



Matanuska Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership December 2006 Newsletter

The Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership is a broad-based, cooperative effort to better steward our salmon resources while maintaining economic prosperity — ensuring that Alaskans can continue to fish, hunt, and view wildlife in the Mat-Su far into the future. Anyone interested in conservation of fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin can join the partnership.

The Year in Review

In the fall of 2005 the Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership formed to address increasing human use and development in the basin and related impacts to salmon, other aquatic species, and systems. The Nature Conservancy, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service took the lead in this extensive partnership. The National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI) recognized the Partnership just a year ago, only one of five pilot partnerships in the nation.

Initial NFHI funding of \$100,000 was directed to four fish habitat restoration projects and one research project. The Mat-Su Borough replaced undersized culverts at Big Beaver and Dollar Lakes. Some funds were also allocated to assist the borough with replacing an inadequate culvert with a bridge over Wasilla Creek at Lower Road. The Chickaloon Village Traditional Council restored approximately 1500 feet of Moose Creek. The state Division of Forestry assessed the effectiveness of the Forest Resources and Practices Act at protecting water quality.

During the spring, the initiators contacted potential partners, drafted an organizational structure, and produced a brochure to explain the Mat-Su and the Partnership to decision makers in Alaska and the lower 48.

The first meeting of the Partnership was held on September 6th in Palmer. Over 50 people attended to learn more about the National Fish Habitat Initiative and the Partnership and to share ideas for salmon conservation in the Mat-Su Basin.

Since October, the Steering Committee has been meeting every two weeks to address some of the questions raised at the September 6th meeting. Discussions have focused on organizational structure, project endorsement, conservation action planning, and potential funding.



Moose Creek Re-alignment

Partnership Priorities for 2007

Steering Committee To increase local representation on the Steering Committee, two At-large seats have been added. The Steering Committee is the guiding body for the Partnership and will ensure that the Partnership follows guidelines set forth by the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. Member

organizations actively seek and encourage partner participation and support partner projects through endorsements for funding, technical assistance, and recommendations for collaboration and funding sources. Currently the committee consists of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The term of the At-large seats will be one year with the option to extend an additional year. Steering committee member organizations attend monthly meetings, sometimes filling roles of Facilitator or Notetaker. Preference will be given to organizations based in the MatSu and with missions closely aligned with the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

Conservation Action Plan The Partnership needs to complete a status assessment of fish and fish habitat and prioritize conservation needs and projects in the basin to fulfill objectives identified by partners and the requirements of NFHI. Development of this Action Plan for the Mat-Su Basin will also serve as a model for future NFHI partnerships in Alaska. The Action Plan has several goals:

1. *Identify important habitats for salmon and other fish species in the Mat-Su Basin.*
2. *Prioritize fish habitat conservation actions, including protection, enhancement, and restoration of key habitat, education and outreach, research, and threat mitigation.*
3. *Identify potential collaborations and funding sources for partners to address fish habitat conservation.*

The Action Plan will be developed using TNC's Conservation Action Planning process. In January the Steering Committee will define the scope of the Action Plan and two working groups. The Science working group will be comprised of 8 to 10 people with knowledge about salmon and their habitat in the Mat-Su, including hydrologists, biologists, ecologists, and naturalists. The Science working group will identify factors describing the health of salmon and habitat, assessing the current state of those factors, and locating the most important places for conservation of species, their habitat, and systems of concern. The Implementation working group will be comprised of those who will carry out conservation strategies in the Mat-Su. The range of strategies is anticipated to be broad, so this group could include government planners and officials, local businesses, educators, watershed groups, local land trusts, and scientists.

The Nature Conservancy has submitted a proposal to the Wildlife Action Opportunity Fund to cover costs associated with the Action Planning process, including travel, meeting expenses, map creation, and project management. The Action Plan will be completed by June 30, 2007.

Project Support The Steering Committee will work with partners to support projects. Support could include technical assistance, ideas for collaborations, and suggestions for potential funding sources. The Steering Committee is developing guidelines for project endorsement.

Current Partners

AK Dept of Commerce, Community & Economic Development
AK Dept of Environmental Conservation
AK Dept of Fish & Game
AK Dept of Natural Resources
AK Dept of Transportation & Public Facilities
Alaska Center for the Environment
Alaska Railroad Corporation
Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats
Aquatic Restoration & Research, Inc.
Bureau of Land Management
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.
Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association
Cook Inletkeeper
Corps of Engineer
Environmental Protection Agency
Friends of Mat-Su
Glacier Ridge Properties
Great Land Trust
Knik River Watershed Group
Matanuska River Watershed Coalition
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Park Service
Native Village of Eklutna
Natural Resources Conservation Service
The Nature Conservancy
Upper Susitna Soil & Water Conservation District
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Fish & Wildlife Service
US Geological Survey
USDA Forest Service
Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District

How to Participate in the Partnership

If you're concerned about conservation of fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin, there are several ways you can participate in the Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership:

- **Join the Partnership** Partners work to meet Partnership goals by contributing funds, people, equipment, or access to shared activities, which may include committees, work groups, and on-the-ground projects. Partners can join at any time by notifying any member of the Steering Committee.
- **Join the Steering Committee** Interested organizations should contact Corinne Smith by January 15th.
- **Attend Steering Committee Meetings** The Steering Committee meets monthly on the 2nd Tuesday, alternating between Anchorage and Palmer locations. These meetings are open to all partners and the public. Please contact Corinne Smith to verify times and location.
- **Participate in development of the Action Plan** Successful development and implementation of the Action Plan will require participation by many of the partners, through participation on working groups and comments on progress reports and the draft plan. Interested organizations should contact Corinne Smith.
- **Come to the next Partnership meeting** (date to be announced)

Update on NFHI Funding for 2007

The federal government is operating on a continuing resolution until February, with the possibility of using a continuing resolution for the remainder of the federal fiscal year. With that the case, FY07 funding levels for the National Fish Habitat Action Plan are uncertain. We remain optimistic that the Matanuska-Susitna Partnership will receive some level of federal funds for project implementation this year. If funds become available for project use, the steering committee will notify Partners and request project proposals.

Steering Committee

Corinne Smith
The Nature Conservancy
715 L Street, Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-276-3133 ext. 121
corinne_smith@tnc.org

Christopher Estes
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518
907-267-2142
christopher_estes@fishgame.state.ak.us

Michael Roy
USFWS-Alaska Regional Office
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99510
907-786-3925
michael_roy@fws.gov

John Duffy
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
350 E. Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, Alaska 99645
907-745-9689
jduffy@matsugov.us

Jeanne Hanson
National Marine Fisheries Service
222 West 7th Avenue, #43
Anchorage, AK 99513
907-271-5006
jeanne.hanson@noaa.gov

***Two At-large Seats to be
filled early in 2007!***