

## Organizational Structure and Operating Framework

The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership formed in 2005 to bring together local communities, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies, and residents to protect salmon habitat through conservation, education and restoration. Mat-Su Salmon Partners share a common vision of *thriving fish, healthy habitats, and vital communities in the Mat-Su Basin*.

The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership is a collaborative effort. This focus on a bottom-up, locally driven, voluntary and non-regulatory effort was inspired by the approach outlined in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP; [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org)). The mission of NFHAP is to “protect, restore, and enhance the nation’s fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.”

### **Organizing and Operating Principles**

The partnership formed and operates with these principles for decision-making and collaboration:

- Strive to work and make decisions by consensus;
- Ensure accountability and transparency for all Partnership activities;
- Focus Partnership activities on issues pertaining to habitat conservation - **not** fishery management allocation decisions. For purposes of the Partnership, ‘conservation’ includes land and water protection, habitat and fish passage restoration, and habitat enhancement, and the development of scientific information that informs decisions about salmon conservation;
- Apply the best available scientific information to Partnership funding and management decisions and the development and evaluation of partnership projects;
- The Partnership is a voluntary self-directed organization actively working to achieve the goals and objectives of the Strategic Action Plan.
- Individual member groups of the Partnership retain their various missions and activities and participate in the Partnership to the extent they are able to support the Partnership’s vision, mission, and strategic plans. All resource agencies who are members of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership maintain all statutory authorities and do not relinquish any of their responsibilities for managing fish and wildlife resources or budgetary responsibilities per their agency missions through partnership participation.

### **Governance**

The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership works to achieve the goals of its Strategic Action Plan through guidance from a Steering Committee and collaboration of its partners through committees and working groups. The Steering Committee establishes committees and working groups as needed. Participation on committees and working groups is open to all member organizations, except the Steering Committee, which has restrictions on membership and term limits. Established on an ad-hoc basis, working groups implement particular projects or tasks of the partnership and its plan. Four committees handle the ongoing activities of the Partnership:

## 1. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the governing body for the Partnership. The Steering Committee shall:

- Act as the guiding body for the Partnership;
- Serve as a forum and mechanism to work jointly and promote cooperation to restore, enhance and protect habitat that supports the fishery and aquatic resources of the Mat-Su Basin;
- Actively seek and encourage partner participation;
- Participate in outreach activities to gain additional resources to build the Partnership;
- Support partner projects through endorsements for funding, technical assistance, and recommendations for collaboration and funding sources;
- Make recommendations, as requested by granting agencies and organizations, on distribution of funds for fish habitat projects in the Mat-Su Basin;
- Prepare an annual report of Partnership activities for the partners, NFHP, and other funding organizations;
- Work with the Partnership Coordinator to achieve goals and develop an annual work plan;
- Complete, maintain, and implement a strategic action plan that prioritizes conservation strategies and locations for fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin;
- Ensure that the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership follows guidelines set forth by the NFHP;
- Convene meetings of the Partnership annually or more frequently as required;
- Coordinate with other NFHP Partnerships (FHPs) where there is geographic overlap with species and habitats;
- Establish committees and working groups as needed to implement the strategies of the Strategic Action Plan.

The Steering Committee is structured to be consistent in composition with the National Fish Habitat Board with representation from local, state, and federal governments, conservation, fisheries interests, and Native Alaskans. The Steering Committee is comprised of nine seats. The four government seats are permanent to maintain continuity at a governmental level. The Native Alaskan, Conservation, and three At-large seats rotate to bring in local interests and new perspectives. The geographic boundary of the partnership is coincident with that of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, which is the local government with the broadest influence on local habitat management. The seats on the Steering Committee are:

1. Local government: Matanuska-Susitna Borough
2. State fisheries management: Alaska Department of Fish and Game
3. Federal fisheries management: US Fish and Wildlife Service
4. Federal fisheries management: National Marine Fisheries Service
5. Partnership Administration: This is a permanent seat held by the organization that employs the Partnership Coordinator and manages partnership finances other than NFHP grant funds. This seat has no term limits and changes when these responsibilities are transferred to another organization.
6. Native Alaskan representative: Tribal, corporate, or non-profit Native Alaska organization. This is a two-year seat without term limits.
7. – 9. Three At-large seats: Organizations that have been active in the Partnership or with local fish habitat conservation are encouraged to apply for these seats. The At-large seats are for two-year terms with a limit of two consecutive terms. Organizations may

reapply after a one-year break.

The Steering Committee solicits interest in the Native Alaskan and At-large seats in the fall. Interested organizations submit a letter indicating why they would like to be on the Steering Committee and committing to participating. Sitting Steering Committee members fill the open seats in time for new members to participate in the January meeting. Committee members who are reapplying for seats cannot participate in the discussion or decision making for filling their seat. If there are not sufficient applications to fill expiring At-large seats, organizations in those seats may reapply. To stagger committee turn-over, seats are filled on the following schedule:

- Terms starting January odd years (e.g. 2015): Native Alaskan, one At-large seat
- Terms starting January even years (e.g. 2014): two At-large seats

Steering Committee uses the following operating procedures:

- The committee meets bimonthly on the 2nd Tuesday afternoon of odd months in Palmer. These meetings shall be open to all partners and the public. The steering committee may also meet at other times and may change meeting times and days to accommodate committee members and business to be covered. Members may attend in person or via telephone.
- Positions of Facilitator and Notetaker shall rotate by meeting among Steering Committee members.
- Five member organizations constitute a quorum, and decisions will be made by consensus.
- If a member organization has not attended three consecutive Steering Committee meetings either in person or by teleconference (including special meetings set up between regular bimonthly meetings), the Steering Committee shall ask that organization to find another staff person to attend meetings or to withdraw from the Steering Committee. If an organization leaves the Steering Committee during its terms, the Steering Committee shall solicit interest in a process similar to filling At-large seats. The organization selected shall fill out the remainder of the seat's term and be eligible to reapply for two full-length terms.

## **2. Outreach Committee**

This committee works to build the partnership through outreach to potential partners, supporters, and funders. Activities include creating and contributing to Partnership media including web site, newsletters and annual reports.

## **3. Salmon Symposium Committee**

This committee is responsible for planning the annual Mat-Su Salmon Science and Conservation Symposium, traditionally a two-day event held in the fall. The committee meets as needed, primarily by teleconference, to develop the agenda, select speakers, and manage logistics of the event.

## **4. Science and Data Committee**

This committee ensures that the Partnership's efforts have a strong science foundation, including development of the Strategic Action Plan and decisions about allocating project funds. Members of this group are biologists, hydrologists, and ecologists from partner organizations. This committee acts as liaison with the NFHB Science and Data Committee and assists with development of the national assessment for Alaska. This committee also consults and advises partner organizations who are implementing science and data strategies in the Strategic Action

Plan.

### **Partner Organizations**

The Partners will include agencies, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, businesses, Native Alaska entities, and private citizens.

The Partners shall:

- Promote conservation of fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin;
- Work to meet Partnership goals by contributing funds, people, equipment, or access to shared activities;
- Attend annual meetings of the Partnership;
- Serve on Partnership committees and working groups;
- Be listed on all Partnership publications;
- Endorse and support the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan
- Be eligible for funding that comes through the Partnership to implement the Strategic Action Plan, if eligible by the criteria of the funding source.

### **Coordinator**

A Mat-Su Partnership Coordinator would assist the Steering Committee in accomplishing goals and objectives, provided that funding becomes available to support that position. The coordinator would provide primary staff support to the Steering Committee. He/she would be responsible for disseminating information, coordinating meetings, coordinating and facilitating overall implementation of actions and projects of the Partnership, outreach activities, and pursuing funding and grant opportunities. The coordinator would be employed and provided office support by one or more of the member agencies or organizations.

Until funding is available for the partnership to hire a coordinator, The Nature Conservancy shall serve as interim coordinator in the following capacity: coordinate and support steering committee and other Partnership meetings, produce a quarterly newsletter, manage the Partnership mailing list, and act as primary contact with NFHB and other fish habitat partnerships.

### **Project Endorsement**

The Steering Committee identified three scenarios under which the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership would conceivably provide advice or make recommendations on projects: (1) allocation of funding made available through NFHAP; (2) periodic reviews of ongoing projects, and (3) other funding opportunities, e.g. State Wildlife Grant. This section explains the Partnership's role under the third scenario.

The Steering Committee will review proposed projects within or affecting the Mat-Su Basin. Proposed projects may be submitted by any Partner organization. The Steering Committee will consider approving submitted projects and decide whether or not to approve the project on its merits. The Steering Committee will not endorse specific grant proposals. However, following Steering Committee approval, projects may be submitted for funding under any program(s). This allows the approved project to be submitted, if an agency chooses, as part of a proposal(s) for consideration by any number of grant agencies and allows time for the Steering Committee to review requests. In this manner, the Steering Committee envisions serving as a clearinghouse for potential project and grant opportunities.

The Steering Committee will also assist Partner organizations in developing projects. For example, the Steering Committee could direct people or organizations with project ideas, as opposed to fully developed projects, to the next step for development. The next step might be a technical expert, an agency with experience with the type of project idea, or a funding opportunity.

Projects submitted for approval or assistance must comply with the five criteria listed below. If a project submitted fails any one of these criteria, it will not be approved by the Steering Committee. Projects must:

1. directly apply to conservation of or increasing knowledge of fish and/or fish habitat
2. affect the Mat-Su Basin
3. address the goals and strategic actions of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership Strategic Action Plan
4. be consistent with the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan
5. be apolitical in nature

The following information should be submitted for each project:

- Date submitted:
- Project name and location:
- Lead organization and contact information:
- Brief description (not to exceed one page):
- Funding source(s) anticipated and status:
- Potential for Mat-Su Salmon Partnership involvement and how the project helps achieve partnership goals
- Other information deemed important by the proposer:

The Steering Committee will endorse projects by consensus and will try to review projects within three weeks of receiving all of the information listed above. The endorsement will follow the format shown in Attachment 1. The Steering Committee will re-assess this process for project endorsement if it proves too time consuming.

## Attachment 1: Project Endorsement Template Letter

Name of Project Proponent  
Proposing Agency  
Address

Dear :

The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership formed in 2005 to bring together local communities, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies, and residents to prevent the negative impacts that development could have on salmon habitat. Mat-Su Salmon Partners share a common vision of *thriving fish, healthy habitats, and vital communities in the Mat-Su Basin*. The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership is a collaborative effort. This focus on a bottom-up, locally driven, voluntary and non-regulatory effort was inspired by the approach outlined in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP; [www.fishhabitat.org](http://www.fishhabitat.org)). The mission of NFHAP is to “protect, restore, and enhance the nation’s fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.”

In 2008 the partnership completed a Strategic Action Plan that outlined goals for protecting and restoring salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin. Implementation of the plan and achievement of its goals will happen through efforts of partner organizations, like [Proposing Agency]. This project to [fill in project title or objective] addresses goals of the partnership that are identified in the plan. Specifically, this project will address the plan’s goal to [fill in plan goal or action that was identified in the application]. In addition, this project increases conservation of or knowledge of fish and/or fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin and is consistent with the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

Please consider this letter an endorsement from the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership of [fill in project title}. We look forward to working with you on this project and wish you success in finding funding.

*Steering Committee signature*

**Steering Committee Member Name**

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership

## **Attachment 2: Steering Committee Organizations**

### **2006:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mike Roy  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith

### **2007:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, John DeLapp  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden (At-large)  
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large)

### **2008:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden (At-large)  
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large)

### **2009:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden  
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large)  
AlaskChem Engineering, Ralph Hulbert (At-large)

### **2010:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden  
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large, term end 2010)  
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2011)  
Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, Catherine Inman (At-large, term end 2011)

**2011:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden-Winnestaffer  
Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, Jeff Davis (At-large, term end 2012)  
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2011)  
Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, Catherine Inman (At-large, term end 2011)

**2012:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bill Rice  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Sue Rodman  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Winnestaffer  
Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, Jeff Davis (At-large, term end 2012)  
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2013)  
Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District, Laura Allen (At-large, term end 2014)

**2013:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bill Rice  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Eric Rothwell  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Roger Harding  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Winnestaffer  
Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, Jeff Davis (At-large, term end 2014)  
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2013)  
Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District, Laura Allen (At-large, term end 2014)

**2014:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bill Rice  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Erika Ammann  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Roger Harding  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Winnestaffer  
Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, Jeff Davis (At-large, term end 2014)  
Envision Mat-Su, Liz Robinson (At-large, term end 2015)  
Alaska Salmon Alliance, Arni Thomson (At-large, term end 2015)

**2015:**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Erika Ammann  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Roger Harding  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jon Gerken  
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District, Christy Cincotta



Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Winnestaffer  
Alaska Salmon Alliance, Arni Thomson (At-large, term end 2015)

**2016:**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Erika Ammann  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker  
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tracy Smith  
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District, Christy Cincotta  
Native Village of Eklutna, Lee Stephan  
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Winnestaffer  
Alaska Salmon Alliance, Arni Thomson (At-large, term end 2017)

**2017:**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Erika Ammann  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Brianne Blackburn  
The Nature Conservancy, Jim DePasquale  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Gillian O'Doherty  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trent Liebich  
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District, Christy Cincotta  
Native Village of Eklutna, Lee Stephan (At-large, term end 2017)  
Alaska Salmon Alliance, Arni Thomson (At-large, term end 2017)  
The Alaska Center, Amy O'Connor (At-large, term end 2018)

**2018:**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Erika Ammann  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Brianne Blackburn  
The Nature Conservancy, Jim DePasquale  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Jess Johnson  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trent Liebich  
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District, Christy Cincotta  
The Alaska Center, Amy O'Connor (At-large, term end 2018)  
Native Village of Eklutna, Marc Lamoreaux (At-large, term end 2019)  
Thomas Cappiello (At-large, term end 2019)