

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer, Alaska 99645

CHAIRPERSON

Peter Probasco

VICE CHAIR

Andy Couch

MSB STAFF

Ashley Stick



BOARD MEMBERS

Michael Bowles

Marty Van Diest

Tim Hale

Gabe Kitter

Bill Gamble

Kendra Zamzow

Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Regular Meeting

October 9, 2024

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Physical Location of Meeting: Conference Room 203, DSJ Bldg, 350 E. Dahlia Ave.,

Palmer **Remote Participation:** See attached agenda on p. 1

Planning and Land Use Department - Planning Division

<http://www.matsugov.us> • planning@matsugov.us

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission
AGENDA

Edna Devries, Mayor

Peter Probasco – Chair
Andy Couch – Vice Chair
Gabriel Kitter
Tim Hale
Bill Gamble
Kendra Zamzow
Michael Bowles
Marty Van Diest
Jim Sykes – Ex officio member

Ashley Stick – Staff



Michael Brown, Borough Manager

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

*Conference Room 203
Dorothy Swanda Jones Building
350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer*

October 9, 2025
REGULAR MEETING
4:00 p.m.

Ways to participate in MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings:

IN-PERSON: Conference Room 203, DSJ Building

REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS:

Join on your computer:

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 213 715 044 561

Passcode: mJ26N5BL

Or call in (audio only):

1-907-290-7880

Phone Conference ID: 123 236 754#

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. September 25, 2025
- VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person*)
- VII. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS

- A. Staff Report
- B. Chair's Report

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Waterbody Setback staff update and discussion

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. North Pacific Fishery Management Council
- B. Board of Fisheries work session
- C. Deshka Resolution 25-02
- D. State legislative priorities
- E. State of Alaska Community Hunts

X. MEMBER COMMENTS (10 minutes)

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE: November 13, 2025, 4:00-6:00 PM

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.

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission
REGULAR MEETING: September 25, 2025**

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Present

Peter Probasco
Andy Couch
Marty Van Diest
Michael Bowles
Gabe Kitter
Jim Sykes

Absent

Kendra Zamzow
Bill Gamble
Tim Hale

III. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: MB moved to remove the Land Acknowledgement from this and all future agendas. The motion was seconded by MVD.

Motion: JS moved to postpone this item until the October 9 meeting. The motion was seconded by AC.

Vote: The postponement failed with 2 in favor and 3 opposed.

Vote: The main motion passed with 3 in favor and 2 opposed.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 8, AC moved to approve the minutes, seconded by GK, No obj, Passed
May 15, AC moved to approve the minutes, seconded by GK, No obj, Passed
June 17, AC moved to approve the minutes, seconded by GK, No obj, Passed
July 16, AC moved to approve the minutes, seconded by GK, No obj, Passed

VII. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person*)

Stephen Braund- Northern district set netters association.

Jessica Speed- Matsu Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership.

VIII. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS

A. Staff Report

Andy tasked with changes to State Legislative priorities being considered by the Assembly Oct 21.

B. Chair's Report

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Waterbody Setback staff update and discussion

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. North Pacific Fishery Management Council

B. Board of Fisheries work session

XI. MEMBER COMMENTS

XII. NEXT MEETING DATE: October 9, 2025, 4-6pm Back of the Assembly Chambers

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MB moved to adjourn at 5:27pm, seconded by GK
No objection, motion passed unanimously

Report to MSBF&W

Seeking new ways to gather scientific information and support in rebuilding essential salmon stocks with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and State of Alaska Fish and Game

By Appointed Committee of 1, Jim Sykes Chair

There has been previous informal discussion about working with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council for additional support conserving and rebuilding increasingly scarce fisheries stocks in Mat-Su and other far northern Cook Inlet Waters. While we can proceed as a commission, NPFMC officials have informally recommended that acceptance is easier if it is compelling and demonstrates strong support.

At the moment, NPFMC and NOAA have both taken funding cuts. State of Alaska has also taken cuts. Restoring and conserving our fisheries has continued to be a priority of the MSB F&W Commission through different levels of funding and some changes in priorities. It took a while for the Conservation Corridor concept to reach approval by the Alaska Board of Fish and it has been helpful. Management adjustments may need to be made. Now that the federal government has a hand in Cook Inlet fish management it may be critical to explore conservation and restoration options with both federal and state agencies to actually accomplish these complicated tasks.

The MSB F&W Commission has been very good at asking critical questions about what needs to be known and help finding and funding ways to gather useful scientific data that make better fish management practices. The best outcome would be state and federal attention to our critical anadromous and other fishing populations in the waters they occupy. It gives us the opportunity to reach out to others with additional knowledge and similar concerns that help ensure the rebuilding of our precarious fisheries.

Large issues include the need for better understanding about how warming ocean and river waters may affect different species of salmon, other fish and marine mammals.

There seems to be limited understanding of competition for some foods that may benefit sockeye and others that may compete. The effect of trawling and bycatch in ocean waters may also be having an effect. Analysis of bycatch numbers and genetics might be helpful.

One sensitive question revolves around hatchery pinks and chum salmon. A good number of years ago hatcheries were seen as a way to boost production a little and provide a cushion for low return years. It has developed into a larger economy and use that is hard to discuss even though our understanding of what is happening in ocean waters is very limited. Is there room to expand stocking programs as we work to sustain wild stocks? Will we have to use hatchery fish to save wild stocks? Should we seek better understanding about how wild stocks and hatchery stocks impacts on each other?

Reduced abundance of King salmon is happening in the Yukon, Mat-Su and other places. Coho have seen some recent declines that we need to better understand.

The State of Alaska Anchor Point Test fishery took place this year after something like two decades of absence. The test fishery provides abundance information and timing of different species before they

get fished. It also provides an indication that can be compared to historic runs which should be a useful management tool for both state and federally managed waters.

Mat-Su Rivers still need to have real time data and a strong system of funded weirs. The recent study by Susan Mauger about cold water refugia on the Deshka has been very helpful.

The Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife Commission has the opportunity to work with people who fish all over Cook Inlet where we share common concerns. But reaching out wider and working with others we have to choose issues of commonality in order to effectively get action or scientific research accomplished. Like any other coalition, there needs to be agreement on what the coalition seeks and separation from additional needs beyond what the common interests may be.

Now is a good time to ask what is most important to be known—broadly and more specifically.

Currently the MSB F&W Commission has developed good relationships with Northern set netters, nearby tribal governments and some Kenai Peninsula organizations. It may be useful to find out what situations and problems are most important on Yukon, Kuskokwim and Tanana rivers.

Reaching Out. We have the opportunity to use a 3-minute between sessions chat to invite interested people at the upcoming Salmon Symposium in November if this is something we want to pursue. Concerns about habitat, harvest, hydrology, and hatcheries elsewhere may have some commonalities.

Working with the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and their researchers at NOAA could be very helpful. They have remarkable research capabilities that could be very beneficial. Both the state and federal government have an obligation to sustain, and restore depleted fisheries and habitats.

It's really up to Commission members to formulate questions and how best to proceed. We've been effective at framing the critical needs and questions around them in the past. We need to keep that up.

If we want to reach others with common concerns to project our needs and solutions to them, we should figure out how best to do it.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) requires regional fishery management councils to describe and identify essential fish habitat for species managed under a Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The MSA defines EFH as *'those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity.'*

There is a special program that is called Essential Fish Habitat, that has lots of details to it, but may be worth consideration. A wider group of interest might help spur such a review. Here is a link:

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-VI/part-600/subpart-J/section-600.815>

These federal processes take time, as do the state's. The Conservation Corridor has so far been successful, but it may need to be adjusted. It seems we don't have much choice but to deal with the big agencies as well as other opportunities to raise awareness and find solutions to our fisheries problems.

AGENDA CHANGE REQUEST FORM

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES

The Board of Fisheries (board) reviews each state managed fishery under its authority once every three years in what is referred to as the board's "three-year cycle". Each year the board takes up regulatory subjects from a consistent set of regions and species, repeating every three years. Regulatory subjects in the current meeting cycle are referred to as "in-cycle" subjects.

The board recognizes there are times when "out-of-cycle" subjects require more immediate attention and created the "agenda change request" (ACR) process to allow consideration of these subjects. The board solicits ACRs 60 days prior to its fall work session. Accepted ACRs are scheduled at a subsequent meeting during the current meeting cycle. More information on the board's long-term meeting cycle is [here](#).

For the 2025/2026 meeting cycle, the following regulatory regions, species and uses are "in-cycle":

- Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea, and Chignik Pacific Cod.
- Arctic / Yukon / Kuskokwim Finfish.
- Bristol Bay Finfish.
- Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Island / Chignik Finfish
- Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues

The deadline for ACRs is August 29, 2025. ACRs received regarding "in-cycle" subjects will not be accepted as they are effectively proposals that missed the April 2025 deadline.

The board accept requests to change its schedule under certain guidelines set forth in 5 AAC 39.999. The board will accept ACRs only:

- 1) for a fishery conservation purpose or reason; or
- 2) to correct an error in regulation; or
- 3) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.

The board will not accept an ACR that is predominantly allocative in nature in the absence of new compelling information, as determined by the board [5 AAC 39.999 (a) (2)].

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

1) CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD. If possible, enter the series of letters and numbers that identify the regulation to be changed. If it will be a new section, enter "5 AAC NEW".

Alaska Administrative Code Number 5 AAC: 21.358 Northern District Salmon Management Plan

2)WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM. Address only one issue. State the problem clearly and concisely. The board will reject multiple or confusing issues. Please address the issue of management failure to achieve the Little Susitna River coho salmon Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) on a near-chronic basis, that with one additional year of failure should cement this very important Upper Cook Inlet coho salmon stock — as a stock of management concern.

3)WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER? Or, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new or amended regulation say? Amend the plan to conservatively manage Little Susitna River and coho salmon to ensure the SEG is met on a more regular basis, and “ . . . to provide sport, guided sport, and other inriver users a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon resources over the entire run, as measured by the number of inseason restrictions, or as specified in this section and other regulations,” as quoted from the plan, as follows.

(b) The department shall manage the Northern District commercial fisheries based on the abundance of sockeye salmon counted through the weirs on Larson, Chelatna, and Judd Lakes, and based on the abundance of king and coho salmon counted through the Little Susitna River weir or other salmon abundance indices as the department deems appropriate.

(1) from July 13 - September 30, sport fishing shall be restricted to artificial lures only in Little Susitna River; and commercial fishing within one mile of the Little Susitna River terminus with Knik Arm shall be restricted to one net not more than 35 fathoms in length per permit holder, unless the department’s inseason projection for Little Susitna River coho salmon escapement exceeds the midpoint of the Little Susitna River coho salmon SEG.

(2) When bait fishing is closed in the Little Susitna River sport fishery after August 5, the Northern District Commercial Set Net Fishery shall be restricted to regular fishing periods of no more than 6 hours in duration.

(3) When harvest is prohibited in the Little Susitna River coho salmon sport fishery, commercial fishing within one mile of the Little Susitna River terminus with Knik Arm shall be prohibited.

4)STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED BELOW. If one or more of the three criteria set forth below is not applicable, state that it is not.

a) for a fishery conservation purpose or reason: The Department has restricted sport coho salmon fishing, followed harvest closures in the Little Susitna River sport fishery for the past 3 years. Even with these inseason restrictions and closures, there has not been enough coho salmon remaining to even document achievement of the Little Susitna River coho salmon SEG in each of the past 3 years. Even with significant shortages of coho salmon at Little Susitna River for the past 3 years, ADF&G management has allowed the same level of commercial set netting within one mile of the Little Susitna River terminus with Knik Arm as elsewhere in the General Subdistrict of the Northern District for the past two years. This management is failing miserably with far too little adaptive change by ADF&G. Current regulations and management practices should be adjusted in a lasting precautionary manner to better meet the purpose language of the management plan - before Little Susitna River coho salmon are required to be listed as a stock of concern.
b) to correct an error in regulation: N / A
c) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted: At the last Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries, the board added Little Susitna River king and coho salmon as indices the department shall use in managing the Northern District commercial setnet fishery. The board left the department with great flexibility in how to achieve the purpose(s) of the management plan. ADF&G management practices and multiple Little Susitna River coho salmon escapements significantly below the SEG clearly illustrate the need for lasting plan clarification in order to meet the SEG and provide reasonable opportunities for all user groups — throughout the entire season, consistently.
5)WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE? Without management change — the same practices will likely produce the same failing results — as repeated history clearly shows. Conservative and lasting change to this management plan is needed to produce the Board adopted objectives from this plan — and to avoid continually rehashing this issue every year or every three years.
6)STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE. While there are allocative aspects, the primary purpose of this ACR is to conservatively manage the Little Susitna River coho salmon resource on a precautionary basis, focusing management for the SEG midpoint, then after ADF&G inseason assessment shows additional harvestable surplus coho salmon, current regulations may allow all user groups additional harvest opportunity throughout the remainder of the season.

7) IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE. Avoiding stock of concern designation for Little Susitna River coho salmon should be a primary objective for the BOF and ADF&G. In addition to ensuring more regular attainment of the Little Susitna River coho salmon SEG, harvest opportunities for all northern user groups should be more predictable, sustainable, and consistent throughout the entire season with these changes. As repeatedly stated, these changes would better ensure attainment of the management plan purpose / objectives. After 3 consecutive years of failure to attain the Little Susitna River coho salmon SEG, there is a desperate need for more precautionary / conservative management to make up for those documented spawning escapement shortages in a lasting fashion for the future health of this salmon stock.

8)STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHERY THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR (e.g., commercial fisherman, subsistence user, sport angler, etc.)

I am a Northern Cook Inlet sport fishing guide, who has been operating for over 40 years primarily at Little Susitna River, but also at Deshka River, other locations in the Susitna River and Knik Arm drainages.

9)STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING. These paired restrictions for both sport and commercial users, to better achieve the SEG and provide reasonable harvest opportunities for all user groups, have not been previously considered, either as an ACR or proposal.

Submitted by: Andy Couch

NAME _____

Individual or Group

14660 E Gunnysack Road _____ Palmer, AK _____ 99645 _____

Address _____ **City, State** _____ **Zip** _____

907-746-2199 _____ 907-746-2199 _____ fishing@fish4salmon.com _____

Home Phone _____ **Work Phone** _____ **Email** _____

SIGNATURE: Andrew N. Couch _____ **DATE: 8-29-2025** _____

Note: Addresses and telephone numbers will not be published.

Mail, fax, or upload this completed form to:

Alaska Board of Fisheries

P.O. Box 115526

Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Fax: 907-465-6094
Upload file online: <https://arcg.is/Kz5ey1>

AGENDA CHANGE REQUEST FORM

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES

The Board of Fisheries (board) reviews each state managed fishery under its authority once every three years in what is referred to as the board's "three-year cycle". Each year the board takes up regulatory subjects from a consistent set of regions and species, repeating every three years. Regulatory subjects in the current meeting cycle are referred to as "in-cycle" subjects.

The board recognizes there are times when "out-of-cycle" subjects require more immediate attention and created the "agenda change request" (ACR) process to allow consideration of these subjects. The board solicits ACRs 60 days prior to its fall work session. Accepted ACRs are scheduled at a subsequent meeting during the current meeting cycle. More information on the board's long-term meeting cycle is [here](#).

For the 2025/2026 meeting cycle, the following regulatory regions, species and uses are "in-cycle":

- Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea, and Chignik Pacific Cod.
- Arctic / Yukon / Kuskokwim Finfish.
- Bristol Bay Finfish.
- Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Island / Chignik Finfish
- Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues

The deadline for ACRs is August 29, 2025. ACRs received regarding "in-cycle" subjects will not be accepted as they are effectively proposals that missed the April 2025 deadline.

The board accept requests to change its schedule under certain guidelines set forth in 5 AAC 39.999. The board will accept ACRs only:

- 1) for a fishery conservation purpose or reason; or
- 2) to correct an error in regulation; or
- 3) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted.

The board will not accept an ACR that is predominantly allocative in nature in the absence of new compelling information, as determined by the board [5 AAC 39.999 (a) (2)].

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

1) CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD. If possible, enter the series of letters and numbers that identify the regulation to be changed. If it will be a new section, enter "5 AAC NEW".

Alaska Administrative Code Number 5 AAC: 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan

2)WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM. Address only one issue. State the problem clearly and concisely. The board will reject multiple or confusing issues. Since the federal EEZ drift gillnet fishery has started, allowing 200 fathoms of gillnet per drift permit holder, and the State of Alaska has attempted to harvest a larger portion of the remaining harvestable surplus Kasilof and Kenai River sockeye salmon offshore in the drift gillnet fishery, there has been a resulting shortage of Northern bound coho salmon to meet spawning escapement needs and to provide reasonable harvest opportunities for subsistence, commercial, sport, and personal use needs in Northern Cook Inlet. Those shortages have resulted in consistent sport fishing restrictions and closures — in particular at Deshka River and Little Susitna River over the past three years — however even with these inriver restrictions and closures too many salmon had already been harvested and not enough remained to even come close to ADF&G established coho salmon SEGs at both rivers. Adaptive Management Changes need to be made. A more precautionary management approach as outlined in 5 AAC 39.222 is clearly required.

3)WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER? Or, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new or amended regulation say? Please consider permanently reducing the amount of State cow Alaska managed commercial drift gillnet fishing allowed in the middle of Upper Cook inlet beyond the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point Sections, — Specifically when larger abundances of Kenai River sockeye allow additional days and hours of drift gillnet harvest — those added harvest opportunities should avoid the primary mixed stocks areas, and only occur closer to the rivers where the abundant stocks are bound, as follows:

(c) From July 9 through July 15,

(2) at run strengths greater than 2.3000 sockeye to the Kenai River the commissioner may, by emergency order, open one additional 12-hour fishing period in the Expanded Kenai and Expanded Kasilof Section of the Upper Subdistrict [AND DRIFT GILLNET AREA 1];

(d). From July 16 through July 31.

(2) at run strengths of 2,300,000 - 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River,

(A) fishing during all [ONE] regular 12-hour fishing periods per week will be restricted to one or more of the following sections and areas:

- (i). Expanded Kenai Section of the Upper Subdistrict;
- (ii) Expanded Kasilof Section of the Upper Subdistrict;
- (iii) Anchor Point Section of the Lower Subdistrict;
- [(IV) DRIFT GILLNET AREA 1;]

(B) Additional fishing time under this subsection is allowed only in one or more of the following sections: Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, Anchor Point. [THE REMAINING WEEKLY 12-HOUR REGULAR FISHING PERIOD WILL BE RESTRICTED TO ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

- (I) EXPANDED KENAI SECTION;
- (II) EXPANDED KASILOF SECTION;
- (III) ANCHOR POINT SECTION;]

(3) at run strengths greater than 4,600,000 sockeye salmon to the Kenai River, all [ONE] regular 12-hour fishing periods per week will be restricted to the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point Sections;

(B) Additional fishing time under this subsection is allowed only in one or more of the following sections: Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, Anchor Point. [THE REMAINING WEEKLY 12-HOUR REGULAR FISHING PERIOD WIL BE RESTRICTED TO ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

- (I) EXPANDED KENAI SECTION;
- (II) Expanded KASILOF SECTION;
- (III) ANCHOR POINT SECTION;]

4)STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED BELOW. If one or more of the three criteria set forth below is not applicable, state that it is not.

a) for a fishery conservation purpose or reason: Deshka River weir counts indicate that the coho salmon escapement goal used by ADF&G as an indicator stock for the entire Susitna River drainage may not be attained for at least the third year in a row. One more year with a similar coho escapement and Deshka River coho should qualify as a Stock of Management Concern on the same year Deshka River Chinook Salmon may also qualify as a Stock of Management Concern. The 2025 Deshka coho count through August 27 was only 2,408 fish compared to an SEG calling for 10,200 — 24,100 coho. Additionally Little Susitna River weir counts show that the department's primary inseason Knik Arm drainage coho salmon indicator stock, has likely missed its SEG for at least the last 3 years. Another year failing to attain the Little Susitna River coho salmon goal, and the stock should also qualify as a Stock of Management Concern — on the same year that Little Susitna River Chinook Salmon should qualify as a Stock of Management Concern. Finally, coho harvest percentages in the drift gillnet fishery have risen significantly compared to Northern Cook Inlet set net and sport harvest percentages over the past three years — indicative of a newly expanding fishery. There is clearly not just one — but 4 serious conservation purposes that should be recognized and addressed. This ACR attempts to partially address the identified conservation purposes for Deshka River and Little Susitna River coho salmon that are likely also present (but not specifically identified by inseason assessments) at other Susitna River drainage and Knik Arm drainage locations.

b) to correct an error in regulation: N/A

c) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted: I doubt that all BOF members fully considered how much taking more of the Kasilof and Kenai River sockeye harvest offshore, with the drift gillnet fishery, would impact northern bound coho salmon stocks and the Northern Cook Inlet fisheries dependent on the health and abundance of northern coho stocks.

5)WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE? If nothing is done the Department / BOF may likely be designating Alaska's first two coho salmon Stocks of Management Concern and developing action plans to rebuild and sustainable manage these two significant coho salmon stocks during the 2026 / 2027 BOF cycle. NOTE: This ACR was purposefully written in a manner to allow the BOF broad leeway in how to adjust drift gillnet harvest area(s) during Kenai sockeye abundance levels that allow additional harvest opportunities in the primary mixed stock staging areas — and with Northern Cook Inlet coho stocks (based on ADF&G's Deshka and Little Susitna River escapement data) rapidly approaching Stock of Management Concern status. This is a festering and reoccurring problem that should be adequately addressed with more permanent regulation — rather than a single year of discretionary ADF&G commercial management.

6)STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.

The stated purpose of The Central District Gillnet Fishery Management Plan . . . “ is to ensure adequate escapement and a harvestable surplus of salmon into the Northern District drainages and to provide management guidelines to the department. The department shall manage the commercial drift gillnet fishery to minimize the harvest of Northern District salmon and Kenai River coho salmon in order to provide all users with a reasonable opportunity to harvest these salmon stocks over the entire run, as measured by the frequency of inriver restrictions. The department shall manage the Central District commercial drift gillnet fishery as described in this section.” Therefore, if provisions within the plan allow too liberal of drift gillnet fishing to achieve the BOF adopted purpose of the plan the plan should be amended / clarified — before liberal drift gillnet fishing opportunity significantly contributes to creating multiple coho salmon Stocks of Management Concern.

7) IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE. Providing for Escapement needs and allocation was already adopted by the BOF in the purpose statement of the Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan. Since both escapement and Northern Cook Inlet allocations are being shorted by a newly expanding drift gillnet fishery, adjustments should be made as outlined in 5 AAC 39.222 Policy For the Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries (2) (F): “salmon escapement and harvest management decisions should be made in a manner that protects non-target salmon stocks or species; and (5) in the face of uncertainty, salmon stocks, fisheries, artificial propagation, and essential habitats shall be managed conservatively as follows:”

“(A) a precautionary approach, involving the application of prudent foresight that takes into account the uncertainties in salmon fisheries and habitat management, the biological, social, cultural, and economic risks, and the need to make action with incomplete knowledge, should be applied to the regulation and control of harvest and other human-induced source of salmon mortality;”

8)STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHERY THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR (e.g., commercial fisherman, subsistence user, sport angler, etc.). Northern Cook Inlet freshwater sport fishing guide, personal use, sport angler.

9)STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING. To the best of my knowledge - No. However, many adjustments have been proposed and made to this plan overtime.

Submitted by: Andy Couch

NAME _____

Individual

Address 14660 E Gunnysack Road **City, State.** Palmer, AK **Zip.** 99645

Home Phone. 907-746-2199 **Work Phone.** 907-746-2199. **Email.** fishing@fish4salmon.com

SIGNATURE: Andrew N. Couch _____ **DATE:** 8-29-2025 _____

Note: Addresses and telephone numbers will not be published.

Mail, fax, or upload this completed form to:

Alaska Board of Fisheries

P.O. Box 115526

Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Fax: 907-465-6094

Upload file online: <https://arcg.is/Kz5ey1>

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. FWC 25-02**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION RECOMMENDING MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY DIRECT ADMINISTRATION TO CLASSIFY KEY BOROUGH-OWNED PARCELS ON THE SHORE OF DESHKA RIVER AS WATERSHED LANDS TO PROTECT SALMON POPULATIONS.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) ranks the Susitna River drainage king salmon population as the fourth largest in the State of Alaska, with Deshka River

providing spawning and rearing habitat for approximately 20 percent of the Susitna River king salmon return on an annual basis; and

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

WHEREAS, even with no sport harvest allowed in 2023 and 2024, not a single Chinook salmon spawning escapement goal was attained anywhere in the Susitna River drainage; and

WHEREAS, unsustainability of Susitna River drainage Chinook salmon is a rapidly accelerating problem; and

WHEREAS, the Deshka River is also a very productive producer of coho salmon within the Susitna River drainage, with Deshka River coho salmon escapements used by ADF&G as a tool for managing coho salmon stocks throughout the entire Susitna River drainage; and

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

populations, both of which require adequate and quality habitat locally; and

WHEREAS, the FWC believes it is important that the MSB takes every available action to safeguard healthy salmon runs in local water bodies; and

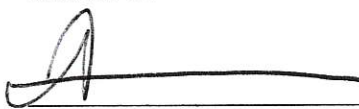
WHEREAS, the MSB can classify these parcels as watershed lands in recognition of the water quality function they provide that protects salmon habitat.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the FWC recommends the Matanuska- Susitna Borough Assembly direct Borough Administration to bring forward legislation classifying key Borough- owned parcels on the shore of the Deshka River as "Watershed" Lands ADOPTED by the Matanuska- Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission this 13th day of March 13, 2025.



Peter Probasco, Chair

ATTEST:



Margaret Brown, Staff

From: [Alex Strawn](#)
To: [Ashley Stick](#)
Cc: [Lacie Olivier](#)
Subject: Fisheries Language in 2026 State Priorities
Date: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 1:39:48 PM
Attachments: [Alex Strawn.vcf](#)

Good afternoon Ashley,

Below are the two Fisheries items in the 2026 State legislative priorities being considered by the Assembly on October 21. Please distribute this to the FWC so that I can discuss and get feedback.

BOROUGH ACTION PRIORITIES

A. FISHERY MANAGEMENT

- Support collaboration between the State and Federal fisheries management to reduce bycatch.
- Maintain/increase funding and support for fish weirs in the Borough, coho genetic sampling to improve salmon management, and invasive species suppression programs.
- Fully match Federal funds from license fees to maximize Federal dollars for fish and game.
- Maintain the conservation corridor for Northern-bound salmon.
- Ensure adequate ADF&G staffing to efficiently and effectively execute fishery-related programs.
- List Susitna king salmon and Little Susitna coho salmon as stocks of yield concern and develop corresponding management action plans.

BOROUGH FUNDING PRIORITIES:

7. FISHERY PROTECTION - \$2,500,000 (HD 25-30) - In 2015, a strategic Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan for Upper Cook Inlet was conducted, resulting in improved resource management through genetic stock analysis, economic impact studies, and improved funding of Northern District weirs. In 2025, the plan will be a decade old, five years beyond its stated relevant time horizon. Since the last plan, there have been significant declines in salmon populations in the Borough. An update to this plan would provide a list of prioritized goals and strategies that support healthy salmon populations and habitat, and an opportunity for public and agency engagement in guiding strategies for the future.

Additionally, this funding would be utilized to support ongoing work on the Borough's fish passage program, secure more consistent funding and operations of Northern District weirs and genetic studies, execute pike suppression efforts, resume operation of the Upper Cook Inlet commercial test net fishery, operate a Susitna River Sockeye Salmon mark/recapture abundance estimate, provide an update to the 'Economic Contributions of Sportfishing on the Cook Inlet Region in 2017' study, and ensure additional cataloging of local streams, rivers, and habitat essential for healthy fish and wildlife populations.

Quality fisheries management for Upper Cook Inlet should not only prioritize the procurement of funding for projects but should also ensure adequate staffing to operate and execute the programs efficiently. In a region with such extensive and essential anadromous fish habitat surrounding a rapidly growing population center, and with declining salmon stocks, it is necessary for our region to continue monitoring and investing in tools, data, and information that support healthy local salmon populations and productive Northern Cook Inlet and Mat-Su fisheries.

