Thursday November 19, 2026

Palmer Community Center (Depot), 610 S. Valley Way, Palmer

8:30 Registration

9:00 Welcome

Erin Larson (Member, Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership Steering Committee, Alaska Center for Conservation Science)

Wilson Justin (Member, Alaska Pacific University Alaska Native Elders Council)

9:30 Keynote Address: *Co-Designing the Future of Tech: How Partnership, Co-development and AI are Scaling Salmon Conservation* • Dr. William Atlas, Wild Salmon Center

Introduction: Vanessa von Biela (U.S. Geological Survey)

Kyle Rosendale, Fisheries Biologist with Sitka Tribe will join remotely for the Q and A session directly following the keynote talk to offer additional local perspective on the Redoubt Lake weir project.

10:45 Networking Break

11:15 Salmon Habitat Mapping/Where Are the Salmon?

Moderator: Ben Americus

Here Be Dragons: At the Edge of Mapping Freshwater Fish Habitat in Alaska • Benjamin Meyer (Kenai Watershed Forum)

Insights on Local Salmon Spawning and Rearing Habitats • Robert Howard (Knik River Watershed Group)

11:45 LUNCH

12:45 The Deshka River as a Model for Warming Salmon Streams: What Have We Learned?

This session will summarize some of the focused climate research occurring on the Deshka River, historically the Mat-Su's most productive Chinook salmon stream. A range of short presentations will share insights into the cultural importance of the river and some key takeaways from the science.

Overview of the Deshka River and Why it was Selected as a Model System for Research • Dan Rinella (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Dena'ina History in the Deshka River • Kevin Toothaker (Knik Tribe)

Recollections of a Sportfishing Guide • Andy Couch (Fishtale River Guides)

Trends in Deshka River Salmon Abundance • Cole Weaver (Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

Pike Predation of Juvenile Salmon • Ben Rich (University of Alaska Fairbanks)

Juvenile Salmon Growth and the Importance of Cool-water Inputs • Dan Rinella (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

How Hot Is Too Hot for Deshka River Salmon? • Vanessa von Biela (U.S. Geological Survey)

Is Heat Stress a Problem for Adult Chinook Salmon in the Warm Deshka River? • Ashley Stanek (U.S. Geological Survey)

Science to Conservation Outcomes: Building Habitat Resiliency • Erin Larson and Anjanette Steer (Alaska Center for Conservation Science)

2:00 Networking Break

Meet Palmer High School visual arts students during the break and learn more about their salmon-themed artwork on display at the Palmer Depot.

2:15 Tidbits

Moderator: Melis Coady (Susitna River Coalition)

Sign up at the registration desk to present a 3-minute project summary or announcement. If you have a slide or two to project (maximum 2), please load them by the end of lunch.

2:45 Water Quality

Moderator: Kendra Zamzow (Chickaloon Village Traditional Council)

Alaska Clean Water Actions Program Overview, Projects in Action, and DEC Water Quality Online Resources • Jeff Fisher (Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation)

Rain Events and Snow Melt Contribute Lethal Pulses of 6PPD-Quinone to Anchorage Waterways • Brian DiMento (University of Alaska Anchorage)

3:15 Poster Session

Moderator: Tim Troll (Southwest Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership)

Poster authors will be on hand to answer questions about their work.

Restoring Tsidek'etna, Reviving Chinook: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Modern Incubation Techniques • Gina Bodnar (Chickaloon Village Traditional Council)

Living Next to a Salmon Stream: Updating a Landowner Resource • Ryan Thomas (Great Land Trust)

Mobile Northern Pike Suppression in Whiskey, Hewitt, and Shell Lakes, Susitna River Basin (2024–2026) • Danny Tanis (Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association)

Overview and Future of Cost Share Work in the Mat-Su Basin • Joe Lyon (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and Grace Fahrney (Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

Prioritizing Salmon Habitat: Updating and Expanding a Science-Based Prioritization • Amanda Hults (Great Land Trust)

Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species: Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination at the Alaska-Canada Border, May–September 2026 • Michael Foley (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Kim Holzer (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and Emma Parker (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

3:45 Announcements and Adjourn

Andrea James (Chickaloon Village Traditional Council)

4:00 Evening social

Matanuska Brewing Company, 513 S. Valley Way, Palmer

Join colleagues, Thursday's keynote speaker Will Atlas, and new and old friends for an evening of good conversation. The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership is providing appetizers, and a cash bar will be available until 7pm, when the social ends.

Friday November 20, 2026

Palmer Community Center (Depot), 610 S. Valley Way, Palmer

8:30 Registration

9:00 Symposium Welcome
Grace Fahrney (Member, Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership Steering Committee, Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

9:15 Keynote Address: *Behind the Story: How Reporters Make News, and You Can, Too* • Amy Bushatz, Mat-Su Sentinel
Introduction: Paul Clark (Mat-Su Borough)

10:00 Comfort Break and Workshop Setup

10:15 Workshop: *On the Spot: Practicing How to Communicate with the Media* • Amy Bushatz, Mat-Su Sentinel
Moderator: Paul Clark (Mat-Su Borough)

11:00 Networking Break

11:15 Strategic Conservation and Community Stewardship
Moderator: Mike Daigneault (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
Working Together for Mat-Su Salmon: The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership's Updated Priorities
From Advocacy to Action: The Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission's Salmon Conservation Priorities • Paul Clark (Mat-Su Borough)
Citizen Science in the Susitna River Watershed • Kendra Zamzow (ba kada')
From Awareness to Action: Engaging Mat-Su Communities in Riparian Stewardship • Kelsey Anderson (RESPEC)

12:15 Lunch

1:15 Science for Proactive Conservation of Salmon Habitat
Moderator: Trent Liebich (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
Addressing Data Gaps in the West Susitna Region: Anadromous Waters Catalog Additions • Olivia Mueller (Tyonek Tribal Conservation District)

1:30 Threats to Mat-Su Salmon: Invasive Northern Pike

Moderator: Trent Liebich (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Out of Sight, Out of Mind? The Unrealized Devastation from Invasive Northern Pike • Parker Bradley (Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

Survey and Monitoring of Invasive Northern Pike • Brennan Watson (Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

Pedal to the Metal: Alexander Creek Suppression • Thomas Sitz (Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

Efforts to Prevent Pike Expansion While Maintaining Passage for Salmon and System Health • Mike Campfield (Mat-Su Borough)

2:30 Networking Break

2:45 Threats to Mat-Su Salmon: Invasive Northern Pike, Elodea & Horizon Species

Moderator: Leah Ellis (Tyonek Tribal Conservation District)

Tag-Team Invaders, Tag-Team Response: Pike Derby & Elodea Showdown • Chennery Fife & Marykate Swenarton (Trout Unlimited) and Emma Parker (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Horizon Species: Keeping New Aquatic Invasive Species Out of the Mat-Su • Marcus Geist (Alaska Center for Conservation Science) and Nicole Swenson (Tyonek Tribal Conservation District)

3:15 Tidbits

Moderator: Anjanette Steer (Alaska Center for Conservation Science)

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3:45 Conclusions

Vanessa von Biela (U.S. Geological Survey)

4:00 Adjourn