

## Board of Fisheries Testimony

**Jessica Speed, Coordinator, Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership**

**February 24, 2017**

My name is Jessica Speed, I'm coordinator of the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership and thank you for this opportunity to speak. In your packet is a letter from the Partnership (PC #43), as well as a bi-annual progress report covering the years 2014/15. The Partnership has been addressing habitat issues in the Basin for over 10 years, and we'd like to keep board members aware of our work and updated on our collective progress.

The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership is a voluntary and non-regulatory coalition of over 60 diverse organizations that includes Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Mat-Su Borough and Alaska Salmon Alliance as well as a range of local, state, federal & tribal governments, private citizens, businesses, fishing interests, and more. All are united by a belief that thriving fish, healthy habitats and vibrant communities can co-exist in the Mat-Su.

Our efforts are guided by a strategic plan that identifies potential threats to salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin, and conservation strategies to address them.

We have provided nearly \$2.5 million for 78 salmon habitat projects in the Mat-Su since 2006, with millions more in direct match and leverage from private and public sources. Please note \$2.5 million is a corrected number from the \$700,000 found in your letter.

Here are a few Partnership highlights:

- We've increased our knowledge of juvenile salmon distribution and abundance. In the Big Lake Watershed for example we've learned that juvenile coho are widespread in summer, but overwinter in just a handful of lakes. Ensuring access between these summer and key winter areas is critical
- Fish passage has been restored at over 100 sites identified as barriers to salmon in the basin.
- In 2013 Mat-Su Borough adopted fish friendly design standards on borough roads; helping prevent creation of new fish passage barriers
- The Partnership surveyed and added over 150 miles of stream to the Anadromous Waters Catalog in the last 3 years
- Partners have protected 9,000 acres of priority salmon habitat
- We've identified 28,000 additional stream miles through improved mapping accuracy
- In November we'll host our 10th annual Salmon Symposium where over 25 presenters and 100 attendees share scientific research in the Mat-Su. We hope you'll consider attending.

Partners are making great progress. There is, however, more to do. This is why the Partnership's priority is to conserve healthy habitat before we go through great expense to restore it.

The future of salmon depends on survival at all stages of their life. Thank you for your recognition of habitat as a critical foundation for salmon. We appreciate the crucial and challenging role the Board plays, and hope that knowing more about the Partnership will be helpful.

Thank you.