



Steering Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 9, 2025 1:30 – 4 pm

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Habitat, Suite 6, 1800 Glenn Highway, Palmer

If joining via Teams: [Join the meeting now](#)

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AGENDA

Facilitator: Michael Mazzacavallo (ADFG) **Notetaker:** Anna Senecal (FWS)

Attendance: Mike Campfield (MSB), Grace Fahrney (ADFG), Jessica Speed (TU), Erin Larson (UAA), Marc Lamareaux, Cody Beus (Knik Tribe), Marykate Swenarton (TU), Natalie Velez (NVE), Melis Coady (SRC)

Partnership Business

- Approve July 2025 Steering Committee meeting notes (5 min) *[Draft July meeting notes](#)
 - Approved.
- Quote Submissions: Strategic Plan Update (30 min) (Jessica)
 - Discussion and decision
 - 4 proposals to facilitate partnership engagement/outreach and Strategic Action Plan revisions: Foraker, Respec, Denali Daniels and Agnew::Beck (A::B)
 - 4 Steering Committee members completed scoring, scoring consistent across reviewers. Rank order: A::B, at the top.
 - A::B has a history of working with the Partnership, and sister orgs/agencies (science to conservation outcomes meeting facilitation, fish passage meeting facilitation, FWS and TTCD strategic plan facilitation)
 - Unanimous decision to award the contract to A::B
 - **Action:** Jessica to reach out to A::B
 - **Action:** prior to reaching out to them, it might be nice to confirm schedule, chat about SOW – schedule follow up Steering Committee meeting to flesh out schedule, scope of work, what is SC responsible for, what is A::B responsible for? How much time does the facilitation team need for the engagement event at the Symposium?
- New National Fish Habitat Partnership project funding timeline (20 min) *[Timeline and notes](#)
 - Discussion and possible decision
 - Timeline shortens from 18 to 12 months with these new changes

- Last roughly five years, RFP opens Dec, closes Feb, review proposals in March, decision and ranked list in March. Project list submitted to National Board for consideration and ranking. Tend to receive around \$300K annually
 - Congressional reauthorization comes with a renewed timeline (most likely, decisions are not 100% finalized). Proposed new end date for National board submission: mid November. Working back: Mid July – Aug 1 RFP opens, closes Oct 1, review for 1.5 month, ranked list due Nov 15. Money is dispersed similar timeline. (Noted symposium planning and field schedule conflicts). Updated RFP report submission deadline will be November 2026.
 - Discussion as to whether to open the RFP in the spring, leave it open until August 1. This leaves it open for a long time. Groups that submit early don't know if they are successful for a long period of time, which is the current system limitation. SC meetings Jan, March, May.
 - Could open the RFP in May and leave open through Oct 1 to give applicants flexibility.
 - Preferred alt: open in May, close mid Sept, submit end of October to give space for Symposium.

- Housekeeping: Steering Committee meeting schedule (*15 min*)
 - November meeting (11/11) is a holiday. Alternative date? Wed before symposium? Or last three hours on Friday? Or a day in December?
 - **Action:** revisit SC date after touching base with A::B re: schedule to see if we need to meet before or after the Symposium.
 - **Action:** consider SC social event at or immediately before the symposium w/ formal SC meeting w/ A::B follow up in December.

- 2025 Mat-Su Salmon Symposium: Update and input (*20 min*) *[Symposium notes](#)
 - Discussion
 - Mike, Erin, Grace on symposium committee
 - Keynote speaker identified and registration open. Additional keynotes may be added depending on registration
 - Awards and recognition? Matt LaCroix for waterbody setback committee work in Partnership seat. 1.5 years spent on this project, 100+ hours. Can request a letter from the Board, waive meeting registration.
 - Question from Erin about formalizing an awards/recognition process that people can submit nominations for in the future. Is this an annual award? Or an opportunistic recognition of exemplary work and/or career achievement.

- Introduction to Cook Inlet Beluga Recovery Coalition, Nicole Schmitt/Alaska Wildlife Alliance (*20 min*)
 - Introduction and opportunity for discussion
 - Mandy Migura outreach, Nicole Schmitt ED AK Wildlife Alliance.
 - Life history: whales are in the inlet year-round. Population ~300, down from 1300 in 1970. Low fertility. Congregate in Turnagain arm and Susitna R. delta. Survey is conducted in June. 1970's, used to be distributed throughout range. Now, concentrated in Susitna R., corresponding with strong salmon and eulachon runs. Calving ground. Tie to Mat-Su geography.

- Beluga focused groups have identified two priorities over the past two years for program focus and outreach:
 - Prey availability (focus on upper and mid Cook Inlet eulachon and salmon)
 - Contaminants and pollution
- Looking at identifying 2026 work plan in support of two ID'd priorities. Interested in cross walking FHP strategic action plan w/ Beluga Coalition.
- Interest in identifying overlapping interest, what could this look like?
 - 2026 water quality summit (repeat of 2023) – is it needed and helpful? What would the focus and content look like, would be great to have input from the FHP. TIDBIT update, asking for input from Symposium goes on potential water quality summit themes.
 - Linking fish habitat and spawning and habitat restoration, also invasive spp (pike) to prey availability.
- From Jessica: invitation to present at the Symposium, also participate in the MSSHP strategic planning work.

**5-10 min break as needed*

Updates (20 min)

- National updates
- Partner updates
 - ADFG: culverts replaced Tyonek (2), Chickaloon (2, one of which is a removal), stream bank restoration workshop location TBD, any suggestions? FHWA money awarded to DOT, working through environmental.
 - MSB: Birch Creek started. AKSSF 49th street culvert application. Still awaiting communications from FHWA and Knik tribe on Meadow Creek
 - NVE: Land env coordinator hired in May (Natalie, yay!), lead field tech (Alice) hired thereafter to conduct salmon surveys, deploy temp loggers, minnow trapping, eDNA, interested in potential habitat restoration (will connect with ADFG)
 - SRC: EPA grant funding for watershed surveys/planning paused, in litigation. Following progress of proposed West Su access road. FOIA 404 documents received. Alexander Ck to whisky bravo air strip 138 culverts, 35 drainage, 103 designed for AOP. Consolidated information available on SRC website.
 - TU: TU awarded NOAA funding for coastal fish habitat partnerships for AIS outreach education grant in partnership with Mat-Su and Kenai FHPs. Looking on making progress and telling stories on invasive species in south central.
 - UAA: wrapped up field validation sampling for optimization model for AWC work for future Mat-Su surveys. Found sites that are not currently mapped that offer good habitat. Finishing temp monitoring sampling in September. Here to support anyone submitting temp data to AK temp. Please reach out with any questions related to temperature monitoring.
 - Knik: progress on lower Tyonek (BIG CULVERT!!) planted over 700 trees and shrubs and hydroseeded. Vegetation looks good.
 - FWS: all FY25 NFHP funding has been approved and processed. Yay! Fish passage money seems to be continuing to flow while capacity dwindles. Anna is leaving the Fish Passage team at FWS to lateral to the Office of Subsistence Management. Trent Liebich will be stepping up to the Steering Committee. Thank you and all the best to Anna, and welcome back Trent!

Committee Updates (5 min) *Committee written updates below.

- Science and Data – see summary. Fall meeting Oct/Nov
- Symposium Planning – will follow up. Will have a list of volunteer roles.
- Outreach
 - 9/11 site tour coordination
 - Meeting Palmer Visitor Center 9:45, see logistics email (will resend)
 - Volunteer lunch pick up – Cody! Yum!
 - Print 35 copies of the handout – Erin 😊
 - Shuttle coord'n
 - Anchorage shuttle: Grace and Erin (8:30 departure, back by 5)
 - Palmer shuttle: Natalie +1, Melis +1, Cody

Upcoming Events and Relevant Dates:

- NFHP coordinators workshop and Board meeting, September 16 – 18, 2025 Minneapolis
- Kenai River King Salmon Conservation Community Forum, October 25th, 9-2pm2025
- Existing Condition Assessment Workshop - September 22-26, 2025
- Stream Quantification Tool Field Camp - September 29-October 3, 2025
- Alaska Invasive Species Workshop, October 28-30, 2025, Anchorage

Next meeting: Tuesday, November 11th, 2025.

Facilitator: Laurie Stuart **Notetaker:** Erin Larson

Committee Updates (find list of committee members [here](#))

- Science and Data
 - Did not meet.
 - John Reed/USGS stepped down from committee.
- Outreach
 - Did not meet.
 - Submitted public comment letter and oral testimony at August 4th Mat-Su Borough Planning Commission meeting related to proposed updates to waterbody setbacks in the Mat-Su Borough.
 - The Partnership will be hosting its summer site tour for community leaders September 11th, 2025, Palmer to Sutton. The tour will highlight examples of tribal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funded projects and broader Chickaloon Village Traditional Council salmon stewardship efforts.
- Symposium Planning
 - Planning committee convened. Vanessa von Biela/USGS, Dan Rinella/USFWS and Jeff Fisher/AKDEC joined committee.
 - Symposium is Thursday and Friday November 20th and 21st, Palmer Depot.
 - Registration and call for abstracts will open ASAP. Please register and help spread the word.
 - Confirmed 2025 keynote speaker – Rick Thoman, climate specialist at the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Will share *Mat-Su's Changing Environment: Connecting the past, present and future*.

- Adhoc working groups and/or initiatives
 - Waterbody Setback Advisory Board

Matt LaCroix has been the Partnership’s representative on the Mat-Su Borough’s (MSB) Waterbody Setback Advisory Board who was tasked to review and recommend any changes to MSB code relating to waterbody setbacks– in particular how to deal with structures built in violation of waterbody setback code. As of March 2025, this board’s duties are considered complete, and the board dissolved as an entity. The draft ordinance the board developed continues to move through the Borough process – planning commission in August, anticipating to assembly in September, 2025. Matt LaCroix did an incredible job on this committee who served well over a year – well beyond the agreed upon term.
 - Science to conservation outcomes pilot.

Sue Mauger presented to the Mat-Su Borough Assembly on August 5th about her Deshka River stream temperature science and identification of cold water refugia as key Deshka River habitat in a changing climate. This is follow-up from the MSB FWC’s resolution to recommend that the Assembly classify Deshka River cold water refugia that Sue has identified as “watershed lands”. This would simply flag these areas as important when considering land management activity.