

Board of Fisheries Testimony

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

February 9th, 2020

My name is Jessica Speed, and I'm coordinator of the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership. Thank you for this opportunity to speak, and your recognition of habitat as a critical foundation for healthy salmon fisheries as articulated in the Board's Sustainable Salmon Policy (5 AAC 39.222). In your packet is a letter from the Partnership (PC #31), as well as some project descriptions. The Partnership has been addressing habitat issues in the Basin for 15 years, and we'd like to keep board members aware of our work and collective progress.

The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership is a voluntary and non-regulatory coalition of 66 diverse organizations that includes Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Mat-Su Borough, and UCIDA as well as a range of local, state, federal & tribal governments, private citizens, businesses, fishing interests, and more. All share a vision of thriving salmon, healthy habitats and vibrant communities co-existing in the Mat-Su.

The future of salmon depends on survival at all stages of their life. It is well known that freshwater habitat loss and fragmentation have been some of the primary drivers in the decline of anadromous fish in the U.S. and around the world.

Because of this, over the last 14 years, we have provided nearly \$3.5 million for 96 salmon habitat projects in the Mat-Su, with millions more in project match and leverage from private and public sources.

Our efforts are guided by a strategic plan – here are a few highlights:

- Stream temperature, flow and juvenile salmon studies are increasing our understanding of, and ability to forecast future suitability of Mat-Su's broader salmon habitat in a warming climate.
- 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 barriers.
- Partners published salmon friendly development guidelines for commercial and residential development in 2018.

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

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, and its work will be helpful.

Thank you.