

SUBJECT: AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY APPROVING THE LAND CLASSIFICATION OF A BOROUGH-OWNED PROPERTY AS RESERVED USE LAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF A SHOOTING RANGE. (MSB008238)

AGENDA OF: February 3, 2026

ASSEMBLY ACTION:

AGENDA ACTION REQUESTED: Introduce and set for public hearing.

Route To	Signatures
Originator	1 / 16 / 2026 X Peter Burton Signed by: Peter Burton
Land & Resource Manager	1 / 21 / 2026 X Joe Metzger Signed by: Joe Metzger
Community Development Director	1 / 21 / 2026 X Jillian Morrissey Signed by: Jillian Morrissey
Finance Director	Recoverable Signature X Cheyenne Heindel Signed by: Cheyenne Heindel
Borough Attorney	1 / 22 / 2026 X Nicholas Spiropoulos Signed by: Nicholas Spiropoulos
Borough Manager	1 / 22 / 2026 X Michael Brown Signed by: Mike Brown
Borough Clerk	1 / 23 / 2026 X Lonnie McKechnie Signed by: Lonnie McKechnie

ATTACHMENT (S) : Map (1 pp)
 Best Interest Finding (3 pp)
 Public Comment (31 pp)
 Planning Commission Resolution 25-30 (2 pp)
 Ordinance Serial No. 26-016 (2 pp)

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

This ordinance is at the request of Assemblymember Bernier.

The Land and Resource Management Division(LRMD) has identified a Borough-owned parcel for classification as Reserved Use - Shooting Range.

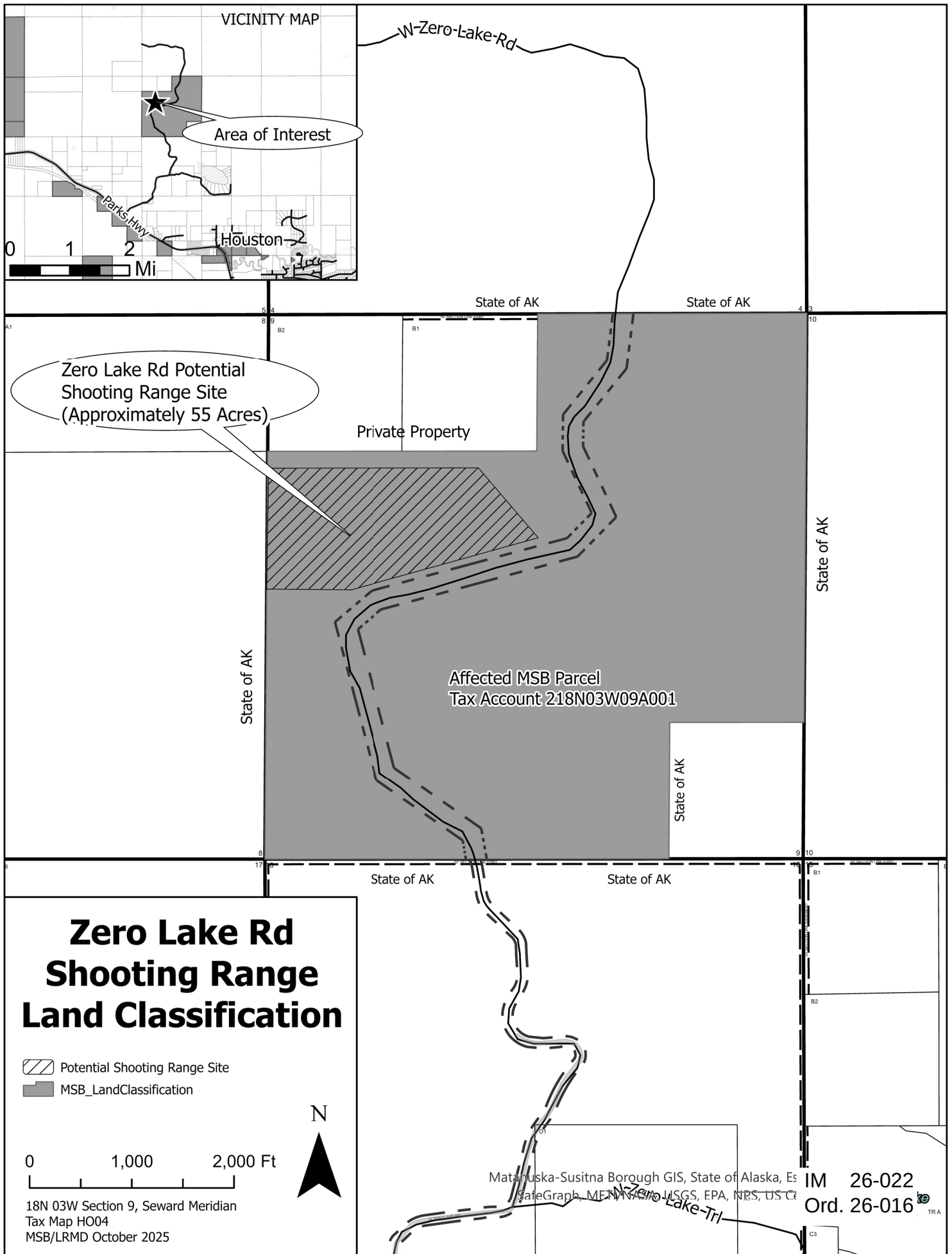
The 520-acre subject parcel, Tax ID 18N03W09A00, is located on the north side of Zero Lake Road approximately 2.5-mile drive from Parks Hwy. LRMD proposes to classify an approximately 55-acre portion of this parcel as Reserved Use Lands for future potential development as a shooting range.

An inter-department review was conducted, and public notice has been completed in accordance with MSB 23.05.025. There are no objections from inter-department review. There are fifteen respondents from the public noticing, eleven in opposition and four in support.

The Planning Commission adopted Resolution Serial No. 25-30 on January 5, 2026, recommending Assembly approval of this land classification.

RECOMMENDATION OF ADMINISTRATION:

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly approval of the land classification as set forth in the attached Best Interest Finding and Ordinance Serial No. 26-016.



BEST INTEREST FINDING
For the
Classification of Borough-owned Land

I. Summary of Proposed Action

In response to Assembly direction, the MSB Land & Resource Management Division (LRMD) has identified a Borough-owned parcel for classification as Reserved Use - Shooting Range.

The 520-acre subject parcel, being Tax ID 18N03W09A00, is located on the north side of Zero Lake Road approximately 2.5-mile drive from Parks Hwy. LRMD proposes to classify a portion of this parcel as Reserved Use Lands for future potential development as a shooting range. A vicinity map is attached to assist with the location of the parcel.

II. Property Site Factors

- A. Location:** The subject parcel (Tax ID 18N03W09A001) is located on the north side of Zero Lake Road approximately 2 and 1/2-mile drive from Parks Hwy. The subject parcel is located in the Willow Area Community Organization, Inc. boundary just outside the Houston city limits.
- B. Legal Descriptions:** SW1/4 SE1/4, N1/2 SE1/4, SW 1/4, NE 1/4 and S1/2 NW ¼ of Township 18N, Range 3W, Section 9, Seward Meridian.
- C. Land Status:** Acquired by Patent 2417, Book 98, Page 891, 1/24/75, Palmer Recording District.
- D. Restrictions:**
1. Land Classification – Currently Classified as Reserved Use and Forest Management
 2. Land Use Plans – The property lies within the boundaries of the Willow Area Community Comprehensive Plan. The plan does not identify specific designations, restrictions, or development objectives for this parcel.
 3. Title Restrictions – State of Alaska reserved all oil, gas, and mineral rights.
 4. Covenants – None
 5. Zoning – None
 6. Easements & Other Reservations – A Public Use Easement exists for Zero Lake Rd. A private access easement for the benefit of parcel in NE1/4 of NW1/, recorded 2005-016780-0, 6/29/05.
- E. Current Land Use:** The current or near future use of the land may include Personal Use Firewood and/or Timber Harvest Sales.

- F. Surrounding Land Use:** Surrounding properties are primarily undeveloped or used for residential and recreational purposes.
- G. Existing Infrastructure:** The existing Zero Lake Rd passes through the parcel, and the potential shooting range site is Northwest of the road. See attached map.
- H. Soils & Terrain:** The subject property contains a mix of soils. The majority of the parcel is composed of Estelle which is a well-drained loam soil suitable for this development. The edges of the area contain Cryaquepts which are poorly drained wetlands.
- I. Resources:** There is no specific data on resources for this parcel.
- J. Assessment:** The 2025 assessed value of the entire 520-acre parcel is \$484,500.00.

III. Review and Comments

The parcel has undergone departmental review. Such review includes historical data, topography, access, adopted Borough plans, desirability of location, land value, and highest and best use of land. Inter-department review revealed no objection to the proposed classification.

Public notice was conducted in accordance with MSB 23.05.025. Fifteen public comments were received in response to the public notice. Eleven of the comments were in opposition, including a letter from the Willow Area Community Organization, Inc. (WACO) which voted 27-1 to send in a letter of opposition. Four comments were received that were in support.

Public input in opposition highlighted:

- Noise from gunfire is expected to carry long distances due to local topography and wetlands, disrupting the quiet character of the area and affecting sled dogs, pets, and wildlife.
- Environmental risks were emphasized, including potential lead contamination in soils and water given high water tables and proximity to a nearby stream, with possible downstream impacts to wetlands and the Little Susitna River.
- Safety concerns such as stray bullets, increased traffic on unmaintained roads, and risks to recreational trail users and low-flying aircraft from nearby private airstrips.
- Additional issues such as concerns with maintaining Zero Lake Road, monitoring lead contamination, lowered property values, and enforcing range rules or staffing for any potential future shooting ranges.

Public input in support highlighted:

- A need for more shooting ranges in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.
- Long travel times to other ranges.
- Safety improvements with a controlled range.

On January 5, 2026, the Planning Commission unanimously approved Resolution No. 25-30 recommending the Assembly approve of an ordinance classifying a portion of land located in tax

account 18N03W09A001 as Reserved Use Lands for the purpose of a future shooting range facility.

IV. Analysis & Discussion

In 2006, 5 acres of the 520-acre parcel was classified as Reserved Use Lands/ESF by Ordinance Serial No. 06-081. The remainder of the parcel is classified as Forest Management to support a timber sale by Resolution Serial No. 88-063. LRMD proposes to classify an approximately 50-acre portion of the parcel as Reserved Use Land – Shooting Range.

Classification of Borough lands for reserved use is consistent with the Borough's Policy to create an asset management plan. Classification of this land will inform the public that this land could be the location for a future shooting range. The land classification will require Assembly approval.

The classification for the parcel is a portion of the parent parcel. Surveying and subdividing the parcel by a plat or waiver subdivision prior to development may be desirable but is not required while the Borough owns the parent parcels.

V. Administrative Recommendation

The Community Development Department, Land & Resource Management Division respectfully requests Assembly review of the classification of a portion of Tax ID 18N03W09A001 as Reserved Use Land – Shooting Range as shown on the attached Vicinity Map.

MSB 23.05.100(A)(13) defines "Reserved Use Lands" are those lands which have been transferred assigned, or designated for present or future public use, or for use by a government or quasi-government agency, or for future development of new town sites, or for future expansion of existing public uses.

Authority: Classify land MSB 23.05.005, 23.05.100



Peter Burton
Land & Resource Management Division
MatSu Borough
350 E. Dahlia Ave
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Nov. 5, 2025

Re: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

To whom this may concern:

Willow Area Community Council (WACO), recognized as the community council for the unincorporated area known as Willow, voted this evening by a vote of 27 to 1 to oppose the classification of and development of a shooting range on any property on Zero Lake Road. Our concerns are substantial. They are listed below and address impacts from development should the process proceed at any time from classification to planned.

- The two Willow property owners whose land adjoins the proposed parcel both strongly oppose this classification and development. Both have plans to develop their properties for full time residence over the next few years and will pay taxes accordingly. They have individually submitted letters as well.
- The property owners on Zero Lake are opposed to this classification and development. They are in Houston but as communities with a shared boundary, we support that neighborhood being protected. These properties are either developed or developing and will also be providing substantial tax payments.
- Property values are known to be decreased by at least 3.7% (Realtor.com) in neighborhoods with a shooting range. Specifics identified: **Noise pollution, environmental concern, perceived safety issues and capped property appreciation.** There are examples of property values dropping by 30% because of proximity to shooting ranges.
- The Willow Area Community Comprehensive Plan is clear in its description of Willow. We are a community economically built on, supporting, and designed for outdoor recreation and tourism. There is an extensive, mapped trail system, used regularly, that surrounds that property, and a number of additional trails that branch off and are maintained privately. We value the peace, quiet and beauty of the area and encourage our guests to enjoy same.
- Road build and management is a difficult concern. Three government entities own and manage different sections of Zero Lake Road: DNR, Houston and the MatSu Borough. Houston manages the plowing up to a certain point and past that its just the residents. It is a dirt road. It would

need to be built to standards after agreement among the three, and then agreements about who will maintain must be decided. An enormous expense and process in a time of cutbacks.

- Access to shooting ranges is an occasional wish of some borough residents. There are currently three. The best developed is in Montana Creek, owned & managed by the Upper Susitna Shooters Association: mile 94.5 Parks Highway. (The intersection of the Parks Highway and Zero Lake Rd is about mile marker 58, approximately 36 miles away.) The Kenny & Patti Barber Shooting Range at Maud Road in the Knik River Public Use Area is open to the public and staffed by DNR. And many already use the Jonesville Mine recreation sites, also on DNR land near Sutton.

Noise pollution:

Sound in Willow carries very long distances because of the large swaths of marshes and lakes. Particularly in winter when the birch and shrubbery lose their buffering leaves and only the tall, spare spruce are left and the deep cold exaggerates all sensory information. People living within a mile to mile and half, especially those closer, will suffer an extraordinary assault on their quiet environment. Dogs and other animals with more acute hearing will suffer even more. A noted dog mushing racing kennel in the neighborhood that has been there for decades will be significantly impacted as will all animal owners that live and recreate there. Hunting is common in that area and wildlife will be affected. There is already a lot of shooting all over the Willow area, most of it on private property or somewhat isolated borough or state lands. The difference will be the volume of gunfire from an occasional hour or two, to every day all day and potentially many shooters simultaneously.

Environmental concerns:

The question has been asked: has Fish and Game been consulted on the potential risk to Nancy Creek which flows close to the proposed site. It is salmon spawning stream and fed with mountain runoff and rain so the volume is variable. The toxins from a shooting range could easily leach into that water source given the high water tables throughout the entire south end of Willow. Flooding anywhere in the Willow area affects the water table throughout this area, so toxins will move. And plowed snow will take materials far from that initial ground spot and disperse. Will any amount of staffed management of the site actually get it cleaned up thoroughly?

Perceived safety issues:

Traffic would exponentially increase on winding narrow Zero Lake road. Wildlife currently abounds, people routine snowmachine, 4 wheel, bike, run, train dog teams, etc on and crossing that road. There will be no policing for speed.

Opening up an area with limited, larger tract properties will draw some nefarious actors, with guns, so the risk of home burglaries etc will increase.

While a well developed shooting range should have sides, and shooting areas with tall built walls, those are not a guarantee that people will not, either on accident or on purpose, shoot past those barriers. People using the trails, as above and to include horse back riding, will be at risk during the range's open hours.

Known to few, there are several private air strips back there. Those planes need to fly a very low flight path after take-off for quite a distance before they can move to altitude because of the air/warmth patterns in the flying valley between the mountain ranges. If they go up too soon, they risk vapor lock on the wings. Shooting in the direction of low flying planes is risky.

Capped property appreciation:

Homeowners count on their properties increasing in value across time; homes are an investment. Artificial capping of appreciation will not be welcome news.

We will be happy to receive questions about this position and will remain engaged on this process.

Respectfully,



Tryg Erickson,
Chair
WACO



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
Community Development
Land & Resource Management Division
350 East Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, Alaska 99645

4 18N03W09B002
MORGAN ROBERT M & DARCIE L
22346 DEER PARK DR
CHUGIAK AK 99567

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
PUBLIC NOTICE

Type: Classification (MSB008238)

Tax ID: 18N03W09A001

In response to Assembly direction, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Borough) Land & Resource Management Division has identified a Borough-owned parcel suitable for future development as a shooting range. Land Management proposes to classify the land as Reserved Use (Shooting Range). The Parcel Tax ID is 18N03W09A001, located in Township 18 North, Range 3 West, Section 9.

Supporting material is available for public inspection by appointment only during normal business hours on the 2nd floor of the Borough Building in the Land & Resource Management office or visit the Public Notice Section on the Borough's web page, www.matsugov.us. Public comment is invited on this request. If you have any comments please mail or deliver them to the Borough offices at the address indicated above, no later than **November 10, 2025**. If you have questions about this request, call Peter Burton at 907-861-7847 between 8 am – 5 pm or you can send an e-mail to: LMB@matsugov.us (please refer to **MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification when submitting comments**).

Comments:

Please see attached letter of opposition.

Signature:

(If you need more space for comments please attach a separate sheet of paper.)
*This public notice & request for comments is in compliance with MSB Code 23.05.025

IM 26-022
Ord. 26-016

10/20/2025

Robert and Darcie Morgan
22346 Deer Park Dr
Chugiak, AK 99567
Darciedemontfort@yahoo.com

To:
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Community Development, Land, and Resource Management Division
350 East Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, AK 99645

Subject: Formal Opposition to Proposed Shooting Range Adjacent to My Property

Dear Members of the Community Development, Land, and Resource Management Division,

I am writing to formally express my opposition to the proposed shooting range planned for development adjacent to my property. My land is located directly next to the proposed site, TOWNSHIP 18N RANGE 3W SECTION 9 LOT B2 and as a tax-paying citizen and property owner in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, I am deeply concerned about the safety, environmental, and quality-of-life impacts this project would bring to the area.

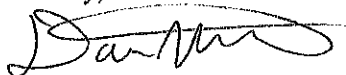
My foremost concern is public safety. Establishing a shooting range immediately next to private properties creates unacceptable risks, including stray bullets, accidental discharges, and other hazards associated with firearm use. Even with safety measures and proper design, there is always potential for human error, changing weather conditions, and unpredictable environmental factors that could endanger nearby residents, visitors, and wildlife. We frequent this property with family, friends, children and pets. The concern for their safety is the most important factor for me. In addition, we use this property as a location for hunting to help feed our family. Constant gunfire would drive away the wildlife that frequents the area and provides for our family.

In addition to safety issues, the peaceful enjoyment and natural setting of the surrounding area would be severely compromised. The constant sound of gunfire would disrupt the quiet, recreational environment that property owners and families currently value. Furthermore, potential environmental hazards, such as lead contamination in soil and groundwater and harm to local wildlife, present serious long-term risks that should not be overlooked. There is a creek located in the proximity of this area that is a known salmon spawning creek.

Given these concerns, I respectfully urge the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to deny or reconsider the proposed location for this shooting range and to explore alternative sites that would not place neighboring residents or the environment at risk.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. I also request to be notified of any public hearings, meetings, or decisions regarding this proposal so that I may continue to participate in the review process.

Sincerely,



Robert Morgan Cell#907-350-8572
Darcie Morgan Cell#907-529-4520

IM 26-022
Ord. 26-016

11/1/2025
Gigi and Joel Hersh
2680 S Rue de la Paix Lp
Wasilla AK 99623

To:
Matanuska Susitna Borough
Community Development, Land and Resource Management Division
350 E Dahlia Ave
Palmer AK 99645

Subject: Formal Opposition to Proposed Shooting Range – Township 18N Range 3W Section 9 Lot B2, Tax parcel ID 18N03W09A001

Dear Members of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough,

I am writing to express my formal opposition to the proposed shooting range located at Township 18N, Range 3W, Section 9, Lot B2.

This proposed site is adjacent to an area that my family, friends, and I use extensively for recreational vehicle activities, hiking, and foraging throughout the year. The development of a shooting range in such proximity would create a serious hazard and endanger the safety of all who use the surrounding land for these activities.

We also rely on nearby property for foraging to help sustain a supply of healthy, locally grown Alaskan food for year-round consumption. The establishment of a shooting range would put these important subsistence and recreational activities at high risk.

In addition, unmanaged shooting ranges have a well-documented history of attracting illegal dumping and other undesirable activities, leading to environmental degradation and decreased property values. The increased traffic on the unmaintained Zero Lake Road would also impose additional burdens on the residents who already contribute to maintaining the road by clearing fallen trees and repairing potholes at their own expense.

From a public safety standpoint, an unsupervised shooting range on an unmaintained road would present serious risks that the Borough would have limited ability to mitigate. Even with a staffed facility, there is always potential for human error. In this case, the potential risks to safety, environment, and quality of life far outweigh any potential community benefit.

The area surrounding the proposed site is valued for its peace, quiet, and natural beauty. The constant sound of gunfire would irreparably disrupt this environment, negatively affecting both residents and the abundant wildlife that inhabits the area.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to reconsider this location for a shooting range and to explore alternative sites that would not endanger the wellbeing of the community or the surrounding natural environment.

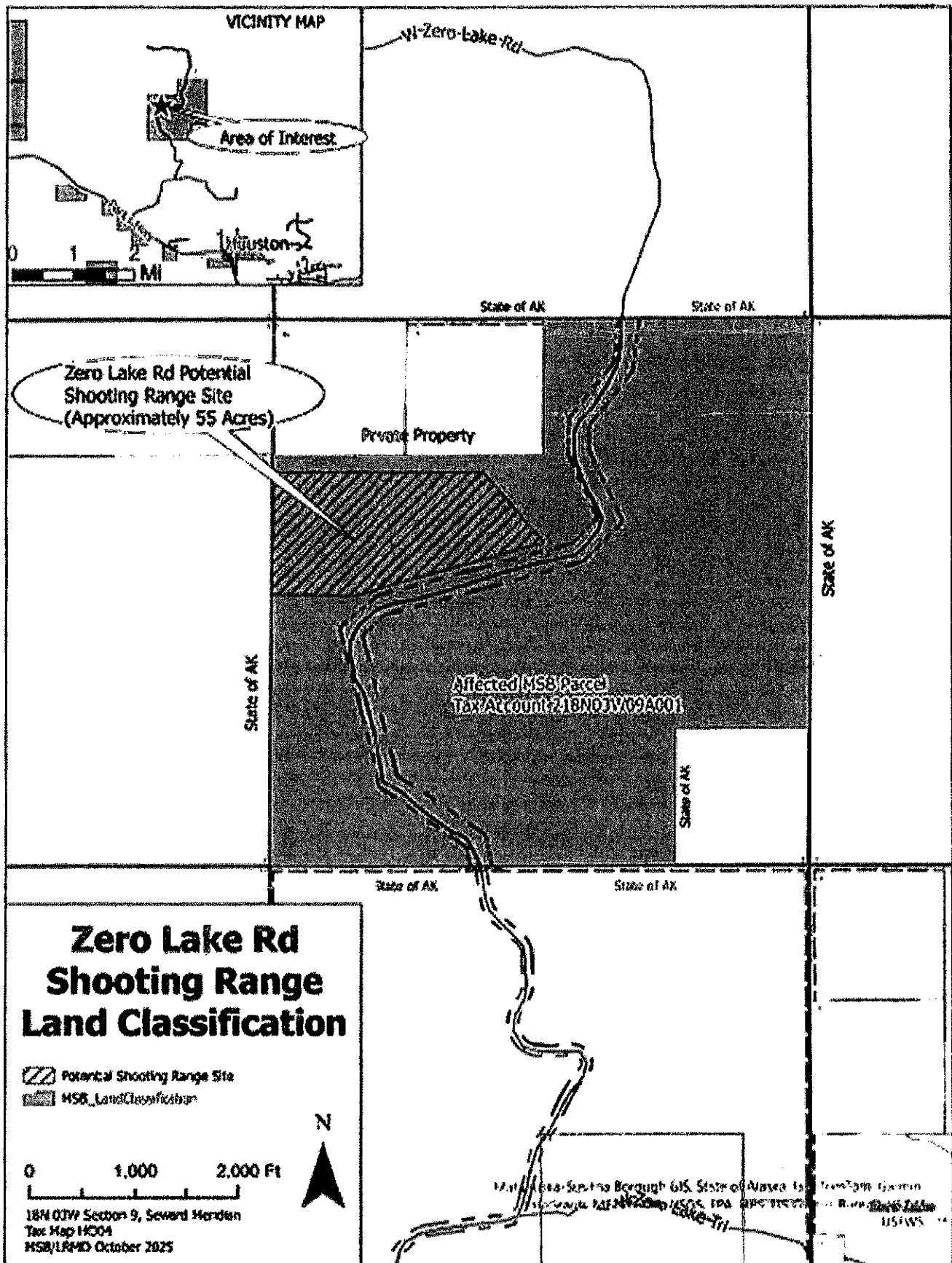
Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Gigi C Hersh Ph. 907 841 4807

Joel D Hersh Ph. 907 841 4810

IM 26-022
Ord. 26-016



Brad and Trish deMontfort
2530 Willett Rd Ext
Keuka Park, NY 14478
btdeMontfort@gmail.com

November 2, 2025

To:

Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Community Development, Land, and Resource
Management Division
350 East Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, AK 99645

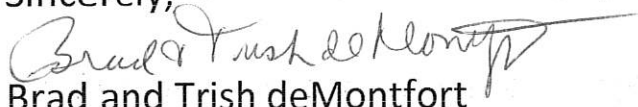
Subject: Formal Opposition to Proposed Shooting
Range Adjacent to Robert and Darcie Morgan's property.

Dear Members of the Community Development, Land, and Resource
Management Division,

We are writing to formally express our opposition to the proposed shooting range planned adjacent to Robert and Darcie's property. We have been helping them develop the property with hopes of building a cabin there also. We like the area and were looking forward to spending more time enjoying the beauty and peacefulness of that piece of wilderness.

We formally request that you consider other sites for the shooting range.

Sincerely,



Brad and Trish deMontfort

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2025 9:20 AM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

From: lwilson@mtaonline.net <lwilson@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2025 9:18 AM
To: Land Management <lmb@matsugov.us>
Subject: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Hi:

I want to voice enthusiastic support for a shooting range in the Zero Lake area. There are few public shooting ranges in the Borough where recreational shooting is a very popular, and as our population grows, the need for places to safely shoot increases. For me to go shoot at a range, it's approximately 40-45 miles and about an hour to reach the private Upper Susitna or Birchwood ranges or the Knik River Public Use Area, and a Birchwood annual membership has gotten prohibitively expensive. This situation contributes to residents establishing uncontrolled ad hoc shooting ranges on public lands that may not be safe. Public lands near Zero Lake have been used for recreational shooting for many decades, and there are still few permanent residences close by. There was a near fatal shooting near Zero Lake a few years ago caused by someone target shooting in an unsafe direction with an inadequate backstop. If the State or Borough were to establish a shooting range, hopefully something similar to the Kenny and Patti Barber Shooting Range at the Knik River Public Use Area, we can at least be confident that shooting will be focused in a safe direction with an adequate backstop. I would certainly welcome and frequently visit a Zero Lake shooting facility.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Lance Wilson
(907) 892-3103



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
Community Development
Land & Resource Management Division
350 East Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, Alaska 99645

4 18N03W09B002
MORGAN ROBERT M & DARCI E L
22346 DEER PARK DR
CHUGIAK AK 99567

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
PUBLIC NOTICE

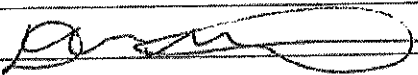
Type: Classification (MSB008238)

Tax ID: 18N03W09A001

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Comments: Please see attached letter of opposition.

Signature: 

(If you need more space for comments please attach a separate sheet of paper.)
*This public notice & request for comments is in compliance with MSB Code 23.05.025

IM 26-022
Ord. 26-016

10/20/2025

Robert and Darcie Morgan
22346 Deer Park Dr
Chugiak, AK 99567
Darciedemontfort@yahoo.com

To:
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Community Development, Land, and Resource Management Division
350 East Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, AK 99645

Subject: Formal Opposition to Proposed Shooting Range Adjacent to My Property

Dear Members of the Community Development, Land, and Resource Management Division,

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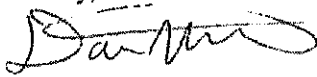
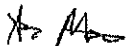
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In addition to safety issues, the peaceful enjoyment and natural setting of the surrounding area would be severely compromised. The constant sound of gunfire would disrupt the quiet, recreational environment that property owners and families currently value. Furthermore, potential environmental hazards, such as lead contamination in soil and groundwater and harm to local wildlife, present serious long-term risks that should not be overlooked. There is a creek located in the proximity of this area that is a known salmon spawning creek.

Given these concerns, I respectfully urge the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to deny or reconsider the proposed location for this shooting range and to explore alternative sites that would not place neighboring residents or the environment at risk.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. I also request to be notified of any public hearings, meetings, or decisions regarding this proposal so that I may continue to participate in the review process.

Sincerely,

Robert Morgan Cell#907-350-8572
Darcie Morgan Cell#907-529-4520

IM 26-022
Ord. 26-016

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Friday, October 24, 2025 4:42 PM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

From: Sandy McDonald <sjmcdonald907@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2025 1:42 PM
To: Land Management <LMB@matsugov.us>
Subject: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Peter,

I've heard about Land Management's proposal to classify land for a shooting range.

The Public Notice mentioned it was at the direction of, or in response to the Assembly.

I have several questions I was hoping you could answer for me.

Who brought this forward? Was it one Assembly member?

When did the Assembly approve this moving forward?

What other supporting documents did the Assembly have to make their decision? May I have a copy of any supporting documents?

What is the time frame?

Have the Local governments been contacted? Houston and Willow? What materials have been sent to them?

What plans are there for the building and maintenance of Zero Lake Road?

Is there any other information to assist me as I prepare my public comment?

My husband and I live within a couple of miles to the west and we also own property north of Zero Lake.

We were not on the mailing list and did not receive a public notice. We were informed by neighbors. Could you please add our name to the mailing list for future public notices if they become available. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Sandy McDonald

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Monday, October 27, 2025 3:59 PM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: Request for Reconsideration of Proposed Shooting Range Near Zero Lake Road, Houston, AK (MSB008238)

From: Kelton Hansley <keltonhansley@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 27, 2025 3:01 PM
To: Land Management <LMB@matsugov.us>
Subject: Request for Reconsideration of Proposed Shooting Range Near Zero Lake Road, Houston, AK (MSB008238)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Dear Land and Resource Management Office,

I am writing as a local property owner of Zero Lake Road in Houston, Alaska, to respectfully request that the Borough reconsider the proposed public shooting range near Zero Lake Road (MSB008238).

While I understand the intent of providing a safe, managed shooting facility for the public, the location chosen is highly unsuitable for several important reasons:

-
-
- **Noise and Safety:**
 - The proximity to residential properties, recreational trails, and lakes would create significant noise pollution and safety risks for residents, families, and visitors who use the area for hiking, fishing, and camping.
-
-
-
-
- **Aviation**
 - **Risk:** The location is directly below the most direct and commonly used route between Wasilla Airport and Willow Airport, where most pilots operate at 500–1,000 feet AGL. One irresponsible user could cause a disaster.
-
-
-
-
- **Wildlife**
 - **Disruption:** The area supports abundant wildlife — including moose, bears, and waterfowl

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the Borough to **re-evaluate this site** and consider **alternative locations** farther from residential and recreational areas — ideally on less densely used public land with safer access and less environmental sensitivity.

Our community is not opposed to responsible firearm recreation, but we believe this proposal threatens the **safety, character, and environmental integrity** of the Zero Lake area.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns. I would greatly appreciate confirmation that this message will be included in the official project review record.

Sincerely,
Kelton Hansley
Property Owner – 12245 W Zero Lake Road
Houston, Alaska
keltonhansley@gmail.com
907-821-0201

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Thursday, October 30, 2025 1:48 PM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: Zero Lake Road Shooting Range

From: Jeff Morgan <jeffmorgan1982@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 30, 2025 9:56 AM
To: Land Management <imb@matsugov.us>
Subject: Zero Lake Road Shooting Range

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Jeff Morgan

3630 N Ebro Cir
Wasilla AK 99654
jeffmorgan1982@gmail.com
3606319294
10/30/2025

Dear Community Development,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed construction of a shooting range on Zero Lake Road. As a resident of the area, I am deeply concerned about the potential negative impacts this project could have on our community and environment.

The construction and operation of a shooting range pose significant safety risks, including the potential for accidents and increased noise levels, which could disturb residents and wildlife. Additionally, concerns about environmental contamination from lead and other hazardous materials are valid and must be thoroughly addressed before proceeding.

We urge you to reconsider this project and explore alternative locations that are less disruptive to our community. Protecting our safety, environment, and quality of life should be our top priorities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response and hope that our voices will be heard in this process.

Sincerely,
Jeff Morgan

It's not a bad idea, just a bad location

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 10:04 AM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: MSB008238 possible shooting range in Houston

Categories: Red Category

-----Original Message-----

From: Ken <sledge@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Sunday, November 2, 2025 7:53 PM
To: Land Management <LMB@matsugov.us>
Subject: MSB008238 possible shooting range in Houston

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Dear Mr Burton

I am a long time resident of Houston. For all this time I have had to put up with the illegal shooting noise on Zero lake road in violation of city ordinance, which the city does not enforce. For me it's a "not in my backyard thing." I have been a shooting enthusiast for all of my life and am a state certified instructor for law enforce. Just because I have to drive a few miles does not stop me from enjoying this hobby. Please do not build a range in Houston, especially an unmanned range.

I chose to live in Houston 30 plus years ago for the quiet life style. Plz don't take that away from my family.

Thanks for your consideration,

Ken Conn
(907)232-9823
Leave message as you are not on my known caller list. Thanks

Sent from my iPad

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 10:05 AM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: MSB008238 Zero Lake Claification

From: Bill Bocast <bocastb@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 2, 2025 9:34 AM
To: Land Management <LMB@matsugov.us>
Subject: MSB008238 Zero Lake Claification

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]
Dear Peter Burton:

As a Mat-Su resident and taxpayer, I support establishing and constructing a shooting range as proposed.

It should be like the Kenny and Ann Barber Range on Maud Road, but on our end of the Valley. This would be a welcome public use facility.

Thank you
William F Bocast
4059 S Andrea Dr
Wasilla Alaska 99623



Virus-free. www.avast.com

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 10:06 AM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: Proposed Gun Range - Houston - Zero Lake

Categories: Red Category

From: Steve Sonnier <akbluz@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 1, 2025 11:01 AM
To: Land Management <LMB@matsugov.us>; Steve Sonnier <akbluz@yahoo.com>
Subject: Proposed Gun Range - Houston - Zero Lake

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]
Mr. Peter Burton,

Regarding MSB 008238 Zero Lake Classification

I fully support establishing a Shooting Range on MatSu Borough property at Houston Zero Lake. It would be closer for many Valley shooters to drive and the road surely could be better maintained than the access to the Maud Road facility. I am sure that modern noise mitigation design would be used. Also reasonable days open and hours of operation could be established for quiet at night.

I think this would be a great use of the property for many Valley shooters.

Thanks for your consideration.

Joe Steve Sonnier
1280 E Inverness Dr
Wasilla, AK 99654
(907) 376-8437

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Monday, November 3, 2025 10:07 AM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: MSB008238 Zero Lake

From: Bill and Sharon Bartel <wgbartel1@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 1, 2025 2:47 PM
To: Land Management <lmb@matsugov.us>
Subject: MSB008238 Zero Lake

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

I read your public notice and would like to support creating another shooting range in this area. It's way past due.

I live in Big Lake and find the drive to existing developed shooting ranges way too long. When I do make the drive, the ranges are typically very busy. This is another indication of the need... it used to be that they were only busy as one approached hunting season, so avoided shooting after mid-August. That strategy doesn't work any more.

I really hope your classification effort is successful. If for any reason it fails, please keep searching for options in the Houston/Big Lake area.

William G Bartel
892-3566

Peter Burton

From: Land Management
Sent: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 3:00 PM
To: Peter Burton
Subject: FW: MSB-008238

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Blair <alaskanblairs@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 5, 2025 1:01 PM
To: Land Management <LMB@matsugov.us>
Subject: MSB-008238

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

I'm contacting you in regards to MSB008238, the purposed zoning/ area classification for a shooting range in the Zero Lake area.

As a long term resident of Zero lake I am strongly against this due to safety concerns for my family and persons who recreate in this area. As you may be aware of we have had accidental shootings out here, environmental impact, and no real form of policing this area are also major concerns.

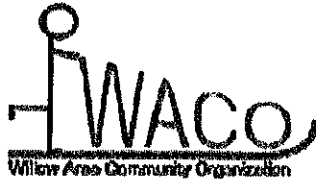
Also, there needs to be better communication from the Mat-Su borough and the residence in proposed areas for land use classification and or zoning issues.

Thank you, Tom Blair

Thomas F. Blair
14634 W.Zero Lake Trail

Mail address:
P.O. Box 221753
Anch., Ak 99522

Sent from my iPhone



Peter Burton
Land & Resource Management Division
MatSu Borough
350 E. Dahlia Ave
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Nov. 5, 2025

Re: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

To whom this may concern:

Willow Area Community Council (WACO), recognized as the community council for the unincorporated area known as Willow, voted this evening by a vote of 27 to 1 to oppose the classification of and development of a shooting range on any property on Zero Lake Road. Our concerns are substantial. They are listed below and address impacts from development should the process proceed at any time from classification to planned.

- The two Willow property owners whose land adjoins the proposed parcel both strongly oppose this classification and development. Both have plans to develop their properties for full time residence over the next few years and will pay taxes accordingly. They have individually submitted letters as well.
- The property owners on Zero Lake are opposed to this classification and development. They are in Houston but as communities with a shared boundary, we support that neighborhood being protected. These properties are either developed or developing and will also be providing substantial tax payments.
- Property values are known to be decreased by at least 3.7% (Realtor.com) in neighborhoods with a shooting range. Specifics identified: **Noise pollution, environmental concern, perceived safety issues and capped property appreciation.** There are examples of property values dropping by 30% because of proximity to shooting ranges.
- The Willow Area Community Comprehensive Plan is clear in its description of Willow. We are a community economically built on, supporting, and designed for outdoor recreation and tourism. There is an extensive, mapped trail system, used regularly, that surrounds that property, and a number of additional trails that branch off and are maintained privately. We value the peace, quiet and beauty of the area and encourage our guests to enjoy same.
- Road build and management is a difficult concern. Three government entities own and manage different sections of Zero Lake Road: DNR, Houston and the MatSu Borough. Houston manages the plowing up to a certain point and past that its just the residents. It is a dirt road. It would

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need to be built to standards after agreement among the three, and then agreements about who will maintain must be decided. An enormous expense and process in a time of cutbacks.

- Access to shooting ranges is an occasional wish of some borough residents. There are currently three. The best developed is in Montana Creek, owned & managed by the Upper Susitna Shooters Association: mile 94.5 Parks Highway. (The intersection of the Parks Highway and Zero Lake Rd is about mile marker 58, approximately 36 miles away.) The Kenny & Patti Barber Shooting Range at Maud Road in the Knik River Public Use Area is open to the public and staffed by DNR. And many already use the Jonesville Mine recreation sites, also on DNR land near Sutton.

Noise pollution:

Sound in Willow carries very long distances because of the large swaths of marshes and lakes.

Particularly in winter when the birch and shrubbery lose their buffering leaves and only the tall, spare spruce are left and the deep cold exaggerates all sensory information. People living within a mile to mile and half, especially those closer, will suffer an extraordinary assault on their quiet environment. Dogs and other animals with more acute hearing will suffer even more. A noted dog mushing racing kennel in the neighborhood that has been there for decades will be significantly impacted as will all animal owners that live and recreate there. Hunting is common in that area and wildlife will be affected. There is already a lot of shooting all over the Willow area, most of it on private property or somewhat isolated borough or state lands. The difference will be the volume of gunfire from an occasional hour or two, to every day all day and potentially many shooters simultaneously.

Environmental concerns:

The question has been asked: has Fish and Game been consulted on the potential risk to Nancy Creek which flows close to the proposed site. It is salmon spawning stream and fed with mountain runoff and rain so the volume is variable. The toxins from a shooting range could easily leach into that water source given the high water tables throughout the entire south end of Willow. Flooding anywhere in the Willow area affects the water table throughout this area, so toxins will move. And plowed snow will take materials far from that initial ground spot and disperse. Will any amount of staffed management of the site actually get it cleaned up thoroughly?

Perceived safety issues:

Traffic would exponentially increase on winding narrow Zero Lake road. Wildlife currently abounds, people routine snowmachine, 4 wheel, bike, run, train dog teams, etc on and crossing that road. There will be no policing for speed.

Opening up an area with limited, larger tract properties will draw some nefarious actors, with guns, so the risk of home burglaries etc will increase.

While a well developed shooting range should have sides, and shooting areas with tall built walls, those are not a guarantee that people will not, either on accident or on purpose, shoot past those barriers. People using the trails, as above and to include horse back riding, will be at risk during the range's open hours.

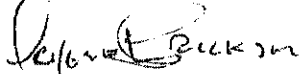
Known to few, there are several private air strips back there. Those planes need to fly a very low flight path after take-off for quite a distance before they can move to altitude because of the air/warmth patterns in the flying valley between the mountain ranges. If they go up too soon, they risk vapor lock on the wings. Shooting in the direction of low flying planes is risky.

Capped property appreciation:

Homeowners count on their properties increasing in value across time; homes are an investment.
Artificial capping of appreciation will not be welcome news.

We will be happy to receive questions about this position and will remain engaged on this process.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tryg Erickson', written in a cursive style.

Tryg Erickson,
Chair
WACO

John and Sandy McDonald
PO Box 940215
Houston, AK 99694

November 5, 2025

Peter Burton, LMB@ matsugov.us

Re: MSB 008238 Zero Lake Classification

Mr. Burton,

Thank you for the answers to my questions in the October 23rd email.

We are not in favor of the land chosen as a favorable location for a future shooting range. I can appreciate the assembly requesting land to be classified for a shooting range closer to Wasilla and Big Lake, the core of the population but those in this area do not support it. About 5 years ago, maybe longer, Point Blank proposed a shooting range on Zero Lake Road just south of this location and close by. The conditional use permit was not approved by the city and there was much opposition even then. In Houston we have Zoning requirements and a shooting range can only be within a Heavy Industrial Zone. This land has been State recreational land, logging, and is now also residential land and a Holding Zone. The City of Houston's Planning and Zoning would need to be contacted and allowed to weight in.

There is an area now that is used as a shooting range on Zero Lake Road and has causes all sorts of problems. Classifying land up Zero Lake Road will only encourage more people to come out and shoot in that location for free, causing more problems, more dumping and more danger.

This area is not only known for it's hunting, dog mushing and berry picking has been a long time home to many and a summer cabin location to a growing number.

We own property and also live very close to this site. We chose to move out here almost 20 years ago because it's remote and quiet. Any shooting range would lower the value of both our home and property and investment property we also own and pay taxes on.

We often hear the shooting that happens on a regular basis from Zero Lake Road. This proposed shooting range would only increase the noise and disturbance experienced. The noise and disruption of gunfire and related activity would affect the people who live here, the sled dogs and other pets and farm animals. It will also affect our overall well-being. Extended hours or event days would exacerbate this impact above and beyond what we experience at this time.

One major concern is the cost to build the road from the Willow/Houston Trail Parking lot located about ½ mile up Zero Lake Road. This shooting range will be at least 3 miles of winding road, although, not far as the crow flies from the Parks Highway and even closer to the center of Houston and the City Hall. This fact was one that had concerned the City Council in regards to Point Blank's facility. Having a shooting range so close to the center of our city would be a major downfall. Building a borough standard road, where a logging road

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now stands, to this proposed site will be a huge expense. Who then will maintain it? The city of Houston has trouble caring for the roads on its Road Maintenance list now and there are many roads within the city limits waiting to be added to that list. Also, because the land is outside of the City of Houston Limits no revenue would be added to city coffers to offset this required maintenance.

Sincerely,

John and Sandy McDonald

John and Sandy McDonald
PO Box 940215
Houston, AK 99694

November 5, 2025

Peter Burton
Land & Resource Management Division
MatSu Borough
350 E. Dahlia Ave
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Re: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

We are not in favor of the land chosen as a favorable location for a future shooting range. I can appreciate the assembly requesting land to be classified for a shooting range closer to Wasilla and Big Lake, the core of the population but those in this area do not support it. About 5 years ago, maybe longer, Point Blank proposed a shooting range on Zero Lake Road just south of this location and close by. The conditional use permit was not approved by the city and there was much opposition even then. In Houston we have Zoning requirements and a shooting range can only be within a Heavy Industrial Zone. This land has been State recreational land, logging, and is now also residential land and a Holding Zone. The City of Houston's Planning and Zoning would need to be contacted and allowed to weight in.

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One major concern is the cost to build the road from the Willow/Houston Trail Parking lot located about 1/2 mile up Zero Lake Road. This shooting range will be at least 3 miles of winding road, although, not far as the crow flies from the Parks Highway and even closer to the center of Houston and the City Hall. This fact was one that had concerned the City Council in regards to Point Blank's facility. Having a shooting range so close to the center of our city would be a major downfall. Building a borough standard road, where a logging road now stands, to this proposed site will be a huge expense. Who then will maintain it? The city of Houston has trouble caring for the roads on its Road Maintenance list now and there are many roads with in the city

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limits waiting to be added to that list. Also, because the land is outside of the City of Houston Limits no revenue would be added to city coffers to off set this required maintenance.

Sincerely,

John and Sandy McDonald

Peter Burton
Land & Resource Management Division
MatSu Borough
350 E. Dahlia Ave
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Nov. 10, 2025

Re: MSB008238 Zero Lake Classification

To whom this may concern:

I am writing this letter in opposition to the classification and potential future development of a shooting range up Zero Lake Road, parcel located on land under the responsibility of the Willow Area Community Organization. (WACO).

The letter of opposition from WACO, approved at the Nov 5, 2025 meeting, reflects all my concerns about this location. This letter is intended to add my name as a remote neighbor who may, unfortunately, be affected by this designation/potential development and to highlight specific issues.

Sound carries out here far further than in other areas of the borough because of all the marshes and lakes with either no or limited vegetative walls to absorb, and limited winds to dilute. I can hear noise with great clarity at greater than ½ mile, even further on cold days. The proposed parcel is roughly 1 to 1 & 1/2 miles away (as the bird flies) from my beautiful home and land. And it is quite likely that I will be able to hear the gunfire should this parcel be developed. Already there is plenty of gunfire around me, all on private property and as best I know, related to target shooting and a gun sighting business. The difference is volume – a gun range would sound like a warzone, as often as every day and all day. Even this far away, my land's serenity is threatened, and my property value could fall.

Second major concern as a remote neighbor, Nancy Creek runs along side my property. With high water levels in this area, the lead discard and contamination there could easily become a toxin that affects my animals and the wildlife that traverses my land.

I'd like to address a statement often made that since a lot of shooting already happens along Zero Lake Road, the borough might as well build a spot for them. And the dumping that happens there. Both may represent code violations and as such should be addressed. Same as above, scale. If you open up a spot for shooters, it will draw even more shooters, expanding the problem not simply enforcing existing laws/codes. Please do have code compliance tackle this eye and ear-sore. The rest of this area of the borough is pretty, well maintained and being developed in a responsible manner. It should be kept that way by borough leaders and their decisions.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Linda Oxley
Physical address: 22601 W. Parks Highway
Mailing address: PO Box 908
Willow, Alaska 99688
907-841-3421
lmoxley@mtaonline.net

IM 26-022
Ord. 26-016

Date: 11/13/25
To: Peter Burton
Land Management Specialist
From: Neal Lacy
Property Owner
Subject: Purposed Zero Lake Shooting range

My name is Neal Lacy and I am strongly opposed to an outdoor shooting range within three quarters of a mile from my property for the following reasons.

1. Lead contamination in watershed. There many scholarly studies that prove lead in watersheds kills any kind of aquatic life. In this area there are no salmon streams, however this area of the proposed range is up hill from the wetland south of the Parks highway. This wet land drains into the Little Su river and any lead contamination can have a potentially fatal effect on all aquatic life downstream.
2. Lead in the soils. Shooting ranges by nature create hazardous soil conditions. There are ranges in Alaska that have to cleanup the lead from the soil, this very expensive and has a specific protocols for not making a bigger mess. The State of Alaska operates several outdoor ranges that monitor employee and soil lead concentrations. Is the borough going to pay for upkeep?
3. Noise. Shooting ranges generate undesirable amounts noise. There will be people shooting after hours. How much noise will be created when someone shoots a propane cylinder or Tannerite. This has happened at the Maud rd range.
4. Reduced property values. I would like to know why the borough assembly wants to make my property worth less, just to have a range that pollutes every thing around it and down stream from it. The eventual plan for my property is going to be 4.5 acre residential lots and I don't want children around gunfire. I think we should build a shooting range right next to every assembly members property, they should lead by example.
5. Unsupervised shooting range. Unsupervised ranges seem to breed the worst behavior with people and firearms. As sited before, there will be people shooting things they shouldn't like Tannerite, propane cylinders and maybe a stolen car after hours. There has also been people shot at the Maud road range.
6. Borough maintenance. I have little confidence that the borough will provide any kind of lead monitoring or remediation of soils when contaminated. They might pickup the garbage but anything after that, I don't see happening. I could see cleanup moneys being a budget item that gets cut.
7. Wildlife and Birds. My property has all forms of wildlife and birds on it, I don't want the noise from a shooting range to affect the there habitat.

By: P. Burton
Public Hearing: 01/05/2026
Action: Approved

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 25-30**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF AN ORDINANCE CLASSIFYING A PORTION OF 18N03W09A001 AS RESERVED USE LAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF A SHOOTING RANGE (MSB008238).

WHEREAS, a portion of tax parcel 18N03W09A001, lying north of W. Zero Lake Road is proposed for land classification for purpose of reserving land for a future shooting range site; and

WHEREAS, the attached Best Interest Finding provides information specific to the parcel to include proposed purpose, land classification, map, inter-department and public comments; and

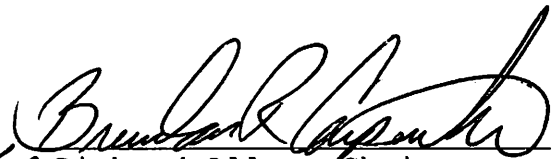
WHEREAS, a Borough inter-departmental review was conducted, along with a 30-day public notice in accordance with Title 23 and Land and Resource Management Policy and Procedures adopted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; and

WHEREAS, through land classification, the parcel identified for specific future purpose which cannot be changed without Assembly approval.

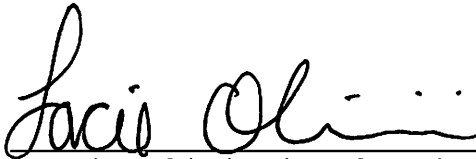
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna

Borough Planning Commission hereby recommends Assembly approval of land classification for a portion of tax parcel 18N03W09A001, lying north of W. Zero Lake Road as "Reserved Use Lands - Shooting Range" for purpose of future shooting range facility.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission this 5th day of January, 2026.


FOR Richard Allen, Chair

ATTEST:


Lacie Olivieri, Planning Clerk

(SEAL)

YES: McCabe, Collins, Scoggin, Carpenter, Zagorodniy

NO:

