MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer, Alaska 99645

CHAIRPERSON
Peter Probasco

VICE CHAIR
Andy Couch

MSB STAFF
Paul Clark

BOARD MEMBERS
Michael Bowles
Marty Van Diest
Tim Hale
Gabe Kitter
Bill Gamble
Kendra Zamzow
Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Regular Meeting

November 13, 2025

Meeting Packet - Table of Contents

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

Physical Location of Meeting: Assembly Chambers, DSJ Bldg, 350 E. Dahlia Ave., Palmer
Remote Participation: See attached agenda on p. 1

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

Paul Clark – 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

Assembly Chambers
Dorothy Swanda Jones Building
350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer

November 13, 2025
REGULAR MEETING
4:00 p.m.

Ways to participate in MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings:

IN-PERSON: Back of Assembly Chambers, 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. October 9, 2025

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

VII. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS

A. Staff Report

i. Healthy Riparian Area Education & Outreach project

B. Chair's Report

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Waterbody Setback staff update and discussion

B. Deshka Resolution 25-02 – Classify Borough Lands as Watershed Lands

C. Board of Fisheries Work Session - Andy

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation Shell Lake Flow Control Feasibility Study (15 min)
-Lisa Ka'aihue and Danny Tanis, Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association

B. ADF&G Summary meeting

C. Preparation for Board of Fisheries 2026-2027 Cycle

X. MEMBER COMMENTS (10 minutes)

XI. NEXT MEETING DATE: December 11, 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: October 9, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Present

Andy Couch
Michael Bowles
Marty Van Diest
Tim Hale
Gabe Kitter
Bill Gamble
Jim Sykes

Absent

Pete Probasco
Kendra Zamzow

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MB moved to approve the agenda as written, BG seconded, No obj, passed

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Sept 25, TH moved to approve the minutes, seconded by MB, No obj, Passed

VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person*)
Jessica Speed
Michelle Heun
Stephen Braund
Corey Berg
Chennery Fife
Stefan Hinman
Bill Stoltze

Neil Dewitt

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

BG made a motion that the Chair, or his designee, plus one or two other commission members would go to Anchorage to meet with Eugenio Piñeiro-Soler of NOAA. MB seconded. No obj, passed

B. Board of Fisheries work session

BG made a motion that Andy Couch in Consultation with Pete Probasco would write a letter that the Borough Mayor or Manager could sign regarding better management for Mat-Su Salmon Stock. It will be sent to the Governor, Commissioner and the Board of Fisheries. TH seconded. No obj, passed

C. Deshka Resolution 25-02

D. State Legislative priorities

BG moved to adopt legislative priority changes as written. TH seconded. No obj, passed

E. State of Alaska Community Hunts

X. MEMBER COMMENTS

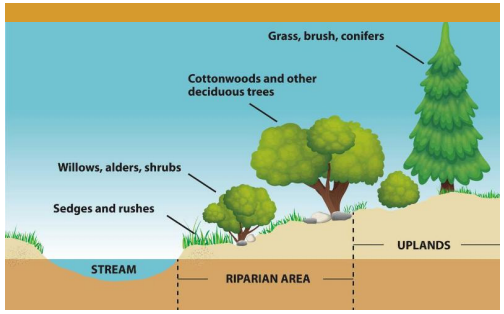
XI. NEXT MEETING DATE: November 13, 2025, 4-6pm Back of the Assembly Chambers

XII. ADJOURNMENT

BG moved to adjourn at 5:53pm, seconded by MB
No objection, motion passed unanimously

WHAT IS A RIPARIAN AREA?

Riparian areas are the green spaces along lakes,wetlands, streams, and rivers. They are vital forproviding clean water, healthy fish populations, and flood protection.



FUNCTIONS:

Create Stable Banks: Plant roots create a network within the soil to help reduce erosion.

Supply Streams with Organic Matter: Leaves and other organic matter from vegetation enter the water and provide a healthy amount of nutrients.

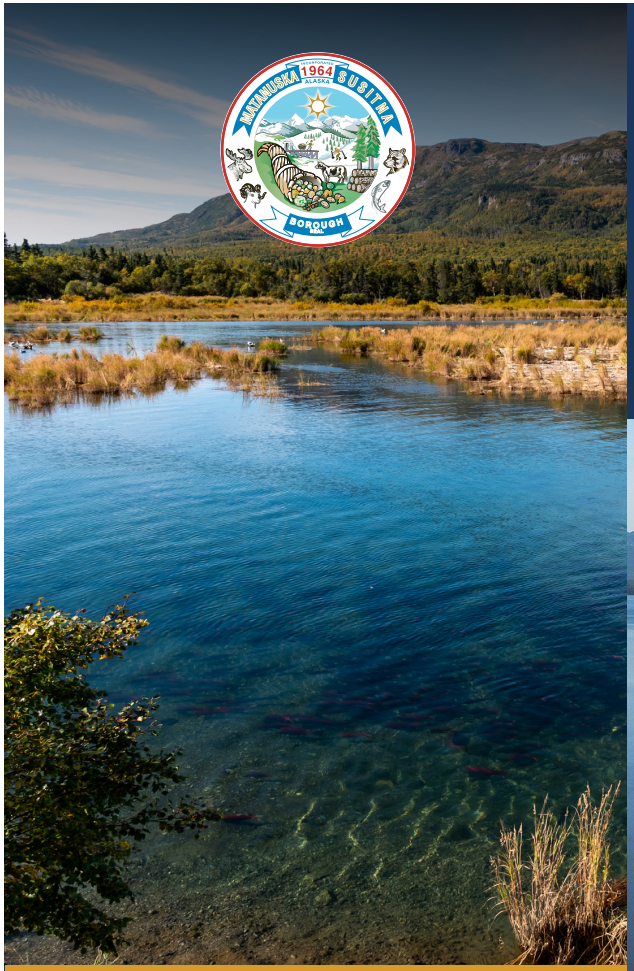
Maintain Water Quality: Riparian vegetation acts like a sponge by absorbing water from rain and snow melt, filtering sediment and excess nutrients before it can enter the stream.

Provide Woody Debris: Large pieces of wood, like tree trunks, help stabilize banks, provide habitat, and reduce water velocity in the stream.

Provide Habitat: Vegetation and woody debris in and near the stream provide habitat for insects and wildlife.

Maintain Biodiversity: As transition areas between water and uplands, riparian areas support a wide variety of plants and animals.

Supply Shade and Maintain Cooler Temperatures: Trees and shrubs along the stream banks provide shade for animals, and people.



Get in touch to learn more or share at your next event!

EMAIL: planning@matsugov.us
PHONE: (907) 861-7822

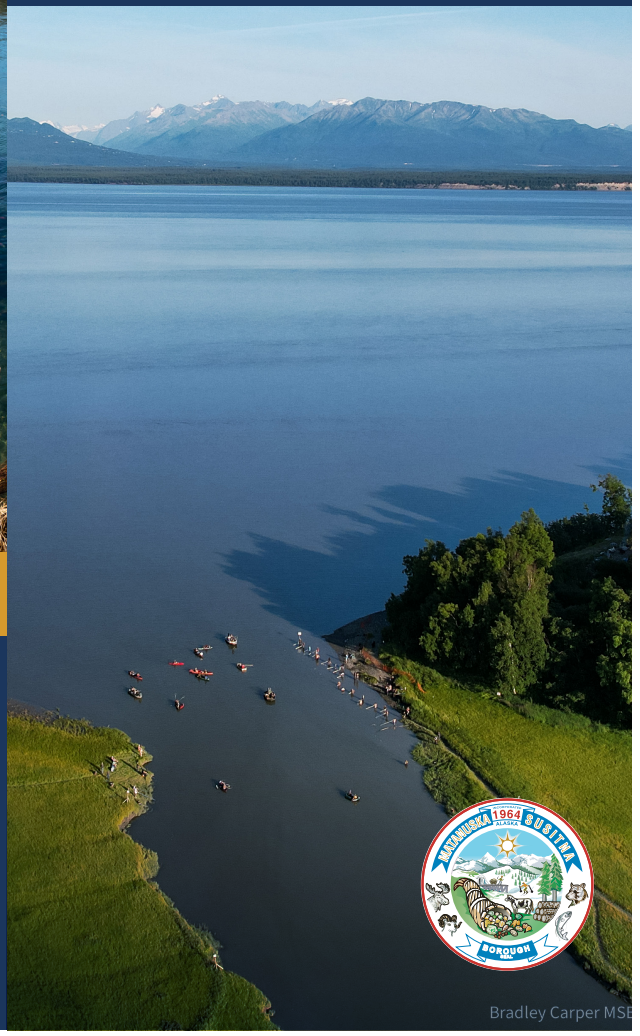
SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION.

https://healthywatershed.matsu.gov/

Funding for this project has been provided in part through an Alaska Clean Water Action Grant #25-03

Healthy Mat-Su

Watershed Initiative



Bradley Carper MSB

MSB CODES RELATED TO RIPARIAN HEALTH

Chapter 17.55.020

(A) Except as provided in subsection

(B) of this section, no structure or footing shall be located closer than 75 feet from the ordinary high water mark of a body of water. Except as provided otherwise, eaves may project three feet into the required setback area.

(C) Docks, piers, marinas, aircraft hangars, and boathouses may be located closer than 75 feet and over the water, provided they are not used for habitation and do not contain sanitary or petroleum fuel storage facilities.

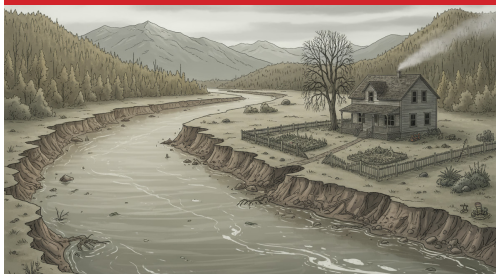
(D) In this section, a "structure" is any dwelling or habitable building or garage.

(E) No part of a subsurface sewage disposal system shall be closer than 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark of any body of water. The planning commission shall require this distance be increased where necessary to protect waters within the borough.

HEALTHY

The river and property are protected by a healthy riparian area full of native plants, and potential sources of pollution are not close to the water. The result – clean water and healthy fish, wildlife, and people!

UNHEALTHY



This river does not have riparian plants along the banks, and the house, garden and path are located too close to the water. This leads to faster erosion, an increased risk to structures, and a higher chance of pollution entering the water. Poor water quality impacts fish, wildlife, and Mat-Su residents.

For more information on MSB Codes, visit https://matsu.gov/code-and-legislation

BEST PRACTICES

On Your Property:

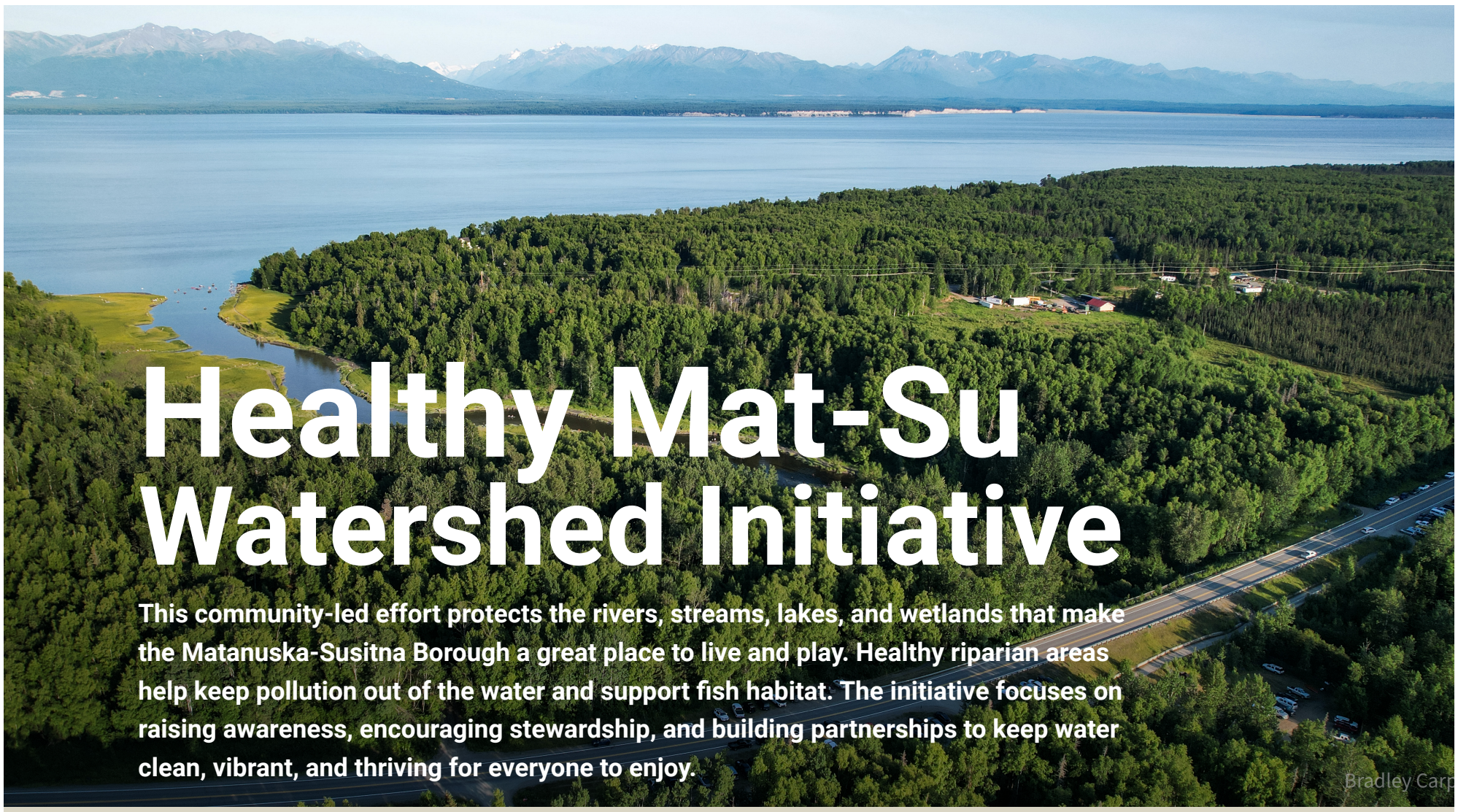
- Maintain vegetated buffers along streams and lakes.
- Avoid mowing or clearing vegetation near water edges.
- Use native plants to stabilize soil and support habitat.
- Clean up and properly dispose of pet waste, oil, fuel, and other hazardous materials.
- Follow MSB setback codes: structures at least 75 ft (Ch. 17.55.020 A) and septic tanks at least 100 ft (Ch. 17.55.020 E) from water bodies.
- Locate livestock enclosures away from waterbodies and riparian vegetation to prevent water pollution.
- Limit use of fertilizers and pesticides, especially near water.

In Your Community:

- Participate in clean-up events and native planting days.
- Report illegal dumping or erosion issues to local authorities.
- Attend community council presentations and workshops.
- Share educational materials with neighbors.
- Volunteer for stream monitoring or habitat restoration projects.

Where You Recreate:

- Pack out all trash, gear, and fishing tackle
- Use non-lead fishing tackle
- Clean, drain, and dry your gear
- Dispose of human and pet waste properly
- Use designated trails, stream crossings and boat launch sites



Healthy Mat-Su Watershed Initiative

This community-led effort protects the rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands that make the Matanuska-Susitna Borough a great place to live and play. Healthy riparian areas help keep pollution out of the water and support fish habitat. The initiative focuses on raising awareness, encouraging stewardship, and building partnerships to keep water clean, vibrant, and thriving for everyone to enjoy.

Bradley Carp

WHAT IS A RIPARIAN AREA?

Riparian areas are the green spaces along rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands. They help keep water clean, support healthy fish and wildlife, and protect communities from flooding.

HOW CAN YOUR HELP PROTECT RIPARIAN AREAS?

On Your Property:

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- Avoid mowing or clearing vegetation near water edges.
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For more information on the Mat-Su Healthy Watershed Initiative, visit our website at https://healthywatershed.matsu.gov/

Funding for this project has been provided in part through an Alaska Clean Water Action Grant #25-03

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Office of the Mayor

350 East Dahlia Avenue • Palmer, AK 99645
Phone (907) 861-8682 / Cell (907) 795-8133 / Fax (907) 861-8669
Edna.DeVries@matsugov.us

October 24, 2025

Mike Dunleavy, Governor of Alaska
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Honorable Governor Dunleavy,

Wild salmon are a vital part of Alaska's culture, economy, and environment. In the Mat-Su Borough and Northern Cook Inlet, salmon provide food for families, support commercial and sport fisheries, and sustain Indigenous communities in Tyonek, Knik, Eklutna, and Chickaloon through subsistence and educational harvests.

All salmon species are found in this region and are essential to the ecosystem. Historically, Chinook and coho salmon have been especially important to the Mat-Su Borough. The Susitna River once supported the fourth-largest Chinook run in Alaska, and the Little Susitna River ranked second statewide for sport coho fishing. A 2017 study commissioned by the Borough showed that anglers spent $716.5 million in the Cook Inlet region, supporting more than 6,300 jobs and $271 million in household income.

Since 2007, declines in wild Chinook and coho salmon have reduced fishing opportunities, hurt the local economy, and limited an important food source. These species have not met escapement goals in recent years, raising concerns for future sustainability.

The Borough supports efforts to conserve Kenai and Kasilof salmon runs, but recent changes to Upper Cook Inlet commercial fishing patterns may be increasing harvest pressure on northbound salmon, especially coho. These challenges have been difficult for residents, businesses, and families who depend on salmon for food and income. With careful management, sustainable populations can provide fair opportunities for all users.

The Borough and its Fish and Wildlife Commission look forward to working with your administration, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Board of Fisheries during the 2026–2027 regulatory cycle to strengthen conservation and management of these important northern stocks.

Sincerely,

Edna DeVries

Cc: douglas.vincent-lang@alaska.gov; marit.carlson-vandort@alaska.gov; msb.planning@matsugov.us

Providing Outstanding Borough Services to the Matanuska-Susitna Community.

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

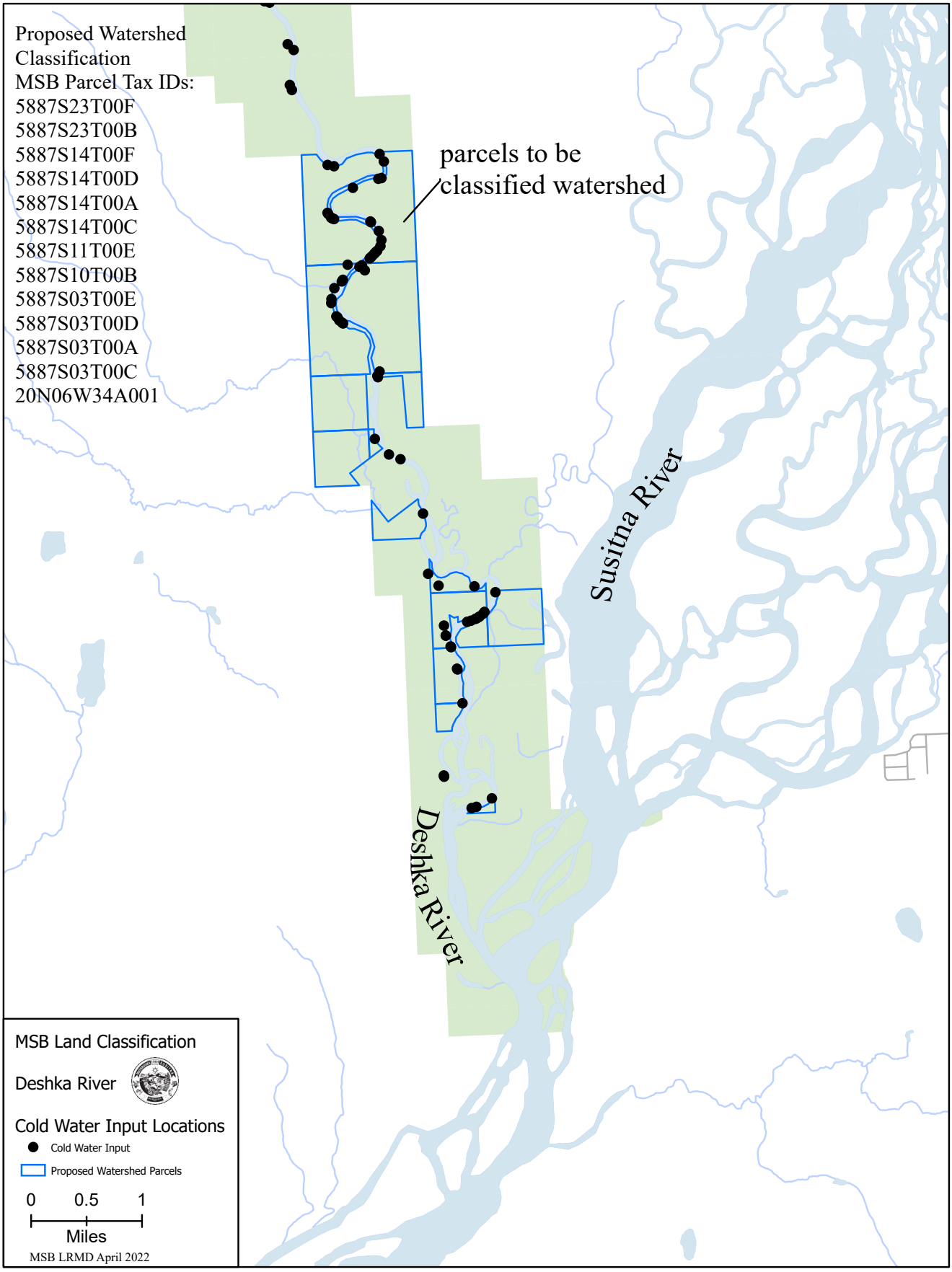
WHEREAS, the MSB can classify these parcels as watershed lands in recognition of the water quality function they provide that protects salmon habitat.

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


Proposed Watershed
Classification
MSB Parcel Tax IDs:
5887S23T00F
5887S23T00B
5887S14T00F
5887S14T00D
5887S14T00A
5887S14T00C
5887S11T00E
5887S10T00B
5887S03T00E
5887S03T00D
5887S03T00A
5887S03T00C
20N06W34A001
parcels to be
classified watershed
Susitna River
Deshka River
MSB Land Classification
Deshka River
Cold Water Input Locations
Cold Water Input
Proposed Watershed Parcels
0 0.5 1
Miles
MSB LRMD April 2022

Andy's upcoming newspaper column update from the Board of Fisheries Work Session that occurred on Oct. 28 and 29.

Board of Fisheries Agrees to Consider Coho Salmon ACR In March By Andy Couch

On Tuesday October 29, 2025, by a narrow 4-3-0 split vote, members of the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) decided to schedule Agenda Change Request (ACR) 5 to be considered out of normal board cycle. Shortly after that decision, Chair Marit Carlson-Van Dort provided her rationale as to why ACR 5 and ACR 8 (the only other ACR the BOF decided to consider out of cycle) should be scheduled for the March 2026 Statewide Finfish meeting in Anchorage. There was no objection from any other BOF member, so ACR 5 and ACR 8 are now both scheduled to be heard during that March meeting. On the ADF&G website that meeting is listed as running from March 17- 20, 2026, however, the BOF also made some slight scheduling adjustments to that meeting, which I did not record, but will provide an update on in the future.

If adopted, provisions of ACR 5 would reduce commercial drift gillnet fishing opportunity in the middle of Upper Cook Inlet during years with more than 2.3 million sockeye salmon returning to the Kenai River, while still allowing drift gillnet harvest in the Expanded Kenai, Expanded Kasilof, and Anchor Point Sections located closer to the Kenai River and Kasilof River terminus areas with Upper Cook Inlet. The intent of this ACR is to provide a Conservation Corridor in the center of Upper Cook Inlet for a longer time duration in July and August thereby allowing adequate passage of coho salmon to better ensure attainment of the Deshka River and Little Susitna River coho salmon sustainable escapement goals (SEGs).

Scheduling this decision to be made in March provides the public and interested user groups advance notice and opportunity to comment on the merits of ACR 5, or possibly more agreeable solutions that could be considered to 5AAC 21.353 Central District Drift Gillnet Fishery Management Plan. **https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/alaska/5-AAC-21.353**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang asked Chair Carlson-Van Dort if she would prefer the ADF&G staff comment only on ACR 5 proposed language or more broadly on the entire management plan. Van Dort's response, "Some of both." Department comments on the plan and merits of proposed changes contained in ACR 5 may be available for the public to consider and comment on about a month (mid-February) in advance of the "mid"- March Statewide Finfish BOF meeting.

More in depth information concerning these and other BOF decisions that occurred at the October 28 and 29 work session should be posted on ADF&G's website, possibly by the time this article is in print on Friday October 31, 2025. https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.meetinginfo&date=10-28-2025&meeting=anchorage

Andy Couch is a member of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Matanuska Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee, however comments expressed in this column are his own unless noted otherwise.

Shell Lake Flow Control Feasibility Study

Presentation to the MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission
by Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA)
November 13, 2025

Project Background

- **CIAA** has actively suppressed **invasive northern pike** in Shell Lake since **2012** to protect native species, especially **sockeye salmon**.
- In **2019,** environmental conditions created a **water-level drop**, and a significant **decline in pike numbers** was observed the following year.
- Based on this observation, CIAA requested and received a **grant** from the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund **(AKSSF)** to investigate the feasibility of controlling water levels to suppress the pike population.
- **HDR** was contracted to assess whether a **flow control structure** could be used as a tool to disrupt the pike life cycle at Shell Lake.

Northern Pike Lifecycle – Why It Matters

Spawning

- Occurs in **early spring**, around **ice-out**.
- Females lay up to **75,000 eggs** in **shallow, vegetated areas**.
- **Eggs adhere to vegetation** and hatch in ~2 weeks.
- **Fry** remains in **shallow, vegetated areas** for several weeks, hidden from predators.

Flow Control Strategy

- **Lower water levels** after pike spawn exposing **pike spawning and rearing habitat**.
- This may **reduce egg and fry survival**, inhibiting pike at a critical point in their lifecycle.

Questions We're Asking

- Can lake levels at **Shell Lake** be **safely modified**?
- Can **seasonal flow control** be an effective tool against **northern pike**?

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
2026/2027 Cycle
Tentative Meeting Schedule

Lower and Upper Cook Inlet Finfish; and Kodiak Finfish and Supplemental Issues.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: Friday, April 10, 2026

Meeting Dates	Topics	Location	Comment Deadline
October 28–29, 2026 [2 days]	**Work Session** ACRs, cycle organization, Stocks of Concern	**Anchorage** Egan Civic and Convention Center	Oct. 13, 2026
December 1–4, 2026 [4 days]	**Lower Cook Inlet Finfish**	**Seward** AVTEC	Nov. 16, 2026
January 5–8, 2027 [4 days]	**Kodiak Finfish**	**Kodiak** Kodiak Marketplace	Dec. 21, 2026
March 4–15, 2027 [12 days]	**Upper Cook Inlet Finfish**	**Anchorage** Egan Civic and Convention Center	Feb. 17, 2027

Total Meeting Days: 22

Agenda Change Request Deadline: August 28, 2026 [*60 days prior to fall worksession*]