

SUBJECT: AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY APPROVING AN ADDITIONAL LAND CLASSIFICATION FOR SIXTEEN BOROUGH-OWNED PROPERTIES ALONG DESHKA RIVER OF WATERSHED LANDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FISH HABITAT. (MSB008272)

AGENDA OF: June 2, 2026

ASSEMBLY ACTION:

AGENDA ACTION REQUESTED: Introduce and set for public hearing.

Route To	Signatures
Originator	<p>Invalid Signature</p> <p>X Emerson Krueger</p> <p>Signed by: Emerson Krueger</p> <p>5/20/2026</p>
Division Manager	<p>X Joe Metzger</p> <p>Signed by: Joe Metzger</p> <p>5/21/2026</p>
Department Director	<p>X Michael Brown</p> <p>Signed by: Mike Brown</p> <p>5/21/2026</p>
Finance Director	<p>Recoverable Signature</p> <p>X Cheyenne Heindel</p> <p>Signed by: Cheyenne Heindel</p> <p>5/21/2026</p>
Borough Attorney	<p>X Nicholas Spiropoulos</p> <p>Signed by: Nicholas Spiropoulos</p> <p>5/21/2026</p>
Borough Manager	<p>X Michael Brown</p> <p>Signed by: Mike Brown</p> <p>5/21/2026</p>
Borough Clerk	<p>X Brenda J. Henry for</p> <p>Signed by: Brenda Henry</p> <p>5/21/2026</p>

- ATTACHMENT (S) :** Vicinity Map (1 pp)
 Best Interest Finding (7 pp)
 Public Comments (4 pp)
 Fish and Wildlife Commission Resolution (3 pp)
 Planning Commission Resolution (5 pp)
 Ordinance Serial No. 26-071 (2 pp)

SUMMARY STATEMENT: This legislation is being brought forward at the request of Assembly Member Gamble.

The conclusion of a five-year scientific analysis of the water

temperature of the Deshka River and its many side-sloughs and tributaries is that frequently in July, during the Chinook salmon run, high water temperatures in the river stop salmon migration. Many cold water sloughs, tributaries, and seeps provide locations for salmon to wait for the Deshka River to cool off so they can continue their migration.

The attached report on the 5-year temperature study includes recommendations for the State and Borough to take steps to safeguard the locations where the cold water is coming from public land.

Adding a Watershed Lands classification to the borough-owned parcels that were identified during the recent study will ensure that future borough land management decisions factor this information into proposed future borough land use along the Deshka River.

Interdepartmental review was conducted, and public notice was completed in accordance with MSB 23.05.025. Four comments were received from the public noticing. Three of the commenters supported the proposed classification and one asked questions regarding the classification's effects on public access. The proposed classification will have no effect on existing public access along the river or local trails.

The attached Best Interest Finding provides supporting analysis and findings to assist the Assembly in their review of the proposed classification action. In addition, the fish habitat study report, an adopted MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission Resolution, an adopted MSB Planning Commission Resolution, vicinity map, and the public comments that were submitted are attached.

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. 26-071.

Proposed Watershed Classification

MSB Parcel Tax IDs:

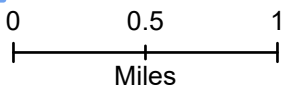
- 5887S23T00F - 9 acres
- 5887S23T00B - 32 acres
- 5887S14T00F - 80 acres
- 5887S14T00D - 37 acres
- 5887S14T00A - 149 acres
- 5887S14T00C - 102 acres
- 5887S11T00E - 42 acres
- 5887S10T00B - 78 acres
- 5887S03T00E - 11 acres
- 5887S03T00D - 142 acres
- 5887S03T00A - 57 acres
- 5887S03T00C - 160 acres
- 20N06W34A001 - 358 acres
- 20N06W34B001 - 251 acres
- 20N06W27A001 - 283 acres
- 20N06W27B002 - 306 acres

Borough-owned parcels to be classified watershed

**MSB008272 - MSB Land Classification
Deshka River
Cold Water Input Locations**



- Cold Water Input
- Proposed Watershed Parcels
- ▨ MSB Land
- Parcels
- Waterbodies



MSB LRMD April 2026
Data provided by U.S. FWS

BEST INTEREST FINDING
For the classification of borough-owned land

I. Summary of Proposed Action

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Land and Resources Management Division is proposing to classify approximately 2,124 acres of borough-owned land along the Deshka River, between river mile one and nine as “Watershed Land”. The subject parcels have been classified as either public recreation or land bank in accordance with Assembly Resolution 1990-134. The proposed action is to add another classification on top of the existing classification to highlight the importance of the parcels for fish habitat. The management guidelines for public recreation on the subject parcels are not expected to change.

The land was acquired by the Borough through the municipal entitlement program and is currently classified as either public recreation or land bank land. No conflicts were identified with the existing classifications and the proposed additional classification. No conflicts are anticipated with adjacent private landowners. The proposed action is to add a second land classification of Watershed Land to the existing classifications to recognize recently identified cold-water habitats, which are critical to support healthy salmon fisheries.

II. Property Site Factors

- A. Location: The subject parcels are located west of Willow, along the Deshka River, from river mile one (1) through river mile nine (9), starting from the mouth or confluence with the Susitna River. The parcels are not within an established Community Council.
- B. Legal Descriptions:
1. Tax parcel 5887S23T00F: Tract F, Section 23, T19N R06W, according to Plat No. 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 12.4 acres more or less.
 2. Tax parcel 5887S23T00B: Tract B of Section 23, in T19N R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 37.12 acres more or less.
 3. Tax parcel 5887S14T00F: Tract F of Section 14, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 81.17 acres more or less.
 4. Tax parcel 5887S14T00D: Tract D of Section 14, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 46.2 acres more or less.
 5. Tax parcel 5887S14T00A: Tract A of Section 14, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 148.65 acres more or less.
 6. Tax parcel 5887S14T00C: Tract C of Section 14, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 90.35 acres more or less.

7. Tax parcel 5887S11T00E: Tract E of Section 11, in T19N, R06W according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 55.18 acres more or less.
 8. Tax parcel 5887S10T00B: Tract B of Section 10, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 87.88 acres more or less.
 9. Tax parcel 5887S03T00E: Tract E of Section 03, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 12.66 acres more or less.
 10. Tax parcel 5887S03T00D: Tract D of Section 03, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 135.7 acres more or less.
 11. Tax parcel 5887S03T00A: Tract A of Section 03, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 57.8 acres more or less.
 12. Tax parcel 5887S03T00C: Tract C of Section 03, in T19N, R06W, according to Plat 81-126, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 158.62 acres more or less.
 13. Tax parcel 20N06W34A001: Tract B of Section 34, in T20N, R06W, according to Plat 95-40, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 356.53 acres more or less.
 14. Tax parcel 20N06W34B001: Tract A of Section 34, in T20N, R06W, according to Plat 95-40, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 253.18 acres more or less.
 15. Tax parcel 20N06W27A001: Tract C of Section 27, in T20N, R06W, according to Plat 95-40, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 284.4 acres more or less.
 16. Tax parcel 20N06W27B002: Tract B of Section 27, in T20N, R06W, according to Plat 95-40, Talkeetna Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, containing 306.1 acres more or less.
- C. Land Status: The subject parcels were acquired from the State of Alaska through the municipal entitlement program and are patented to the Borough via patents 6393 & 14974 (attached).
- D. Restrictions:
1. Current Land Classification – The subject parcels are classified as a mixture of public recreation and land bank (Assembly Resolution 90-138).
 2. Land Use Plans – The State’s Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan (1991), while not adopted by the Borough Assembly, is the basis for the existing land classification. This plan is referenced in the adopted Assembly legislation that classified the property. Both the 1991 plan as well as the 2024 draft update were reviewed for this Best Interest Finding. The Borough Assembly adopted the Deshka River Recreation Management Plan by Ordinance Serial No. 2004-044. The Deshka River Recreation Management Plan does not contain specific guidance on management of the subject parcels; however, it does highlight the public’s desire

to keep the shoreline in a natural state outside of the existing developed access points. The proposed classification of watershed is supported by both the State's Recreation Rivers Plan and the Borough's Recreation Management Plan.

3. Deed Restrictions: These parcels are subject to:
 - a. Valid existing easements.
 - b. A 50-foot-wide lineal perpetual public easement along the line of ordinary high-water mark of Deshka River (aka Kroto Slough), unnamed creeks and sloughs as portrayed on the Supplemental Cadastral Survey, filed in the Talkeetna Recording District on December 18, 1981, as Plat No. 81-126 and further subject to the reservation of a 50-foot wide perpetual public access easement to the aforementioned lineal public easement along the Deshka River, unnamed creeks and sloughs.
 - c. A 50-foot-wide lineal perpetual public easement along the line of ordinary high-water mark of Deshka River (aka Kroto Slough) as portrayed on the Supplemental Cadastral Survey, filed in the Talkeetna Recording District on August 29, 1995, as Plat No. 95-40.
 - d. Restrictions in the Federal Patent by which the Grantor acquired title.
 - e. Reservations in the State Patents (see attached).
 4. Covenants: None
 5. Zoning: None
 6. Easements & Other Reservations: None.
- E. Current Land Use:
1. Parcel tax ID 5887S23T00F: There are five primitive seasonal campsites available on this parcel. Two of the campsites have been developed with moderate clearing and dock sites on the bank of the river. The campsites have been vacant for the last few years and all improvements have been removed.
 2. Parcel tax ID 5887S23T00B: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 3. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00F: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 4. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00D: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 5. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00A: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 6. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00C: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 7. Parcel tax ID 5887S11T00E: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 8. Parcel tax ID 5887S10T00B: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 9. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00E: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 10. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00D: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 11. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00A: Mona Lakes winter trail, wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 12. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00C: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 13. Parcel tax ID 20N06W34A001: ADF&G fish weir and camp. There are also four seasonal campsites that were last permitted for use in 2005. There are no improvements at the seasonal campsites. Mona Lakes winter trail, wildlife habitat, undeveloped.
 14. Parcel tax ID 20N06W34B001: ADF&G fish weir and camp, Mona Lakes winter trail, habitat, and otherwise undeveloped.

15. Parcel tax ID 20N06W27A001: Wildlife habitat, undeveloped.

16. Parcel tax ID 20N06W27B002: Mona Lakes winter trail, wildlife habitat, undeveloped.

- F. Existing Infrastructure: There is very little infrastructure on the subject parcels. The old seismic lines are used now for the winter trails noted above. The seasonal campsites consist of small clearings as all personal property, including the steps from the river have been removed. The clearings are overgrown and are returning to a natural condition. The State's campsite and weir operated by the Department of Fish and Game are boxed up and stored on-site in accordance with their Borough Land Use Permit.
- G. Soils: Soil descriptions below are derived from data from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Survey of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.

Uplands on the subject parcels consist largely of the Benka-Liten complex, the Susivar-Moose River complex, Lucille silt loam, and the Nancy-Kashwitna complex. Lower elevations on the subject parcels that are not wetlands are comprised of Killey and Hiline silt loams.

The Benka-Liten complex parent materials consist of silty volcanic ash and/or silty loess over sandy outwash and silty loess over sandy eolian deposits. This soil complex is given a land capability classification of 3, meaning the soils have severe limitations that restrict the plants capable of growing well or that require special conservation practices to maintain soil health if developed for use. A primary limitation of the soil is the high amount of silt.

The Susivar-Moose River complex parent materials consist of loamy alluvium over sandy and gravelly alluvium. This soil group is associated with floodplain deposits. This soil group has fewer limiting development factors than the other major soil group on the subject parcels, but is generally susceptible to periodic flooding given its location.

Both the Nancy-Kashwitna complex and the Lucille silt loam parent material is volcanic ash influenced wind blown soil deposits over sandy and gravelly river deposits. Both soils are associated with stream terraces and represent the most developable soils on the subject parcels.

The Killey and Hiline silt loams are formed of stratified loamy alluvium lying over sandy and gravelly river deposits. While these soils do not present a challenge to development, their location is generally close to the ordinary high-water mark of the river and are prone to seasonal flooding in the spring and fall.

Lowlands on the subject parcels include Salamatof peat, Slikok muck, and typic cryaquents. These soils are found in muskegs (wetland) or abandoned and grown

over river channels. These soils represent the least developable areas on the subject parcels.

- H. Resources: The subject parcels have high recreational value due to the proximity to Willow and the Deshka and Susitna Rivers, the topography and existing trails. Many of the ridges on the parcels likely contain sand and gravel. In addition, the property is mostly wooded and could be a source of paper birch, white spruce, black spruce, cottonwood, and aspen.
- I. Assessments: MSB Assessment information is not available because these parcels are tax exempt. The following are the values listed in the 2026 certified tax roll:
1. Parcel tax ID 5887S23T00F: \$16,400.00.
 2. Parcel tax ID 5887S23T00B: \$27,700.00.
 3. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00F: \$42,000.00.
 4. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00D: \$26,600.00.
 5. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00A: \$59,800.00.
 6. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00C: \$36,400.00.
 7. Parcel tax ID 5887S11T00E: \$28,600.00.
 8. Parcel tax ID 5887S10T00B: \$35,400.00.
 9. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00E: \$15,300.00.
 10. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00D: \$54,600.00.
 11. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00A: \$29,900.00.
 12. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00C: \$63,800.00.
 13. Parcel tax ID 20N06W34A001: \$112,800.00.
 14. Parcel tax ID 20N06W34B001: \$87,300.00.
 15. Parcel tax ID 20N06W27A001: \$98,100.00.
 16. Parcel tax ID 20N06W27B002: \$96,800.00.

III. Public, Board and Commission Comments & Recommendations

Pursuant to Title 23, land owners in the proximity of the land proposed for classification were notified by mail. Notices were also published in the Frontiersman newspaper. Four written comments were received during the public notice period. Three of the comments were in support and one included several questions regarding the land classification effects on the existing trails and river traffic. The proposed land classification will not have any effect on the river traffic or existing trails.

The MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted Resolution 25-02 in support of the land classification at their regularly scheduled public meeting on 3/13/25, "...in recognition of the water quality function they [these parcels] provide that protects salmon habitat."

IV. Analysis & Discussion

The Deshka River Recreation Management Plan (2004) supports the classification evaluated in this Best Interest Finding. Extensive public outreach during the drafting of the plan highlighted

the public's desire for the Borough to keep things the way they are along the river. A watershed classification would fit within the existing management guidelines for the subject parcels.

The State Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan, while a state plan, was used by the Borough Assembly in 1990 to classify the borough-owned land. The 2024 update to this plan was reviewed for consistency with the proposed dual classification of public recreation \ watershed and land bank / watershed considered by this Best Interest Finding. The plan recommends cooperative management of the state and borough-owned lands. To the extent that the plan addresses borough-owned land use adjacent to the river, the proposed classification action is supported by the plan. The subject parcels are used primarily for public recreation and wildlife habitat. The subject parcels have been documented to have a critical role in supporting fish habitat through the natural discharge of cooler groundwater into the Deshka River. To that end, adding a dual classification of watershed lands to the existing land classification highlights this aspect of the subject parcels and will make it a factor in considering future land uses and development.

Interest in using the borough-owned land along the Deshka River has decreased significantly since the late 1990's. The State's limits and repeated closures of salmon fishing and the overall decreases in the salmon run numbers are assumed to be the primary reason for the decrease in interest. Adding a watershed land classification to the existing land classifications is not anticipated to have any effect on the recreational use of the borough-owned land along the Deshka River.

The proposed classification of the subject parcels is consistent with borough code and applicable plans. There are no objections to the proposed classification.

Authority and Intent

The Land & Resource Management Division finds the proposed classification of the subject parcels of Public Recreation and Watershed or Land Bank and Watershed would meet the requirements of MSB 23.05.010(4) Policy and MSB 23.05.100 Land Classifications. MSB 23.05.010(4) requires that real property in which the Borough has an interest shall be managed to develop and implement the borough-owned land and resource management plans.

MSB 23.05.100 Land Classifications include the following relevant definitions:

- "Public recreation lands" are those lands which, because of location, physical features, or adjacent development, are presently or potentially valuable to the public as natural or developed recreational or historic areas.
- "Land bank lands" are those lands for which specific long-term uses have not yet been determined but, due to the land's surface and sub-surface resources, are suitable for management utilizing the multiple use concept during the near term.
- "Watershed lands" are lands that may be forested at a high or moderate relief which will direct water to low lying areas covered or saturated by surface or groundwater sufficient to normally support vegetation found in areas such as riparian, swamps, marshes, bogs, estuaries, and similar areas.

V. Preliminary Administrative Decision

Recommended action – Add Watershed Lands classification to the existing classification:

1. Parcel tax ID 5887S23T00F: Public Recreation and Watershed.
2. Parcel tax ID 5887S23T00B: Public Recreation and Watershed.
3. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00F: Public Recreation and Watershed.
4. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00D: Public Recreation and Watershed.
5. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00A: Public Recreation and Watershed.
6. Parcel tax ID 5887S14T00C: Public Recreation and Watershed.
7. Parcel tax ID 5887S11T00E: Public Recreation and Watershed.
8. Parcel tax ID 5887S10T00B: Public Recreation and Watershed.
9. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00E: Public Recreation and Watershed.
10. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00D: Public Recreation and Watershed.
11. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00A: Public Recreation and Watershed.
12. Parcel tax ID 5887S03T00C: Public Recreation and Watershed.
13. Parcel tax ID 20N06W34A001: Land Bank and Watershed.
14. Parcel tax ID 20N06W34B001: Land Bank and Watershed.
15. Parcel tax ID 20N06W27A001: Land Bank and Watershed.
16. Parcel tax ID 20N06W27B002: Land Bank and Watershed.

VI. Final Decision

The Community Development Department recommends adding a watershed lands classification to the subject parcels.



April 30, 2026

Comments submitted by: Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership

Matanuska-Susitna Borough
350 E. Dahlia Ave.
Palmer, Alaska
99645

Re: MSB008272 Land Classification

Dear Mr. Krueger and Mat-Su Borough staff,

I am submitting this letter as a preliminary public comment on behalf of the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership regarding MSB008272 Land Classification.

The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership (Partnership) represents businesses, governments, landowners, Native Alaskans, and the non-profit community. Since its inception in 2005, the Partnership has brought together a diverse coalition of more than 65 members, including the Mat-Su Borough. The Partnership has a strong interest in this topic, and we look forward to engaging with more detailed written and oral comments during the upcoming process considering cold water refugia on the Doshka River as watershed lands.

Healthy cold-water habitat is foundational to healthy fisheries. The Partnership encourages the application of relevant local science to help inform local policies, such as land classifications, that affect fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

We appreciate the interest and efforts of Assembly member Gamble, the MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission, and Borough staff in bringing this science forward for consideration.

The Partnership has a standing Science and Data Committee and significant technical expertise. Please feel welcome to call upon us if we can provide any assistance or technical resources during this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Speed", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Jessica Speed
Coordinator, Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership



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

RECEIVED
 APR 30 2026
 PERMIT CENTER

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
 PUBLIC NOTICE

Type: Land Classification (MSB008272)

Tax ID: 5887S23T00F, 5887S23T00B, 5887S14T00F,
 5887S14T00D, 5887S14T00A, 5887S14T00C,
 5887S11T00E, 5887S10T00B, 5887S03T00E,
 5887S03T00D, 5887S03T00A, 5887S03T00C,
 20N06W34A001, 20N06W34B001, 20N06W27A001
 20N06W27B002

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Land & Resource Management (MSB) is requesting the Planning Commission's recommendation on land classification and Assembly approval to classify 16 Borough-owned parcels in support of Salmon Habitat. These parcels are along the Deshka River, near the confluence with the Susitna River, up to river mile 9.5. The Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund sponsored a project to map locations along the Deshka River where cold, oxygen rich water is seeping into the river. Those locations provide essential fish habitat during periods of the summer months when river water temperatures get dangerously high. Classifying those MSB-owned parcels as WATERSHED is a way for the MSB to recognize the importance of those parcels in supplying high-quality water to the Deshka River. The parcels are currently unclassified.

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.matsu.gov. Public comments are 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 **April 30, 2026**. If you have questions about this request or would like to schedule an appointment to view supporting materials, call Emerson Krueger at 907-861-7867 between 8 am - 5 pm or you can send an e-mail to: LMB@matsu.gov (please refer to MSB008272 Land Classification when submitting comments).

Comments: Has the Mat Su Borough contacted Property Owners near the land reclassification to give them an opportunity to comment? Will this land reclassification violate state statues 2477, 19.45.001(a), ANILCA section 1110 a and 43 CFR 36.11 by cutting people off accessing their cabins?

Signature: Ethan Huddleston

(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



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

10
 Kendra Zamzow
 MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission - SPT 5
 PO Box 1250
 Chickaloon, AK 99674

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
PUBLIC NOTICE

Type: Land Classification (MSB008272)

**Tax ID: 5887S23T00F, 5887S23T00B, 5887S14T00F,
 5887S14T00D, 5887S14T00A, 5887S14T00C,
 5887S11T00E, 5887S10T00B, 5887S03T00E,
 5887S03T00D, 5887S03T00A, 5887S03T00C,
 20N06W34A001, 20N06W34B001, 20N06W27A001
 20N06W27B002**

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Comments: I strongly support this! The Deshka has many reaches where water gets so warm it could affect the ability of salmon to reproduce or reach spawning grounds. The classification will highlight the importance of these cold seeps now and in the future.

Signature: Kendra Zamzow

(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

Emerson Krueger

From: Land Management
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2026 4:17 PM
To: Emerson Krueger
Subject: FW: MSB008272 Land Classification – Deshka River Parcels

From: Margaret Stern <margaret@susitnarivercoalition.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2026 3:57 PM
To: Land Management <LMB@matsu.gov>
Subject: Re: MSB008272 Land Classification – Deshka River Parcels

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

To the Mat-Su Borough Land and Resource Management Office,

I write on behalf of the Susitna River Coalition to support MSB008272 Land Classification- Deshka River Parcels.

The Susitna River Coalition is a nonprofit watershed health organization. We strongly support the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's proposal to classify 16 Borough-owned parcels along the Deshka River as WATERSHED lands.

The Deshka River is a major tributary of the Susitna River and supports some of the most important salmon habitat in the region. The parcels identified in this proposal are associated with mapped cold-water inputs that provide critical thermal refuge for salmon during periods of elevated summer temperatures. These areas play an outsized role in maintaining habitat quality when fish are most vulnerable.

This proposal reflects a clear connection between strong research and effective policy. Recent work supported by the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund has identified specific locations where cold, oxygen-rich groundwater enters the river. These places are disproportionately important to salmon during seasonal stress. Classifying these lands as WATERSHED is a straightforward way for the Borough to recognize and protect that function.

This is also a clear, actionable step the Borough can take, providing a unique opportunity to preemptively safeguard salmon habitat in the Mat-Su. As changing conditions continue to affect water temperature and fish distribution across Southcentral Alaska, protecting groundwater-fed habitats and cold-water refugia will only become more important.

We encourage the Borough to move forward with this classification.

Thank you for your consideration,

Margaret Stern

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Margaret Stern
Program & Communications Director, [Susitna River Coalition](https://susitnarivercoalition.org)
margaret@susitnarivercoalition.org

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. FWC 25-02**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION RECOMMENDING MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY DIRECT ADMINISTRATION TO CLASSIFY KEY BOROUGH-OWNED PARCELS ON THE SHORE OF DESHKA RIVER AS WATERSHED LANDS TO PROTECT SALMON POPULATIONS.

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) has reviewed the outcomes of a recent study on the temperature of water entering the Deshka River from adjacent groundwater seeps; and

WHEREAS, this new information shows that certain parcels supporting the cold-water inputs to the Deshka River are essential for maintaining healthy salmon runs on the river; and

WHEREAS, spatial variation in water temperature is a key feature of habitat complexity that contributes to the movement, resilience, and persistence of cold-water fishes, including salmonids; and

WHEREAS, during spawning migration, periods of high river temperatures can block migratory corridors and cause thermal stress or mortality; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) ranks the Susitna River drainage king salmon population as the fourth largest in the State of Alaska, with Deshka River

providing spawning and rearing habitat for approximately 20 percent of the Susitna River king salmon return on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, during the 10-year period from 1997-2006 Deshka River king salmon spawning escapements averaged more than 33,000 fish per year and the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery was an important economic driver for the Matanuska - Susitna Borough; and

WHEREAS, even with no sport harvest allowed in 2023 and 2024, not a single Chinook salmon spawning escapement goal was attained anywhere in the Susitna River drainage; and

WHEREAS, unsustainability of Susitna River drainage Chinook salmon is a rapidly accelerating problem; and

WHEREAS, the Deshka River is also a very productive producer of coho salmon within the Susitna River drainage, with Deshka River coho salmon escapements used by ADF&G as a tool for managing coho salmon stocks throughout the entire Susitna River drainage; and

WHEREAS, economic studies in our region in 2007 and 2017 show the significant positive economic impact returning salmon have on the economy of the MSB, that included \$56 million in direct spending benefits to the MSB in 2017 alone, and there are additional economic benefits from healthy wildlife and fish

populations, both of which require adequate and quality habitat locally; and

WHEREAS, the FWC believes it is important that the MSB takes every available action to safeguard healthy salmon runs in local water bodies; and

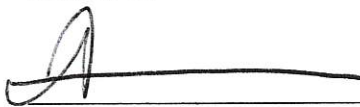
WHEREAS, the MSB can classify these parcels as watershed lands in recognition of the water quality function they provide that protects salmon habitat.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the FWC recommends the Matanuska- Susitna Borough Assembly direct Borough Administration to bring forward legislation classifying key Borough- owned parcels on the shore of the Deshka River as "Watershed" Lands ADOPTED by the Matanuska- Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission this 13th day of March 13, 2025.



Peter Probasco, Chair

ATTEST:



Margaret Brown, Staff

By: E. Krueger
Public Hearing: May 18, 2026
Action: Approved

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 26-08**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF AN ORDINANCE CLASSIFYING KEY BOROUGH-OWNED PARCELS ON THE SHORE OF THE DESHKA RIVER AS WATERSHED LANDS TO PROTECT SALMON POPULATIONS. (MSB008272)

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) Planning Commission has reviewed the outcomes of a recent study on the temperature of water entering the Deshka River from adjacent groundwater seeps; and

WHEREAS, this new information shows that certain parcels supporting the cold-water inputs to the Deshka River are essential for maintaining healthy salmon runs in the river; and

WHEREAS, spatial variation in water temperature is a key feature of habitat complexity that contributes to the movement, resilience, and persistence of cold-water fishes, including salmon; and

WHEREAS, during spawning migration, periods of high river temperatures can block migratory corridors and cause thermal stress and mortality; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) ranks the Susitna River drainage king salmon population as the fourth

largest in the State of Alaska, with the Deshka River providing spawning and rearing habitat for approximately 20 percent of the Susitna River king salmon return on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, during the 10-year period from 1997-2006 Deshka River king salmon spawning escapements averaged more than 33,000 fish per year and the Deshka River king salmon sport fishery was an important economic driver for the MSB; and

WHEREAS, even with no sport harvest allowed in 2023, 2024, and 2025, not a single king salmon spawning escapement goal was attained anywhere in the Susitna River drainage and the sport fishery is closed again for 2026; and

WHEREAS, unsustainability of the Susitna River drainage king salmon population is a rapidly accelerating problem; and

WHEREAS, the Deshka River has a very productive silver salmon run within the Susitna River drainage, with Deshka River silver salmon escapements used by ADFG as a tool for managing silver salmon stocks throughout the entire Susitna River drainage; and

WHEREAS, local economic studies in 2007 and 2017 show the significant positive economic effect returning salmon have on the MSB economy, that included \$56 million in direct spending benefits to the MSB in 2017 alone, and there are additional economic benefits from healthy wildlife and fish populations; and

WHEREAS, the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Planning Commission believe it is important the MSB takes every available action to safeguard healthy salmon runs in local water bodies; and

WHEREAS, the MSB can classify these parcels as watershed lands in recognition of the water quality function they provide that protects salmon habitat; and

WHEREAS, a Borough inter-departmental review was conducted, along with 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 parcels identified as essential for salmon habitat cannot be changed without Assembly approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission hereby recommends Assembly approval of the land classification contained in Exhibit A.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission
this 18th day of May, 2026.



Richard Allen, Chair

ATTEST



Lacie Olivieri, Planning Clerk

(SEAL)

YES: Fonov, Carpenter, Allen, McCabe

NO: None



Land Classification Casefile MSB008272

Deshka Cold Water Refugia

Exhibit A: Parcels List

#	Tax ID	Acres	TRS	Parcel ID	Existing Classification	Proposed Classification
1	5887S23T00F	12.4	S 19N06W23	88810	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
2	5887S23T00B	37.12	S 19N06W23	68170	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
3	5887S14T00F	81.17	S 19N06W14	33720	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
4	5887S14T00D	46.2	S 19N06W14	76118	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
5	5887S14T00A	148.65	S 19N06W14	80419	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
6	5887S14T00C	90.35	S 19N06W14	43892	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
7	5887S11T00E	55.18	S 19N06W11	59752	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
8	5887S10T00B	87.88	S 19N06W10	38349	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
9	5887S03T00E	12.66	S 19N06W03	7941	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
10	5887S03T00D	135.7	S 19N06W03	84786	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
11	5887S03T00A	57.8	S 19N06W03	9950	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
12	5887S03T00C	158.62	S 19N06W03	87431	Public Rec	Watershed, Public Rec
13	20N06W34A001	356.53	S 20N06W34	62376	Land Bank	Watershed, Land Bank
14	20N06W34B001	253.18	S 20N06W34	82343	Land Bank	Watershed, Land Bank
15	20N06W27A001	284.4	S 20N06W27	2962	Land Bank	Watershed, Land Bank
16	20N06W27B002	306.1	S 20N06W27	63092	Land Bank	Watershed, Land Bank