



2025 Mat-Su Salmon Science  
& Conservation Symposium



# Mat-Su Borough Fish & Wildlife Commission Update

Andy Couch  
Vice Chair

# Quick Facts: MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission



## 01



9-member **volunteer board**, appointed by the MSB Mayor; created to advise the MSB Assembly on fish & wildlife related issues

## 02



Members with **pertinent expertise** including a former State biologist, hunting & fishing guides, 2 former commercial fishermen, and 2 current MSB Assembly members

## 03



Regular **monthly meetings September to May**, with public participation encouraged

# MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission Alumni

## Thank you for your service!



**Larry Engel**



**Howard Delo**

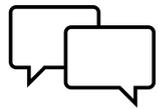
## 2025 Highlights



Waterbody Setback Work



Legislative Priorities & Funding



Engagement with State & Federal Managers and Elected Officials



Fish Passage



Stock of Concern Designations





## Waterbody Setback Ordinance Update



- Waterbody Setback Advisory Board established in 2023
- Advisory Board Planning Commission Finalized Recommendations - Resolution 25-10
- Planning Commission – August 2025
  - Motion to pass resolution failed unanimously
  - Passed resolution recommending new task force
  - Proposed ordinance to make noncompliant structures eligible for grandfather rights

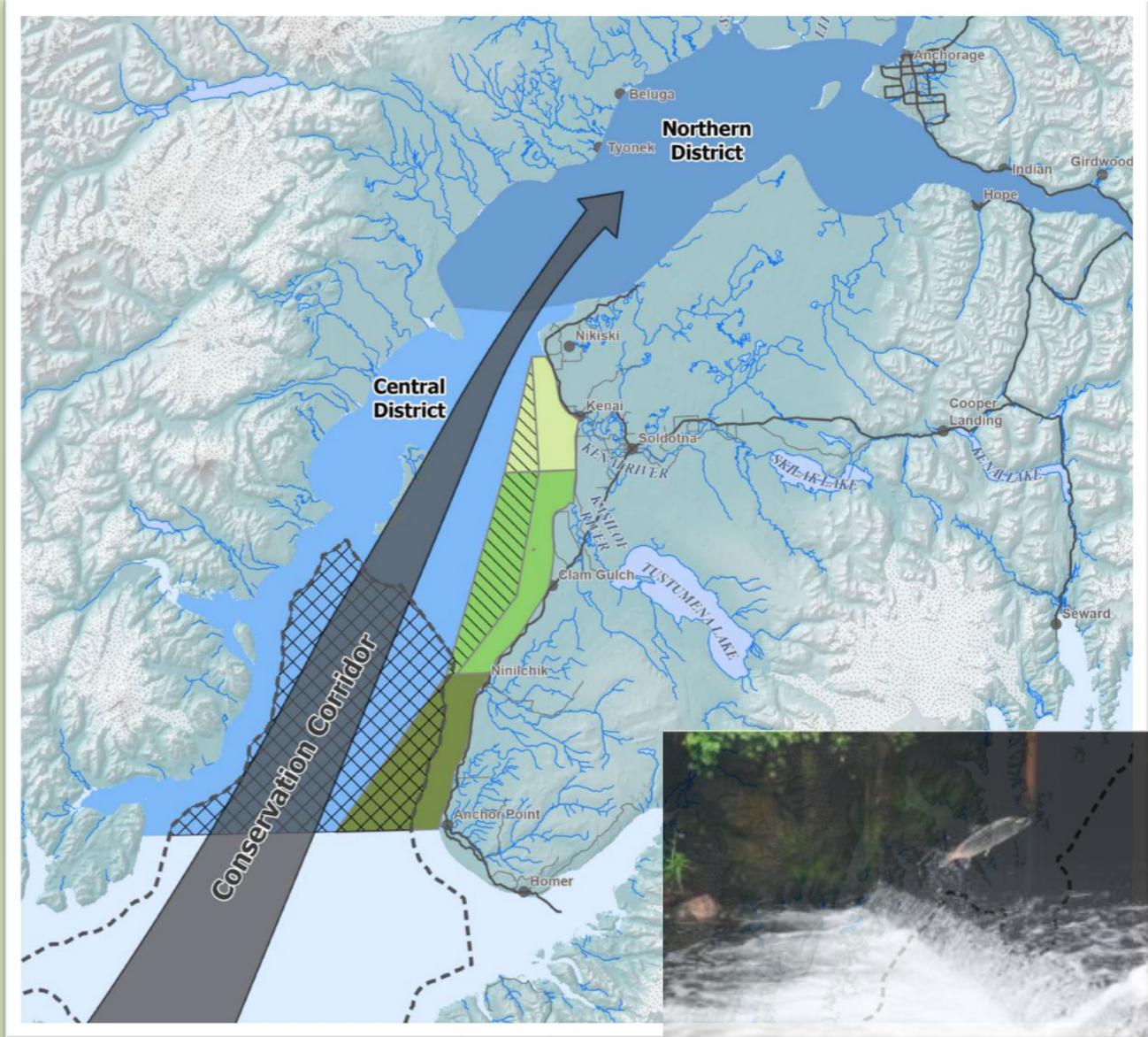
# FY26 State Legislative Priorities & Funding

## Resolution 25-072

- Support collaboration to reduce bycatch
- **Maintain funding and support for fish weirs and explore sonar capabilities**
- **Fully match Federal funds from license fees**
- **Maintain the conservation corridor Ensure adequate ADF&G staffing**
- **Support designation of Susitna king salmon, Deshka coho salmon, and Little Susitna coho salmon at the appropriate stock of concern levels**

### Request \$2.5 million for:

- **Update Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan for Upper Cook Inlet**
- **Support ongoing fish passage work**
- **Update to Economic Contributions of Sportfishing study**
- **Maintain project and staff funding**



# Engagement with State & Federal Managers and Elected Officials



## State Game



- Annual meeting with ADF&G
- Board of Game testimony and representation

## State Fisheries



- Annual meeting with ADF&G
- Board of Fish

## Federal Fisheries



- Outreach to NOAA / NFMS managers to build awareness of Upper Cook Inlet concerns

## Elected Officials



- Work with Assembly
- Coordination with state delegation
- Letter from mayor to governor

# Annual Fisheries Meeting & Annual Game Meeting

## Fisheries Meeting Highlights

- Salmon stock status
- Escapement levels
- Study results
- Public participation

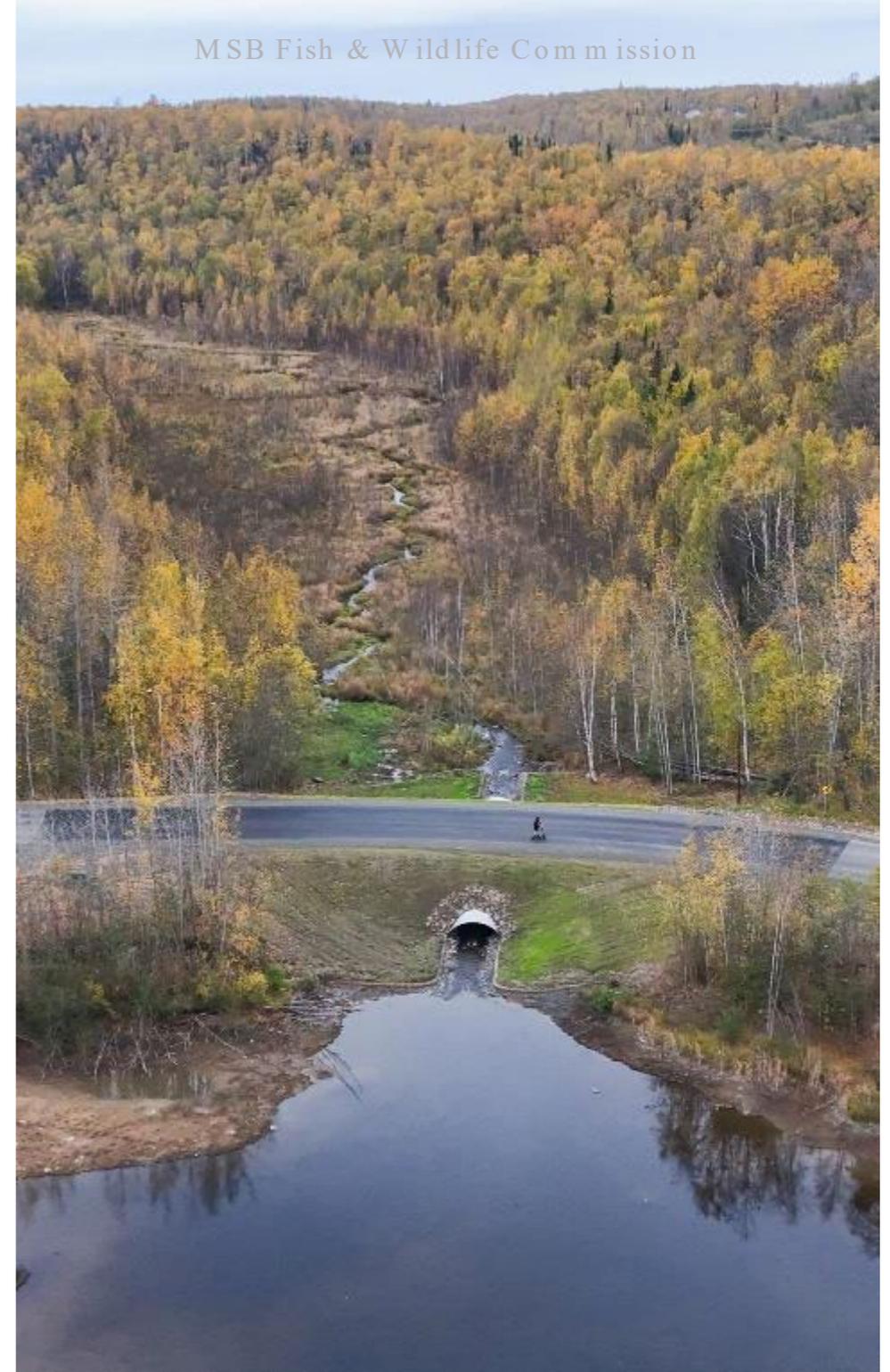
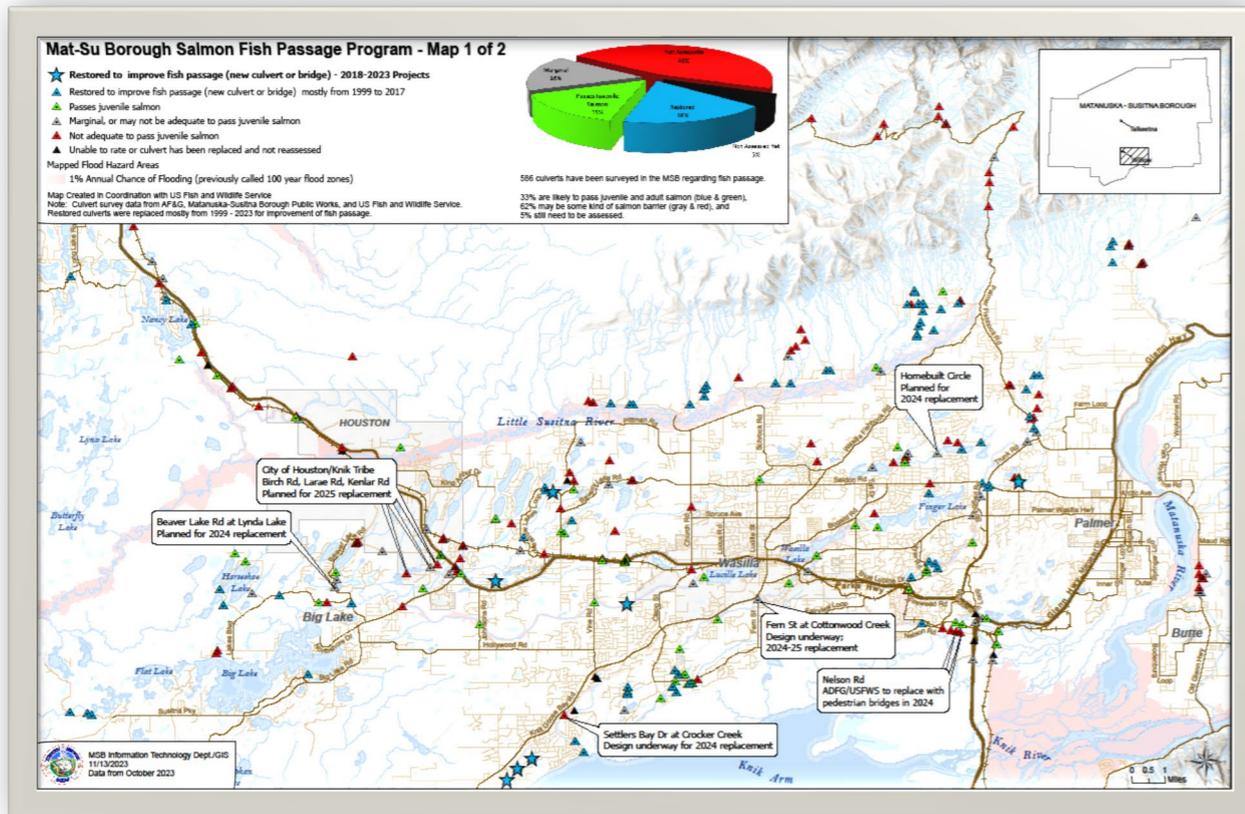
## Game Meeting Highlights

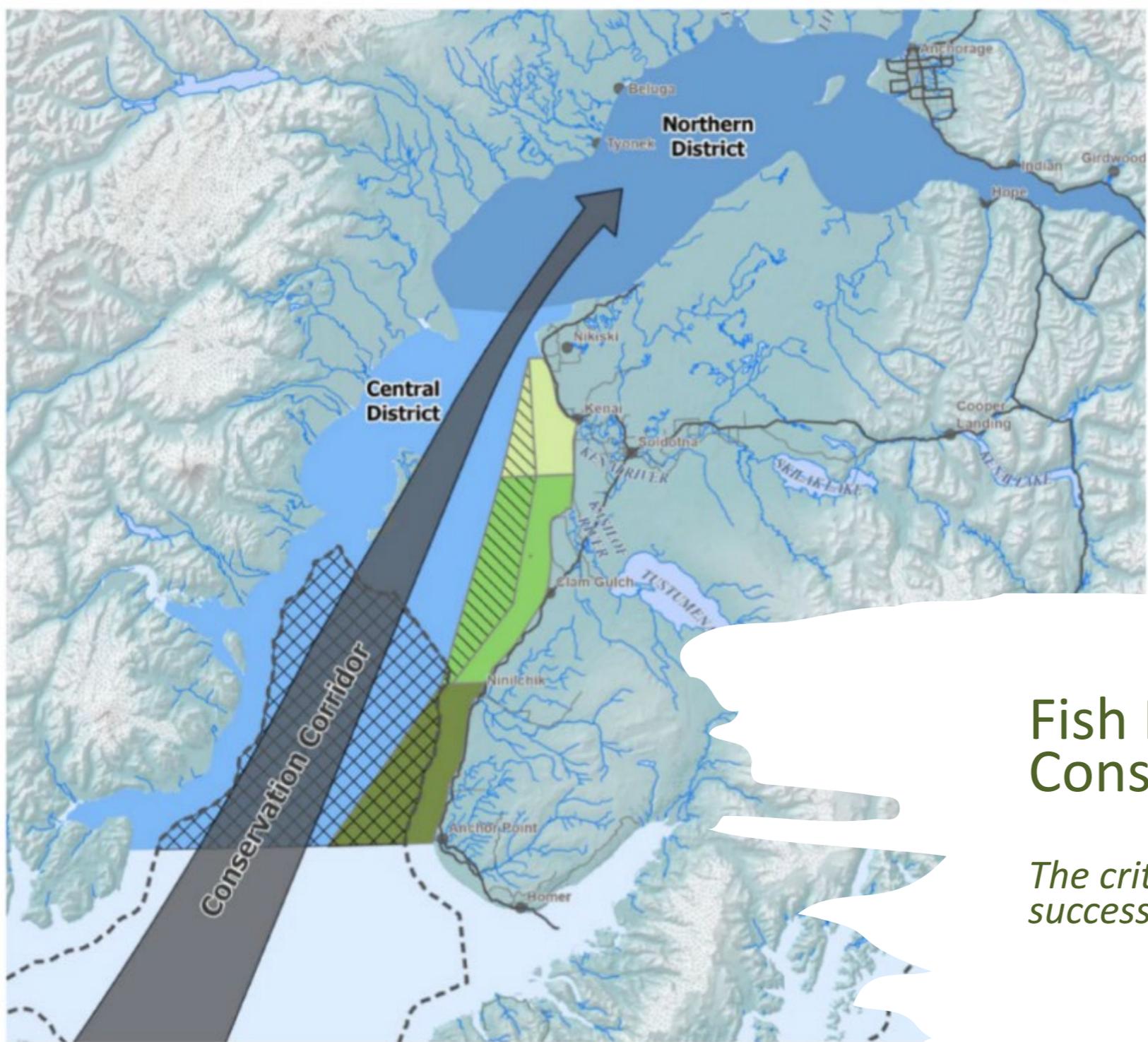
- Population status
- Recent harvest results
- Habitat issues
- Social / User Group issues



# Fish Passage Projects

- \$20+ million to improve fish passage in the MSB
- 2025 projects at Caswell and Birch Creek
- Projects led by Chickaloon, Eklutna, and Tyonek
- ADOT Projects





## Fish Passage: Maintaining the Conservation Corridor

*The critical first step in fish passage project success!*

# Stock of Concern Designations

Deshka River Coho

East Susitna Chinook

Current Stocks of Management Concern

Potential Stocks of Management Concern

## Susitna Drainage Chinook

Alexander Creek Chinook

Little Susitna River Coho and Chinook

Theodore River Chinook

Chuitna River Chinook

**A stock of yield concern** is defined in 5 AAC 39.222(l)(42) as "a concern arising from a chronic inability, despite the use of specific management measures, to maintain specific yields, or harvestable surpluses, above a stock's escapement needs; a yield concern is less severe than a management concern." The SSFP defines chronic inability as "the continuing or anticipated inability to meet expected yields over a 4 to 5 year period."

**A stock of management concern** is defined in 5 AAC 39.222(l)(21) as "a concern arising from a chronic inability, despite the use of specific management measures, to maintain escapements for a salmon stock within the bounds of the SEG, BEG, OEG, or other specified management objectives for the fishery; a management concern is not as severe as a conservation concern."

# Looking ahead to 2026 -27



Maintain Conservation Corridor and Intent



Prepare for Board of Fisheries Meeting



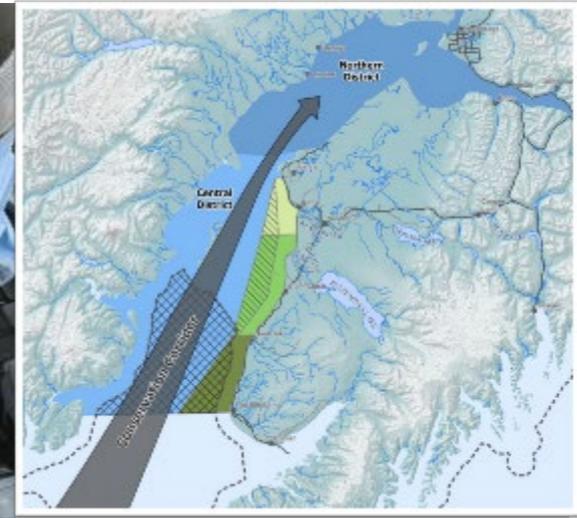
Stock of Concern Designations



Continued Advocacy with the Local, State & Federal Agencies and Elected Officials



# Board of Fisheries Upper Cook Inlet Fin fish 2026-27 Cycle



## Timeline

1

April 10, 2026  
Board of Fisheries Proposals Due

2

October 28-29, 2026  
Work Session (ACRs, cycle  
organization, Stocks of Concern)

3

March 4 – 15, 2027  
Upper Cook Inlet Finfish  
Meeting

# Board of Fisheries Upper Cook Inlet Fin fish 2026-27 Cycle Defining Goals



## 2024 Commission Goals

1

Maintain and enhance the Conservation Corridor in the drift gillnet fishery management plan.

2

Continue conservative management practices which provide protection for current and formerly identified Stocks of Concern.

3

Increase in-river returns of Coho salmon to Northern Cook Inlet river systems.

4

Review and evaluate the existing Chinook salmon management plans and strategies to determine if they adequately address the conservation of the early run king salmon in northern Cook Inlet.

5

Personal use fishery: maintain or extend personal use fishing opportunity for Alaskan residents fishing the Northern Cook Inlet who choose to harvest salmon with net gear.

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# Participation Opportunities

- **Attend the Next Meeting:** Dec 11 @ 4:00 pm, Main Borough Building
- Regular meetings second Thursday of the month, September - May
- Visit the [MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission Website](https://matsu.gov/boards/msb-fish-and-wildlife-commission) for more resources (<https://matsu.gov/boards/msb-fish-and-wildlife-commission>)
- Contact MSB Staff – Paul Clark, [paul.clark@matsugov.us](mailto:paul.clark@matsugov.us), 907-861-8556

## Questions?



Thank you!

—  
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