

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
Gabe Kitter
Bill Gamble
Kendra Zamzow
Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Special Meeting March 26, 2026

Meeting Packet – Table of Contents

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Conference Room 203, DSJ Bldg, 350 E. Dahlia Ave., Palmer, AK 99645

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
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*

MARCH 26, 2026
SPECIAL MEETING
4:00 p.m.

Ways to participate in MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings:

IN-PERSON: Conference Room 203, DSJ (Main Borough) Building

REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS:

Join on your computer:

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 230 143 734 385 99

Passcode: NH3zj6oT

Or call in (audio only):

1-907-290-7880

Phone Conference ID: 268 436 425#

Note: Decision items are bold and marked with an asterisk

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person*)
- VI. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS
 - A. Staff Report
 - B. Chair Report

VII. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Board of Fisheries 2026 March Meeting

1. After Action Review
2. Next Steps

B. Prep for 2027 Board of Fisheries

1. Draft proposals
2. Goals

C. Providing a Letter of support for HB 321 “Fish & Game Wildlife Refuges”

VIII. MEMBER COMMENTS (10 minutes)

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE: Regular Meeting, April 9, 4:00 PM

X. 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.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Alaska Board of Fisheries

**THE ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES CALLS FOR PROPOSED CHANGES
IN THE SUBSISTENCE, PERSONAL USE, SPORT, GUIDED SPORT, AND COMMERCIAL
FISHING REGULATIONS FOR THE
LOWER AND UPPER COOK INLET FINFISH, and KODIAK FINFISH FISHERIES.**

PROPOSAL DEADLINE – FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2026

The Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) is accepting proposed changes to the subsistence, personal use, sport, guided sport, and commercial fishing regulations for the Lower and Upper Cook Inlet finfish, and Kodiak finfish management areas. Finfish includes salmon, herring, trout, other freshwater finfishes, and groundfish, including Pacific cod, for consideration by the board in its 2026–2027 meeting cycle. The board may also consider subsistence proposals for other topics (including other areas) under the subsistence proposal policy, 5 AAC 96.615, if proposals are submitted within this deadline and the board determines they meet the criteria in either 5 AAC 96.615(a)(1) or (a)(2).

To ensure the proposal book is finished in advance of the board meetings, the board sets Friday, April 10, 2026, as the proposal deadline.

Proposals may be submitted online, email, mail or fax at:

Online: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.forms>

Mail: ADF&G, Boards Support Section
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Fax: (907) 465-6094

Proposals must be received by Friday, April 10, 2026 at the Boards Support Section office in Juneau. A postmark is NOT sufficient for timely receipt.

Interested parties are encouraged to submit proposals at the earliest possible date. The Board of Fisheries proposal form, including the on-line proposal form, is available at the Boards Support website, <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.forms>. Proposal forms are also available at any Boards Support office. Proposals must be submitted on the current approved form. Any additional information provided with the form, such as pictures, tables, Internet web links, or charts/maps will not be included in the proposal book.

The completed proposal form must contain a contact telephone number and address. Email addresses are appreciated. Please print or type the individual's or organization's name as appropriate.

All proposals are reviewed prior to publication. Language that is emotionally charged detracts from the substance of the proposal and may draw opposition not germane to the element(s) of the proposal. Such language may be edited or deleted prior to publication. **Proposals that do not meet this call will not be accepted.** Proposals must pertain to the region, species, and uses in this call. Proposals that do not request a regulatory change or are outside the authority of the board will not be accepted. If duplicative proposals are received by the same individual or group only one will be included in the proposal book.

Proposals published in the proposal book will be referenced with the appropriate Alaska Administrative Code citation and include a brief description of the action requested.

Proposal books are sent to advisory committees for review and comment. Proposals are posted online for the public at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.proposalbook>. Those submitting proposals are encouraged to review the proposal book at their earliest convenience to ensure proposals are included and accurate. Noted errors and omissions should be reported to Boards Support immediately. The public is encouraged to visit the Board of Fisheries website frequently for news and information regarding the upcoming cycle.

Responsive proposals received by the proposal deadline will be considered during the board's 2026/2027 meeting schedule.

For more information, please contact the Art Nelson, Executive Director for the Board of Fisheries at art.nelson@alaska.gov or (907) 267-2292.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE FINANCE
Operating Budget Co-Chair



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DISTRICT
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EAST SAND LAKE
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MIDTOWN
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TAKU-CAMPBELL

REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

HB 321: State Game Refuge, Sanctuary and Critical Habitat Area Bill Summary

(February 24, 2026, Version 34-LS1257\N)

Name Changes: this bill will bring naming consistency to Alaska’s Special Areas (game refuges, wildlife refuges, game sanctuaries, wildlife sanctuaries, and critical habitat areas (CHA)) by renaming all refuges and critical habitat areas as “Wildlife Refuges,” and all sanctuaries as “Wildlife Sanctuaries”. Eliminating the designation of “critical habitat area” will avoid confusion with “critical habitat” as defined in the federal Endangered Species Act and will more clearly emphasize that state wildlife refuges do not unduly restrict public access and uses.

Purpose Statement: the existing overriding purpose statements for refuges (AS 16.20.020) and CHAs (AS 16.20.500) is consolidated in AS 16.20.020(a) and is applicable to all redefined wildlife refuges. This statute reiterates that the primary purpose of refuges is to protect habitat values, and fish and wildlife populations. The existing stand-alone statutory purpose statements for the sanctuaries, and individual refuges and CHAs are unchanged.

Public Uses: in addition to the primary purpose statement in AS 16.20.020(a), subsections (b) and (c) of this statute allow for continued public uses of refuge resources including hunting, trapping, fishing, subsistence activities, wildlife viewing, and other uses and these subsections authorize the department, Board of Game, and Board of Fish to adopt regulations to better manage public access, uses, and recreational and other facilities.

Firearms: this bill reconfirms (via AS 16.20.028) the public’s right to carry and use firearms in refuges for legal purposes including hunting, trapping, and fishing. In subsection (a), it also allows the department, by adopting regulations, to restrict the discharge of firearms for the purpose of public safety with the intent to prohibit target shooting at public access sites. Unregulated target shooting at refuge access sites endangers public safety and creates hazardous contaminated sites through the concentrated accumulation of lead leaving the department with financial and other liabilities of contaminated sites.

This statute also allows the department to close certain areas within a refuge to public access by adopting regulations to protect public health and safety. The intent is to allow the department to close areas that are not appropriate for public entry such as the downrange area of a shooting range where public access disrupts the operation of the shooting range and creates a significant public safety issue.

Personal Watercraft: these watercraft would be prohibited in the Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats refuges (AS 16.20.590(c)) and (AS 16.20.580(b)), respectively) to reduce user conflicts and to avoid disturbance to fish and wildlife and their habitats.

Boundary Adjustments\Land Additions: these bill provisions are necessary for several reasons including:

1. correcting errors in legal land descriptions adopted in several enabling statutes (Egegik, Pilot Point, and Port Moller refuges).
2. Adding acquired conservation lands to refuge jurisdiction located within existing refuge boundaries (Anchorage Coastal, Palmer Hay Flats, and future acquisitions).
3. Expand refuge boundary to include acquired conservation lands outside existing refuge boundary and being managed by the department (Anchorage Coastal, Creamers Field, Dude Creek, Anchor River-Fritz Creek, Mendenhall Wetlands, and Beluga Wetlands refuges).
4. Adding lands that were presumably inadvertently left out of the original legal descriptions (Anchorage Coastal, Palmer Hay Flats, Izembek, Cape Newenham, Kachemak Bay, Fox River Flats, Cinder River, Tugidak Island).

Private/Native Corporation Lands: removes statutory refuge jurisdiction from private lands located within a refuge boundary including private Native Corporation lands located within Port Moller, Port Heiden, Egegik, and Pilot Point refuges (AS 16.05.550, 555, 565, 570, respectively).

Brown Bear Hunting Near McNeil River Sanctuary: brown bear hunting at McNeil River has been closed since 1955 and is now closed by statute in the entire sanctuary. This bill would extend the closure to the adjoining McNeil River refuge (AS 16.20.041(c)) and the state-owned “Kamishak” lands between the sanctuary and Katmai National Park (AS 16.05.793). Brown bears using the sanctuary regularly range into these adjoining areas which have been closed to brown bear hunting by the Board of Game for more than 40 years in the Kamishak lands and over 30 years in the refuge. An expanded statutory hunting closure to the areas adjoining the sanctuary would permanently elevate the sanctuary’s distinction as one of the world’s premier wildlife viewing destinations.

Interdepartmental fees: to allow the department to more economically manage and provide for public uses in refuges and sanctuaries, AS 38.05.030(h) would exempt the department from Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) land use permit fees or other authorization fees when the department carries out its statutory functions in refuges and sanctuaries such as development of public use or administrative facilities. This statute would have no other effect on DNR’s authorities as the state’s landowner in refuges and sanctuaries.

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REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

HB 321: State Game Refuge, Sanctuary and Critical Habitat Area

Sponsor Statement

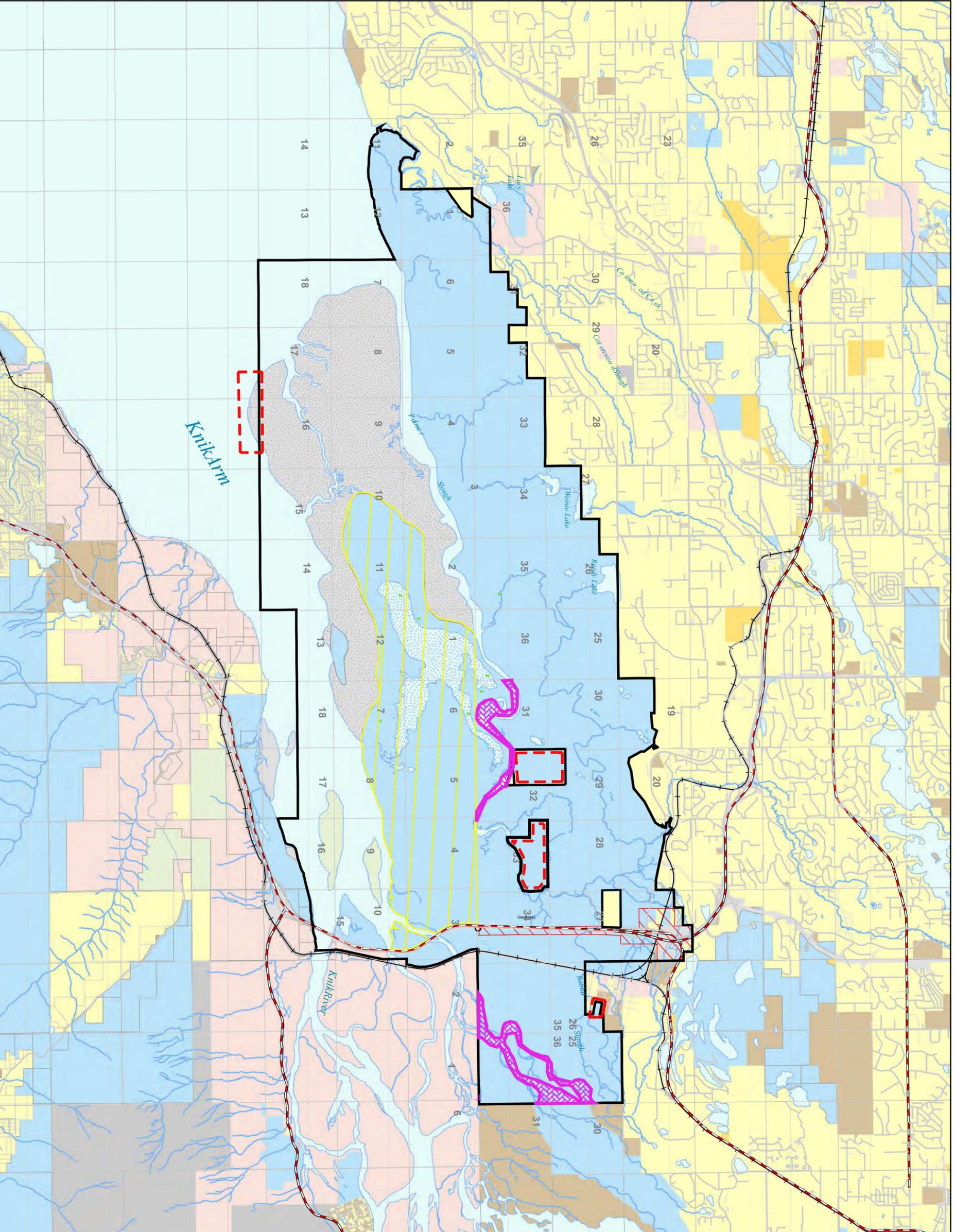
(February 24, 2026, Version 34-LS1257\N)

Alaska’s state wildlife refuge program (AKA Special Areas) protects some of the richest and most diverse fish and wildlife habitats found in North America. Encompassing nearly 3.3 million acres within 32 sites, it is the nation’s largest state-run refuge program and is of equal acreage contained in our Alaska State Parks network. These rich wildlife areas including refuges, sanctuaries, and critical habitat areas provide abundant opportunities for Alaskans and visitors who engage in a host of activities including hunting, fishing, trapping, subsistence activities, wildlife viewing and photography, nature study, commercial activities, and a variety of general recreational activities such as boating, hiking, camping, and an assortment of winter activities.

The first state-protected area of any sort was created by Alaska’s second legislature in 1960 at the Walrus Islands in Bristol Bay. Since that time, Alaskans have developed a world-renowned wildlife refuge system attracting people from around the world and adding significantly to Alaska’s economy and lifestyles. HB 321 seeks to provide the Department of Fish and Game and the Boards additional statutory tools necessary for more effective and efficient management of these areas which receive over one million annual visits.

Specifically, HB 321 will correct and adjust refuge boundaries, remove refuge regulatory oversight on private lands including on Native Corporation lands located within refuge boundaries, amend certain refuge jurisdictions to match important habitat boundaries, change “critical habitat areas” to “refuges” to avoid confusion with federal wildlife laws and to provide a uniform purpose statement, restore an original name to one refuge area, change the name of “game” refuges and sanctuaries to “wildlife” refuges and sanctuaries, elevate protections of one of the world’s most renowned brown bear viewing site by extending the brown bear hunting closure to lands surrounding the McNeil River sanctuary, remove an interdepartmental fee requirement allowing the department to more economically manage and provide for public uses in refuge areas, allow the department to efficiently manage public uses and public safety within refuges including confirmation of the public’s right to carry and use firearms, and to reduce user conflicts and wildlife disturbances in Kachemak Bay.

Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge



State Game Refuge Boundary
16.20.032(A)

Transportation and Utility Corridor
16.20.032(E)

Excluded from refuge jurisdiction
State Land to be Added to Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge
excluded areas to be incorporated to Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

Cabin

State Lands

State

State Selected

Tidelands

Federal Lands

Federal

Other Lands

Native Corporation

Private

Borough

0 40 80 Miles



Conceptual Presentation By
Canyon Arch Design
March, 2026

