



Matanuska Susitna Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership August 2007 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.

Conserving Mat-Su Salmon: A Strategic Action Plan

In January, the Partnership started working on a Strategic Action Plan for conserving Mat-Su salmon and their habitats. The plan focuses on wild salmon and their freshwater habitats in the Mat-Su Basin and marine habitats in Upper Cook Inlet. Two committees were organized to develop the plan; the Science Working Group and the Implementation Group.

Through the winter and spring, the Science Working Group identified factors describing the health of salmon and their habitat, assessed the current state of those factors, and ranked threats to salmon and habitat. A meeting was held in April for the Science Working Group to share their assessments with the Implementation group. A second Implementation workshop was held on July 24 – 25. Using recommendations from the Science Working Group, the Implementation group chose the following focal issues for salmon conservation that the Partnership should highlight in the plan:

- *Alteration of riparian areas* due to housing and urban development
- *Filling of wetlands* for housing and urban development
- *Impervious surfaces* due to housing and urban development
- *Culverts that block fish passage* under roads and railroads
- *Invasive northern pike*
- *Stormwater runoff management*
- *Loss of estuary and nearshore habitats* due to marine transportation infrastructure
- *Septic systems* due to housing development
- *Loss of instream flow* due to ground and surface water withdrawals

Through break-out groups over two days, participants drafted strategies for most of these focal issues. Strategies for most focal issues fell into three broad categories: ***protect what we've got, find out more about salmon and their use of habitats in the MatSu, and restore those habitats and connections between habitats that have already been damaged.*** Break-out groups also identified places where the threats are most active or are likely to be most serious in the next ten years, identified existing programs already working on the issue, identified knowledge gaps on the issue, and listed action steps to achieve the objectives.

If you're interested in the extensive notes from the July workshop or any of the previous workshops, you can find them in the Notes folder at <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/MatSuSalmon>.

The next steps in the planning process are to:

- Draft the plan with assistance and review from the Implementation and Science Working Groups and the Steering Committee
- Present the draft plan at a full partnership meeting on October 20th
- Finalize the plan before the end of the December

Mat-Su Salmon Partnership in the News



Stacy Hall of Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game shows Marion Rose Kaucic how a stream functions.

Mat-Su Borough Deputy Mayor Lynne Woods welcomed partners and their families to a celebration of wild Mat-Su salmon at Kepler-Bradley State Park on July 31st. ConocoPhillips, Inc. and The Nature Conservancy sponsored the open community event. The Mat-Su Borough, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) brought displays and activities about invasive northern pike, restoration projects, and living in Mat-Su watersheds. *The Frontiersman* featured photographs of children enjoying the activities in its August 3rd edition.

On August 22nd the borough dedicated the new Lower Road bridge over Wasilla Creek. The bridge replaced a culvert which was inadequate for juvenile salmon passage. Several Mat-Su Salmon Partners were part of

the collaborative project, including the Mat-Su Borough, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, and The Nature Conservancy. KTUU Channel 2 News and Valley News reported on the event on their nightly news and on their website:

www.ktuu.com/Global/story.asp?S=6971158&nav=menu510_2_6

Application for Formal Partnership Status

In June, John Cooper, Chairman of the National Fish Habitat Board, invited the five pilot Fish Habitat Partnerships to submit applications to be recognized as the first full-fledged partnerships. The Steering Committee submitted an application for the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership on August 17th. The National Fish Habitat Board will decide on formal recognition at its board meeting on October 2nd and 3rd in Arlington, Virginia.

Partner Projects Funded in 2007

On a national level, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service received almost \$3 million from the National Fish Habitat Action Plan for FY 2007. Project funds of \$220,000 were allocated to the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership. The Steering Committee reviewed project proposals from Partnership organizations in early June and were able to fund seven projects with the available funds. Projects include wetlands assessment, culvert replacements, education, and stream temperature monitoring. Partners were able to show a match of over \$320,000 for the NFHAP funds. Additional administrative funds were provided to support the development of the Strategic Action Plan.

Partner Projects Receiving NFHAP Funds

Wasilla & Cottonwood Creeks Wetlands Assessment
(*Mat-Su Borough*)

Colter Creek Fish Passage Improvement
(*The Nature Conservancy*)

Mat-Su Salmon Education
(*Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District*)

Upper Wasilla Creek Fish Passage Assessment & Restoration
(*Chickaloon Village Traditional Council*)

Hydraulic Assessment of Fish Passage at Wasilla Creek culverts
(*Alaska Dept of Fish & Game*)

Government Creek Fish Passage Restoration
(*Mat-Su Borough*)

Assessment & Classification of Mat-Su Stream Water Temperatures
(*Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute*)

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 Mat-Su Salmon 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.
- **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.
- **Participate in development of the Strategic Action Plan** Successful development and implementation of the Strategic Action Plan requires participation by many of the partners, through participation on working groups and comments on the draft plan. Contact Corinne Smith for more information.
- **Come to the next Partnership meeting on October 30th from 6:30 – 8:30 at the Wasilla Sports Complex**

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 Outdoor Council
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

Steering Committee

Corinne Smith
The Nature Conservancy
907-276-3133 ext. 121
corinne_smith@tnc.org

Tom Brookover
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
907-267-2150
tom_brookover@fishgame.state.ak.us

John DeLapp
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
907 271-1799
john_delapp@fws.gov

Frankie Barker
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
907-746-7439
fbarker@matsugov.us

Jeanne Hanson
National Marine Fisheries Service
907-271-5006
jeanne.hanson@noaa.gov

Kathy Wells
Friends of Mat-Su
(907) 746-0130
foms@mtaonline.net

Jessica Dryden
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
(907) 745-0737
jessica@chickaloon.org