

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

Peter Probasco – Chair • Andy Couch – Vice Chair • Gabe Kitter • Bill Gamble • Marty Van Diest • Terry Gorlick •
Jim Sykes – Ex officio member • Paul Clark – Staff



Regular Meeting November 12, 2026

Meeting Packet – Table of Contents

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- **1 = Meeting Agenda**
- **3 = Draft FWC 10.8.26 Meeting Minutes**
- **6 = Salmon Symposium Presentation Abstract**
- **7 = FWC Comment Letter to Board of Fisheries**
- **9 = ADF&G Nelchina Hunt Proposal**

DSJ Building, Back of the Assembly Chambers

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

Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting Agenda

Meeting Date: Thursday, November 12, 2026

Meeting Time: 4:00 PM



Meeting Location

Assembly Chambers – Dorothy Swanda Jones Building
350 E. Dahlia
Avenue Palmer,
Alaska 99645

Fish and Wildlife Commission Members

Chair

Pete Probasco

Vice Chair

Andy Couch

Commissioners:

- Bill Gamble
 - Terry Gorlick
 - Gabe Kitter
 - Marty Van Diest
 - Jim Sykes – Ex officio member
-

Ways to Participate in the Meeting

1. Participate In Person

Members of the public may attend the meeting in person

2. Submit Written Comments

Send **written comments** to the Fish and Wildlife Commission Clerk: paul.clark@matsu.gov

Deadline: Written comments must be received **by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the Friday before the meeting.**

3. Join the Teams Meeting

[Meeting Link](#)

Meeting ID: 287 164 698 039 602

Passcode: Yy9sG6UW

Call-in Option: +1 907-290-7880, Conference ID: 509826329#

Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes
 - A. October 8 Minutes
6. Staff/Agency Reports and Presentations
 - A. Staff Report
 - MSB Assembly Waterbody Setback Special Meeting Summary
 - Youth Pike Program Planning
 - Salmon Symposium Presentation – Nov 19-20
 - B. Chair's Report
 - BOF Work Session Summary
7. Audience Participation (three (3) minutes per person)
8. Unfinished Business
 - A. FWC Comments on Nelchina Caribou Hunt
9. New Business
 - A. 2027 BOF Preparation
 1. Hire Mac Minard as consultant?
 2. Upper Cook Inlet Finfish Proposals
10. Member Comments (10 minutes)
11. Next Regular Meeting Date: **December 10, 2026, 4:00pm, DSJ Building Assembly Chambers**
12. Adjournment

Accessibility and Accommodation Information

Individuals with disabilities who need reasonable accommodation to participate in this meeting should contact the Borough ADA Coordinator at least one week before the meeting.

Phone: 907-861-8432

Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting MINUTES

Meeting Date: Thursday, October 8, 2026

Meeting Time: 4:00 PM



Meeting Location

Assembly Chambers – Dorothy Swanda Jones Building

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 4:03pm

2. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

Present

Gabe Kitter

Jim Sykes

Marty Van Diest

Andy Couch

Terry Gorlick

Bill Gamble

Pete Probasco (joined by phone)

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approval of Agenda

Andy requested to put draft letter to Board of Fisheries about their work session under new business

Terry Gorlick moved to approve agenda as amended, no objection, amended agenda was approved

5. Approval of Minutes

- A. September 29 Minutes

Gabe Kitter moves to approve minutes, no objections, minutes approved

6. Staff/Agency Reports and Presentations

- A. Staff Report

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan Environmental Consultation Memo
- MSB Assembly Waterbody Setback Special Meeting – Oct 20 at 4:00pm
- Youth Pike Program Planning

Andy stated he would like our definition of 'youth' to be as inclusive as possible.

Terry Gorlick will reach out to Dep of Revenue to confirm details on any permits needed or regulations.

- B. Chair's Report

Comments are due October 18. Pete requested authority to write a comment letter to the Board of Fisheries and submit on behalf of the FWC, for the Oct 21 BOF Process Committee meeting and the work session

- C. Status of the Nelchina Caribou Herd – Heidi Hatcher, ADF&G
Heidi shared updated data on the herd from this past spring and summer. ADF&G’s fall estimate for the herd is 18,750. 2-5% of adults as harvestable surplus for a population to grow, ADF&G is proposing a hunt of 2.5% of harvestable adults, or up to 150 permits – bull only, August 10 – September 20, through a Tier II hunt. ADF&G is looking for comments on the proposal through the end of December. Heidi recommended watching her You Tube video from this past winter about the Nelchina herd ([Winter Wildlife Series - Nelchina Caribou Herd Update](#)).

FWC’s comments on the proposal will go on the November meeting agenda.

Audience Participation (three (3) minutes per person)

Invited audience to share any comments. Public included:

**Stephen Braund
Parker Bradley
Heidi Hatcher
Samantha Oslund
Todd Rinaldi
Ross Dorendorf
Anjanette Steer
Angela Stephl
Kevin McCabe
Morgan Urquia**

7. Unfinished Business

A. Legislative Priorities Updates for FY27

Terry moved to boost funding amount to \$4.5 million. Motion did not have a second.

Gabe moves to approve fisheries legislative priorities as written. The motion passed 6-1, with Terry Gorlick opposed.

B. Prepare for 2027 NPFMC Meeting (February 22 – March 2, 2027)

C. Prepare for 2027 Alaska Board of Fisheries Meeting (March 4-15, 2027)

Bill Gamble moved to authorize Pete to write up letter to BoF and submit on behalf of the FWC, to request clarification from the Department of Law on their legal review process and why board adopted regulations were not approved; and get clarification on how these regulations will be addressed at the March Board of Fisheries meeting. No objections, motion passes.

B. FWC Comments on Nelchina Caribou Hunt

Andy proposed to move this to the next meeting agenda, no objection.

C. Comment on AIDEA Application for USACOE Permit for West Susitna Access Road

AIDEA Project Website: <https://www.aidea.org/Programs/Infrastructure-Development/West-Susitna-Access>

Gabe explained the rationale behind the comment letter, including concerns about expediting the permitting process and how short the public comment period was.

The FWC expressed concern that the draft letter did not align with the Assembly's and Borough Administration's position regarding the project.

GK moves to approve letter as amended by Jim, motion did not have a second.

TG moves to extend meeting by 15 minutes to 6:15pm. No obj. Meeting extended.

C. Draft Letter to BoF for Work Session Comment – Andy

Andy shared a letter he will submit on his own for the upcoming BoF work session, since the FWC has not had the chance to review (shared as a handout). Presented key points from the letter about stocks of concern and establishing a Jim Creek escapement goal

8. Member Comments (10 minutes)

9. Next Regular Meeting Date: **November 12, 2026, 4:00pm, DSJ Building Assembly Chambers**

10. Adjournment

TG moves, no obj, motion adjourned at 6:03pm

From Advocacy to Action: The Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission's Salmon Conservation Priorities

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) was formed in 2007 to represent the interests of the Borough and residents in the conservation and allocation of fish, wildlife, and habitat. The presenter will highlight the FWC's support for fishery management and funding in 2026, including advocating for funding of salmon research and monitoring, updates on progress towards fully establishing a salmon Conservation Corridor through Cook Inlet to allow more salmon of all species to return to Mat-Su natal streams and rivers to spawn, and other highlights.

In 2027, the FWC will continue to focus on the full establishment of the Cook Inlet Conservation Corridor during the Alaska Board of Fisheries Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council federal regulations process. The FWC is also increasingly focused on aquatic invasive species mitigation as a critical priority for protecting salmon habitat, including plans for a youth pike program, and we are seeking to expand our outreach to build more public awareness of, and support for, FWC priorities. The presenter will finish with an opportunity for Symposium participants to ask questions, learn how to get engaged in these topics, request support from the FWC, and help identify other priority issues.



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Fish & Wildlife Commission

Planning and Land Use Department

Planning Division

350 East Dahlia Avenue • Palmer, AK 99645

Phone (907) 861-7833

<https://www.matsu.gov> • planning@matsu.gov

October 13, 2026

Marit Carlson-Van Dort
Chair, Alaska Board of Fisheries
Committee on Board Process, Management, and Research Needs
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

RE: Department of Law recommendation addressing proposal 186 as amended and adopted by the Board of Fish March 2026

Dear Ms. Carlson-Van Dort,

On behalf of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC), I am seeking clarification on how the Department of Law will be advising the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) on proposal 186 as amended and adopted by the BOF during the Statewide and Supplemental Issues meeting occurring on March 17-21, 2026. Furthermore, we are seeking guidance on how we can ensure the issues and ideas presented in proposal 186 as amended can be revisited during the BOF Upper Cook Inlet Finish meeting from March 4-15, 2027.

Background

During the BOF Work Session on October 28-29, 2025, Agenda Change Request (ACR) 5 was submitted by Andy Couch and addressed by the BOF in the same manner as the other ACRs submitted. Upon completion of the review and deliberation, the BOF accepted ACR5 and scheduled this ACR for the Statewide Finfish meeting on March 17-21, 2026. ACR5 was later identified as Proposal 186.

At the March 2026 BOF meeting, after public testimony and further comment and discussion during the Committee of the Whole, Proposal 186 was amended with substitute language and submitted as Record Copy 161. Following deliberation, the BOF passed the amended proposal by a vote of 4-2, with one abstention. With this action, many of the affected public, including the FWC, were under the assumption that these regulatory changes adopted by the BOF during the Statewide meeting would go into effect prior to the 2026 fishing season. On June 4, however, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued a Fisheries Update stating that the new regulations “are still undergoing review by the Alaska Department of Law” and that the Central District Commercial Drift Gillnet Fishery would be managed under the existing regulations “until the

Providing Outstanding Borough Services to the Matanuska-Susitna Community

new regulations become effective 30 days after they are filed by the Lieutenant Governor.” This did not occur, and the reasons/justification for this delay have not been explained to the public.

The regular BOF meeting addressing Upper Cook Inlet fisheries management is scheduled for the 2026/2027 meeting cycle. The deadline for proposals for this meeting cycle was April 10, 2026. Many of the affected public, including the FWC, were under the assumption that the new regulations adopted by the BOF during the Statewide meeting would be in effect the 2026 fishing season, and thus did not need to submit a proposal for the 2027 meeting. Only after the proposal deadline did we learn that the regulations were under legal review and could possibly be rejected by the Department of Law and Lieutenant Governor.

Discussion of Concerns

Proposal 186 as amended seeks 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 was instructed to 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 in-river restrictions. Unfortunately, this management plan as adopted by the BOF was not for the 2026 season.

If the public, and specifically the FWC, could have possibly been aware of the regulations not going into effect due to the lengthy legal review process by the Department of Law, they would have submitted a proposal addressing the same issues prior to the April 10, 2026, proposal deadline. As of today, the proposals addressing the Upper Cook Inlet have not been made available to the public. With this in mind, the FWC is very concerned there may not be a way for the BOF to adequately address the issues reflected in proposal 186 during this upcoming meeting cycle.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission respectfully requests an explanation from the Department of Law on why the new regulations for the commercial drift gillnet fishery adopted by the BOF were not approved and put into effect. We further request guidance on how the FWC, and the broader public, can make sure those issues raised and adopted by the BOF in proposal 186 as amended will be placed on the agenda for the Upper Cook Inlet Finfish meeting in March 2027. We appreciate you and the other board members' service to our state, and we look forward to responses regarding our concerns.

Sincerely,



Pete Probasco
Chair, MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission

Cc: ADF&G Commissioner, Mat-Su Borough Mayor, Mat-Su Borough Manager, Mat-Su Delegation

Providing Outstanding Borough Services to the Matanuska-Susitna Community



AA/NR File: [R4-AA-26-3528.pdf](#)

(Glennallen) – The 2026 Nelchina caribou herd population survey has revealed continued encouraging numbers, with over 17,800 caribou counted—more than 13,400 of which are adults. This represents a notable increase in herd size compared to the 2025 summer count, and the 2026 Rivest population model projects the population may surpass 19,000 caribou.

Recruitment data from 2025 and early calf survival in 2026 suggest robust ratios exceeding 40 calves per 100 cows and 40 bulls per 100 cows this fall. The cessation of hunting since RY2023, coupled with relatively mild winters, has contributed to high adult survival and strong calf recruitment, leading to an increase in abundance with an improved bull-to-cow ratio. A harvestable surplus of bulls is now available to be offered in the fall of 2027.

To ensure sustainable management and prevent overharvest, ADF&G is preparing a conservative harvest approach for state hunters, and we recommend the federal hunt administrators do the same for RY2027. The approach would allow the harvest of up to 335 bulls, representing 2.5% of the minimum adult count from 2026. Federal harvest in Unit 13 is expected to remain below 185 animals, leaving 150 bulls available for Tier II state hunters during RY2027. As such, a Tier II hunt for Nelchina caribou (TC566) will be advertised as "*May be Announced*" in the upcoming subsistence hunt supplement.

The department is seeking public comments on the implementation of a Tier II hunt through the advisory committee (AC) process. Advisory committees with specific interest in Nelchina caribou have been contacted and this topic is being added to upcoming agendas. Contact and meeting information for your local AC can be found here: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=process.advisory> or through the QR code on the bottom.

An overview for the status and management of the Nelchina caribou herd was made available on our YouTube channel this winter (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-JdITyQepc>); stay tuned for a published newsletter with additional information this winter following October fall composition survey and management captures.