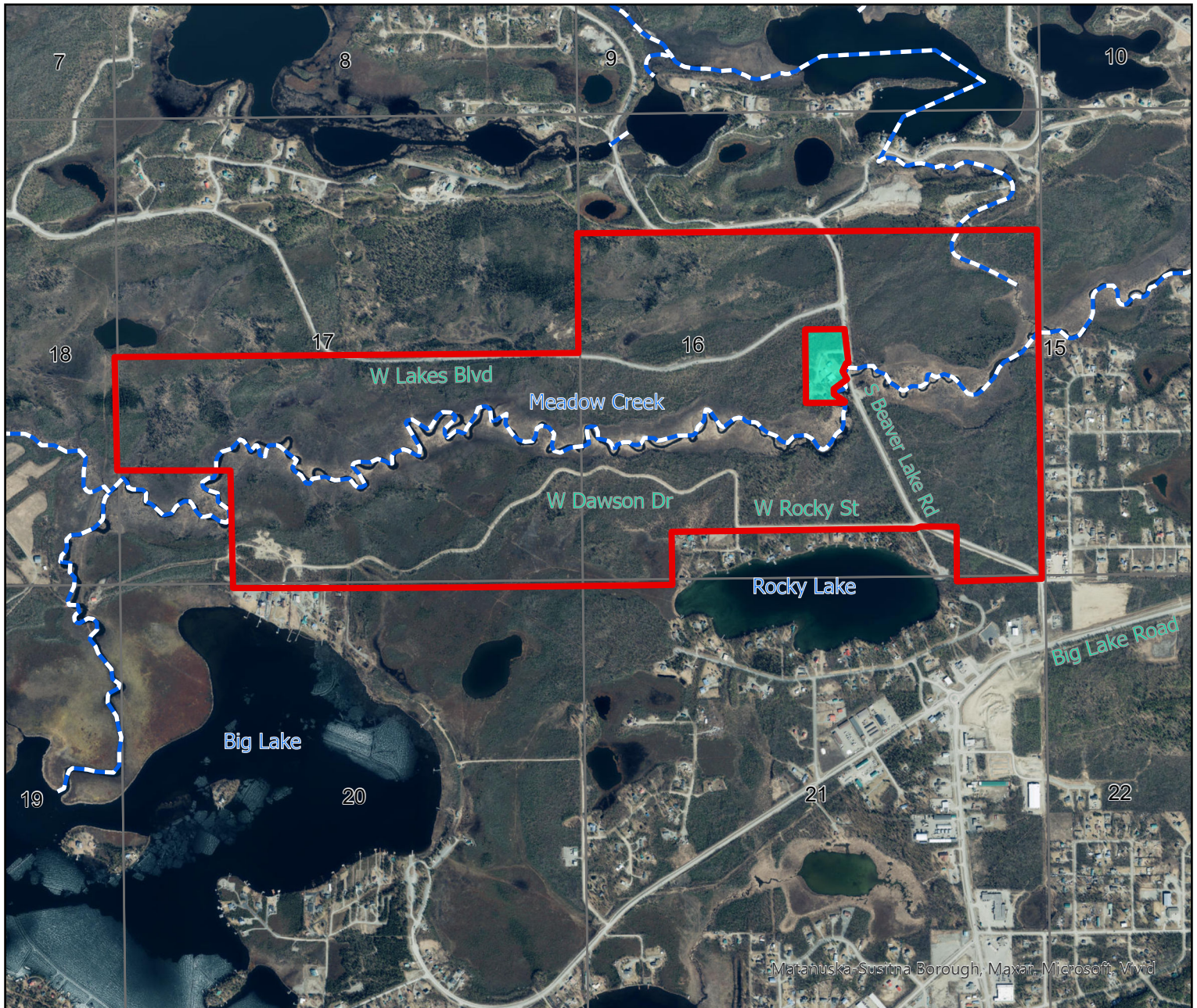
Approved by: Tim Shilling  
Natural Resource Manager II  
Land Conveyance Section  
Division of Mining, Land and Water  
Department of Natural Resources  
State of Alaska

July 19, 2023

Date



# Attachment A: Vicinity Map Beaver Meadows Subdivision ADL 233752



- Project Area
- Anadromous Streams
- Private Lands

0 0.5 1 Miles

TMH 10/28/2022



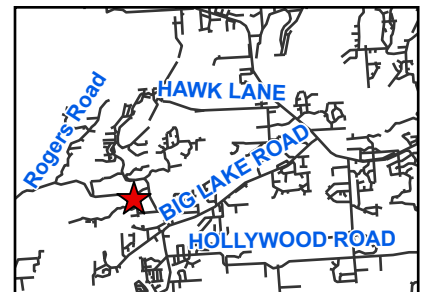
**Sections 16 & 17, Township 17N,  
Range 3W, Seward Meridian**

USGS QUAD 1:63,360  
Anchorage C-8, AK, 1994  
For more information contact:  
Terry Hess  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Mining, Land, and Water  
Land Conveyance Section  
Phone: 907-269-8594  
Fax: 907-269-8916  
Email: [land.development@alaska.gov](mailto:land.development@alaska.gov)

Regular Meeting



10/19/2023



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STATE OF ALASKA, DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF MINING, LAND & WATER  
LAND CONVEYANCE SECTION

**ATTACHMENT B: PUBLIC NOTICE**

Requesting Input for  
a Proposed Land Offering:  
**Beaver Meadows Subdivision – ADL 233752**

**COMMENT PERIOD ENDS 5:00PM, WEDNESDAY AUGUST 30, 2023**

This proposed project includes offering for sale surveyed parcels in a future offering under the method described in the Preliminary Decision document, including the proposed related action. The project may be subdivided and offered in multiple offerings over time.

**Location** The project area is located within DNR's Southcentral Region, approximately 1.5 miles West, Southwest from the City of Houston, and 1/2 mile North of the Big Lake roundabout, within Sections 16 and 17, Township 17 North, Range 3 West, Seward Meridian, within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB).

**Project size:** 704-acre project area with approximately 350-acres proposed for development.

To obtain a copy of the Preliminary Decision, Mineral Order, or instructions on submitting comment, go to <http://landsales.alaska.gov/> or <http://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/>. For assistance in obtaining the documents by an alternative method, to request auxiliary aids, services, or special accommodations, contact DNR's Public Information Centers on State work days, Monday through Friday, between 10AM and 5PM in Anchorage at 907-269-8400, Fairbanks at 907-451-2705, or the Southeast Land Office in Juneau at 907-465-3400 (TTY for the hearing impaired for all locations: 711 for Alaska relay or 800-770-8973), or go to <http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/pic/> for additional contact information. Individuals who require special assistance must request assistance from the Public Information Center in Anchorage no later than 4:00 PM, Wednesday, August 16, 2023.

Pursuant to AS 38.05.945 *Notice*, the public is invited to submit comment on the Preliminary Decision, and/or Mineral Order for which notice is being conducted concurrently. If commenting on more than one proposed action, separate comments should be submitted for each. **The deadline for public comment is 5:00PM, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30, 2023.** Only persons from whom DNR DMLW LCS receives timely, written comment during the identified comment period will be eligible to file an appeal of the Final Finding and Decision. Written comment may be received by email, fax, or postal mail. To submit comments or for direct inquiries, contact LCS at [land.development@alaska.gov](mailto:land.development@alaska.gov), fax # 907-269-8916, or 550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Ste. 640, Anchorage, AK, 99501. If you have questions, call Terry Hess at 907-269-8591.

If no significant change is required, the Preliminary Decision and related action including any minor changes and a summary of comments and responses, will be issued as the Final Finding and Decision, and Mineral Order 1261, without further notice. A copy of the Final Finding and Decision and related actions will be sent to any persons who commented timely on the Preliminary Decision.

LCS will be holding a public meeting to discuss the proposal and share information about the project area. The public meeting will be on Tuesday August 22, 2023, from 5 to 7 pm, at the Big Lake Lions Club, 2942 Lions Circle, Big Lake, AK.

DNR reserves the right to waive technical defects in this notice.

**Board Of Fisheries 2024 FWC Draft Planning Document:****Task Table 1**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Note 1</b>	<b>Note 2</b>	<b>Complete Date</b>
Develop Initial FWC Goals	Nov. '22- Jan. '23			January 2023
FWC BOF Budget	Jan. '23	Currently: \$49,073.36. Submit budget request to MSB Planning.	Work to increase by \$10K - \$15K	Final request to MSB by 2/1/23
Identify Allied Groups	Dec. '22 – Feb. '24			Ongoing
Develop FWC BOF Proposals	Dec. '22 – March '23			Submit April 1, '23
Extend BOF Project Funds	April – May '23	Current project expires 6/30/23.	Extend current project to 6/30/24.	6/1/23
BOF Member Education	Summer '23	Develop/offer field trips for BOF and stakeholders	Involve Salmon Habitat Partnership	August '23
FWC BOF Media Development	June '23 – Feb. '24	Booklet Website StoryMap	Need a FWC Work Group Prior to 6/1/23	Final Booklet Printed Dec. '23

Task	Target Date	Note 1	Note 2	Complete Date
BOF Consultant Hired	July – Aug. '23	RFP developed, publicized, consultant hired.		August '23
BOF Outreach Plan	Develop June – Oct. '23; Deliver Nov. '23-Feb. '24	Identify key target groups; develop content messaging; deliver program.	Print Social media Presentations Workshops	Ongoing
ID Partners for sharing onsite resources	Summer '23	Onsite meeting room; printing resources.		May '23 FWC reso in support.
BOF Proposal Review & Recommendations	Fall '23	FWC Committee		Dec. '23
After Action Summary Report	March '24	Internal report	Community summary press releases	March '24
Strategy Reflection for BOF '27	April – May '24			May '24

**Approved by FWC at their 10/20/22 meeting.**





THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Natural Resources  
DIVISION OF MINING, LAND & WATER  
Resource Assessment & Development Section

550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1050  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3579  
Main: 907.269-8534  
TTYL 711 or 800-770-8973  
Fax: 907-269-8915

September 22, 2023

Subject: Release of the Public Review Draft of the Matanuska Valley Moose Range and Jonesville Public Use Area Management Plan. Public Comment Period Open September 22, 2023, through November 9, 2023.

Dear Interested Community Members and Organizations,

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has released the Public Review Draft (PRD) of the Matanuska Valley Moose Range and Jonesville Public Use Area Management Plan (Moose Range and JPUA) for public review and comment. Following the public review period, DNR intends to adopt the plan with any changes that may result from the input received. Once adopted, this plan will serve as the basis for the management of the Moose Range and JPUA for 20 years. This plan includes a Land Classification Order (SC-23-001) that affects approximately 131,700 acres of state owned and state selected land distributed throughout the planning area. The Moose Range and JPUA are nestled in the southern foothills of the Talkeetna Mountains east of the Little Susitna River and north of the Glenn Highway extending as far as the Boulder Creek drainage to the east. The classification order implements the plan and primarily classifies land as Habitat, Public Recreation, Forestry, and Coal.

In 2018, the Alaska Legislature passed [Alaska Statute 41.23.280](#) establishing the JPUA to address concerns of safety and to provide a spectrum of public recreation opportunities while maintaining fish and wildlife habitat. The JPUA lies almost entirely within the Moose Range, [Alaska Statute 16.20.340](#), that is managed through the [Moose Range Management Plan](#). The Moose Range was established to maintain, improve, and enhance moose population and habitat and other wildlife of the area, and to perpetuate multiple public uses of the area. The Moose Range Management Plan was adopted by DNR and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in 1986.

Alaska Statute directs DNR to prepare a management plan that includes long-range guidelines and management recommendations for the JPUA and the Moose Range. The PRD for the Moose Range and JPUA has been developed as one document to ensure compatibility and consistent management of state resources.

The PRD presents a range of management guidelines and recommendations for public review that are intended to fulfill the purposes of the Moose Range and JPUA, protect natural resources, manage user conflicts, and improve public safety including:

- Updating management guidelines and recommendations to be consistent with current best management practices. Much has changed since the original plan was adopted in 1986.
- Recommending the need for a specific Trail Management Plan to identify trail routes that protect wetlands and wildlife habitat and reduce trail user conflicts.
- Establishing Public Use Sites within the planning area so that places with concentrated use can be more actively managed.

- Recommending a designated area for the discharge of firearms in the Jonesville Management Subunit and other management subunits as necessary.

Many of these management recommendations would require the promulgation of subsequent regulations for successful implementation.

To facilitate your review and comment, the PRD is available online at <https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/mgtplans/jonesville-mooserange/>. Public meetings are scheduled in several communities within the planning area during this comment period.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Sutton Public Library 11301 N. Chickaloon Way Sutton, AK 99674	Tuesday, October 17 <sup>th</sup>	From 5-7 PM
Palmer High School Library 1170 W Arctic Ave. Palmer, AK 99645	Thursday, October 19 <sup>th</sup>	From 5-7 PM
Chickaloon Community Center Milepost 76.2 Glenn Highway	Tuesday, October 24 <sup>th</sup>	From 5-7 PM
Virtual Open House via <a href="#">Microsoft Teams</a>	Thursday, October 19 <sup>th</sup>	From 12:00-1:30 PM

Comments on the Public Review Draft of the Moose Range and JPUA Management Plan must be received on or before November 9, 2023 by email at [jonesvillemooserange@alaska.gov](mailto:jonesvillemooserange@alaska.gov), or through the online Public Comment Portal at <https://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/comment/>.

Mailed comments must be received by November 9, 2023, and should be mailed to the following:

DNR, DMLW ATTN: RADS  
550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 1050  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Please contact the planning project staff indicated below with questions on the Moose Range and JPUA Management Plan.

Rob Earl  
Natural Resource Specialist III  
Email: [jonesvillemooserange@alaska.gov](mailto:jonesvillemooserange@alaska.gov)  
Phone: 907-269-8533



Scan the QR code to be taken to the Moose Range and JPUA Management Plan webpage:

*The State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who may need auxiliary aides, services, or special modifications to submit a comment or participate in a meeting, should contact a person indicated above or contact the state TDD number (907)269-8411 seven days (7) in advance of meetings to arrange accommodations.*

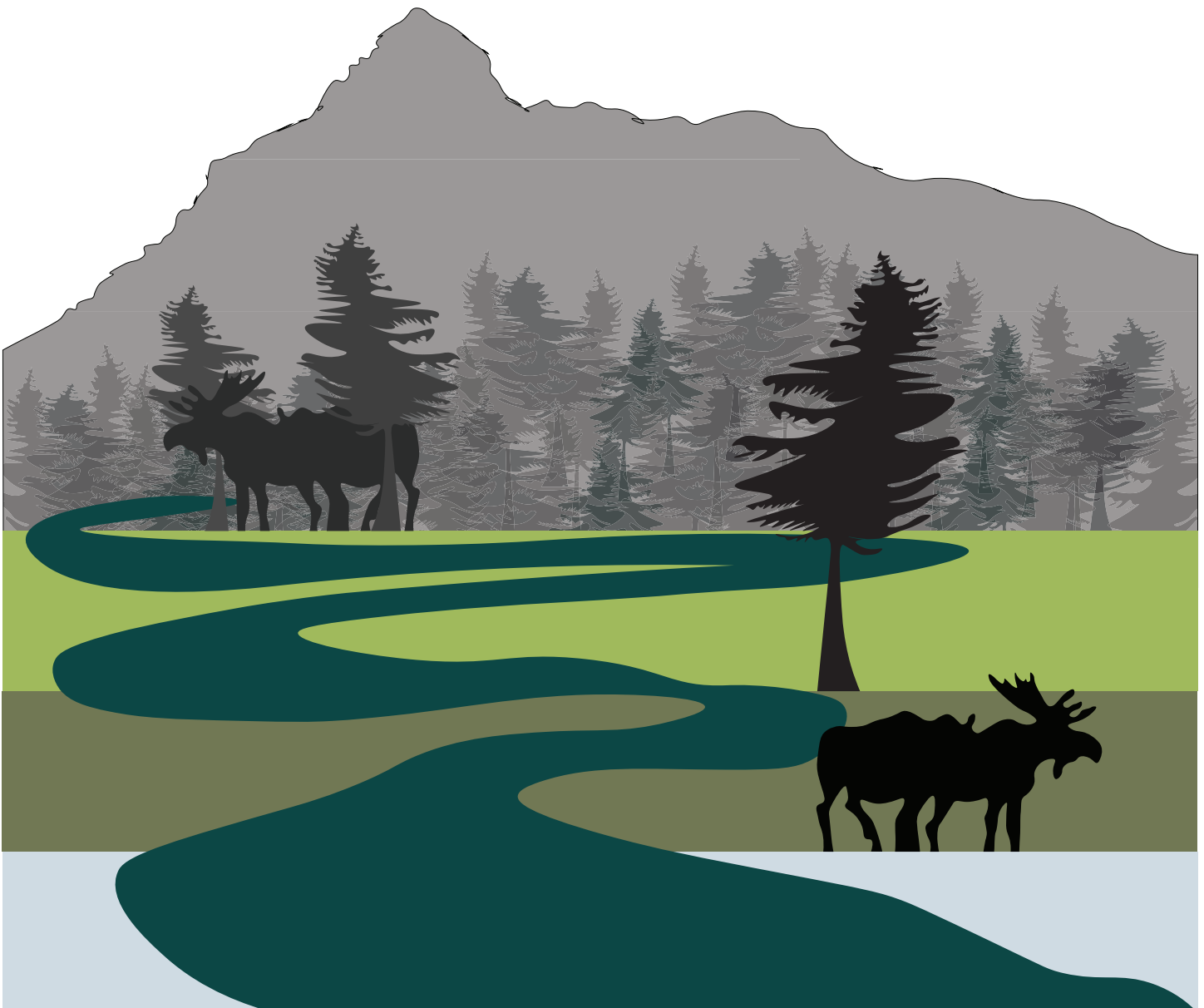
# Matanuska Valley Moose Range and Jonesville Public Use Area Management Plan



PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

September 22, 2023

Department of Natural Resources Division of Mining, Land & Water  
Resource Assessment & Development Section



# Table of Contents

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## **Chapter 1**

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## ECONOMY &amp; ENVIRONMENT

## ALASKA IN BRIEF

## Alaska salmon task force charged with developing science plan

BY: YERETH ROSEN - JUNE 12, 2023 5:00 AM



📷 Salmon dries on a traditional rack on the beach in the Seward Peninsula village of Teller on Sept. 2, 2021. Salmon is a dietary staple for Indigenous residents of Western Alaska, and poor runs have created hardship. A new Alaska salmon task force mandated by federal law is now appointed and charged with producing a science plan within a year. (Photo by Yereth Rosen/Alaska Beacon)

Federal and state leaders have appointed 19 experts to a special task force responsible for creating a science plan to better understand Alaska's salmon, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service announced on Friday. Task force members must address sustainable management and a response to the recent crashes in the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.



The group was chosen in accordance with the [Alaska Salmon Research Task Force Act](#) that [passed](#) and was signed into law late last year. The law calls for most members to be appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with Alaska's governor, and one to be appointed directly by the governor.

Task force members represent subsistence users, the fishing industry, supporting supply-chain businesses and the academic community, NOAA Fisheries said in its statement. According to the law, NOAA, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and U.S. representatives of the Pacific Salmon Commission are represented. The law also requires Indigenous representation on the task force.

"The work of the Alaska Salmon Research Task [Force] is critically important," Robert Foy, director of NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Fisheries Science Center, said in the agency's statement. "We are grateful to the individuals who have agreed to serve as task force members and share their knowledge and expertise to develop a roadmap of where to go next with research to best understand and respond to the unprecedented changes in Alaska salmon runs."

Western Alaska communities have endured recent years of record-low or near-record low runs of Chinook and chum salmon, two of Alaska's five salmon species that are dietary and cultural staples for Indigenous communities.



📷 Salmon are seen migrating in southwestern Alaska's Togiak National Wildlife Refuge on Dec. 7, 2011. (Photo provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Bleak conditions [continue this year](#). The Alaska Department of Fish and Game last month announced a full closure of Chinook salmon fishing in the Yukon River, even for subsistence purposes, and the department's present forecast predicts that runs of all salmon species in the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers will be too low this year to support any commercial harvests.

The task force is responsible for producing a coordinated science plan within a year. It is also responsible for identifying knowledge gaps and in? research needs, setting up a work group to focus specifically on the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers and finding ways to support sustainable salmon management, NOAA Fisheries said.

Federal appointees are Andrew Munro of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Ed Farley of NOAA Fisheries, Bill Templin of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Andy Piston of the Pacific States Salmon Commission.

Subsistence users are represented by members Oscar Evon of the Native Village of Kwigillingok, Jacob Ivanoff of the Native Village of Unalakleet, Karla Jensen of the Native Village of Pedro Bay, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Subsistence Director Caroline Brown

and Justin Leon of the Alaska Native American Fish and Wildlife Society.

The fishing industry is represented by Michelle Stratton of the Alaska Marine Conservation Council/Commercial Salmon Fisherman, charter-boat fisherman Mike Flores, Austin Eastbrooks of the At-Sea Processors Association, commercial fisherman Tom Carpenter and Steve Reifensstuhl with the aquaculture industry.

The academic community is represented by Megan McPhee of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Megan Williams of the Ocean Conservancy and UAF, Noelle Yochum of Alaska Pacific University and Katie Howard of Alaska Pacific University and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

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## AKSRTF IPR #2 Meeting 9/19/23

### Task Force Attendees (Virtual)

Andrew Munro	Ed Farley	Megan McPhee	Oscar Evon
Andy Piston	Jacob Ivanoff	Megan Williams	Steve Reifensstuhl
Austin Estabrooks	Justin Leon	Michelle Stratton	Tom Carpenter
Bill Templin	Karla Jensen	Mike Flores	Tommy Sheridan
Caroline Brown	Katie Howard	Noëlle Yochum	Laura Dwinneil

- 18 public participants
- [Agenda Link](#)
- [Website Link](#)

### Meeting Highlights

#### Welcome / Logistics - Facilitator, Laura Dwinneil

- Welcomed all attendees at 10:00am AKDT, provided an announcement of meeting recording, and an agenda overview.

#### Update on AKSRTF - Chair, Ed Farley

- Provided task and activities Update. Ed reviewed the overall task force schedule and key milestones. Upcoming highlights include
  - **Oct 20:** Draft report will be posted on AKSRTF Website for public review, comment.
  - **Nov 14-15:** In person/hybrid Task Force meeting in Anchorage AK.
- Also noted: Ed has received several emails containing testimony on gaps and research needs regarding AK salmon. Those emails will be posted on the Task Force website under gaps.

#### Region Area Updates: Central, Tommy Sheridan; Westward, Michelle Stratton; Southeast, Andy Piston.

- Team leads provided status of their Knowledge Review to date (as captured in the AKSRTF Assignment\_Knowledge Review file) and discussed next steps for their teams.
- The Southeast team shared a helpful organizing method for the Gaps and Project ideas and highlighted the information in their spreadsheet. The Westward and Central teams agreed that this method of organizing ideas (around species and broadscale ideas) would be helpful and agreed to follow the same approach.
- **ACTION - Laura: Set up the Westward and Central teams with a “Gaps and Project Ideas” worksheet similar to the Southeast worksheet. (done, 9/20/23))**

### AYK Working Group - Co-Leads: Katie Howard & Daniel Schindler

- Provided an update on the WG formation, kick off meeting (9/12/23) and plans for holding bi-weekly meetings from 9/26/23 through 11/21/23 in order to allow the large WG to fully share ideas, testimony, and recommendations

### Upcoming Meetings - Vice Chair: Jacob Ivanoff

- The November 14-15 meeting will focus on gaps and project ideas as well as opportunity for public comment and testimony during the afternoon of each day.
  - Note: There are limited travel funds. Those requiring or requesting travel funds should do so through their own organizations and lastly request to Ed Farley and Jacob Ivanoff.
  - **ACTION - All: For planning purposes, please let Laura and Ed know by Oct 15 if you plan to attend in person or virtually.**

### Other Updates

- (Ed Farley, Chair). Review of the report sections and structure. Ed described the process for organizing and summarizing the knowledge, gaps and ideas by “likely suspects”.
  - **ACTION - All: Review report content to date. Provide comment and additional input by Friday Oct 6.**
  - Note. The draft Report will be made available on the website to the public on Oct 20 for a 3 week review process in advance of the Nov 14-15 TF meeting. The public will also have another opportunity to review and comment on the report late March through April 2024.
- The Attendee Report and Q&A Report, can be found in the [Meeting folder](#). The meeting recording will also be dropped into that folder in the next day or two.

### Questions & Comments

Question	Response
How do we access the Excel file?	Thanks for your question Mark. We will provide some information on this webpage about ongoing work of the Task Force and gaps they are identifying. You will also have an opportunity to comment on the entire draft report when it is posted in concert with the November public meeting. <a href="https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/ecosystems/alaska-salmon-research-task-force">https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/ecosystems/alaska-salmon-research-task-force</a>
Could someone post the website url? I'm	Thanks Peggy we will provide some information on

on NOAA's site and cannot find "Gaps"	this webpage about ongoing work of the Task Force and gaps they are identifying. You will also have an opportunity to comment on the entire draft report when it is posted in concert with the November public meeting. Report will be available on Oct 20 for public review. We will try to figure out a way to open a tab in the website to allow for input to gaps. <a href="https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/ecosystems/alaska-salmon-research-task-force">https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/ecosystems/alaska-salmon-research-task-force</a>
Hello! Thank you for holding this public meeting. Did the existing knowledge gathering involve significant outreach to AYK communities?	Short answer: Yes "Existing Gaps" contain reference materials and partner knowledge to include members from the AYK region to pull in other existing knowledge and gaps. The AYK WG contains 15 members from the Task Force and 29 members from general public.
Also, did any of the research or citations gathered address the impacts of trawling and bycatch on fish populations?	Short answer: Yes AYK has publication citations that address that. The Westward region also references studies based on harvest in the peninsula area.
1) will the be an opportunity to provide comments on the prioritization of these research needs/gaps (ex. high, med, low for Tribes), 2) is there capacity to highlight Indigenous Knowledge in development of research questions/projects. I am not hearing much in regards to Tribally-led/focused salmon research and collaborative potential of this proposed work	Yes. The public will have the ability to review the Draft Report in October and again in late March and April of 2024. Also many of the Regional Teams as well as the AYK Working Group are reaching out and hearing from the community.
not a question, but a resource: <a href="https://www.skipperscience.org/">https://www.skipperscience.org/</a>	Thank you Lorna
Is studying and reporting on issues pertaining to economic sustainability part of the scope of this task force? Obviously we have critical issues regarding biological production, but comfish is facing a very serious economic crisis as well.	It's an important issue. However, the Act is centered on research. We have TF members from across the salmon production realm. TF is mostly focused on the biology of salmon. Maybe a follow up would focus more on production. In short, it's not the purview of this TF to look at



	the economic impact
What do you all think of the notion of encouraging or funding "Skipper Science" observations, as a means of gathering what is otherwise very expensive marine environment data. In particular, I'm thinking about orca sightings, which could be substantiated with pictures. Probably other kinds of data to collect too.	The SE region team identified "leading indicators" as a research gap. People on the water will be making the observations. There have been efforts SE to equip troll boats to capture water data/info, for example.
FYI-- new modeling paper about the dissolved oxygen ideas in SE AK... <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969723038706">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969723038706</a>	