

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer, Alaska 99645

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Gabe Kitter

Bill Gamble

Kendra Zamzow

Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Regular Meeting

March 21, 2024

[Supplemental Handout – Table of Contents](#)

- [1 = MSSHP SC Call for Letters of Interest](#)
- [2 = JS & GK Legislative Visit Trip Report](#)

Physical Location of Meeting: Assembly Chambers,
DSJ Bldg, Palmer. Remote Participation: See agenda.

Planning and Land Use Department - Planning Division

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MARCH 20, 2024 BY ADMIN

Want to be more involved in the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership? Join the Steering Committee!

Three Upcoming Vacancies on the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee is the guiding body for the Partnership which brings together over 65 organizations and individuals who share a vision of thriving salmon, healthy habitats, and vibrant communities in the Mat-Su. The 10 person Steering Committee ensures that the Partnership follows guidelines set forth by the [National Fish Habitat Partnership](#) and achieves goals set out in the [Mat-Su Salmon Partnership 2019 Addendum to the Strategic Action Plan](#).

The Partnership is currently accepting applications for two at-large seats, and one local government seat. To learn more about the operations of the Partnership see [Mat-Su Salmon Partnership Structure and Operations Framework](#), and contact the Partnership coordinator with questions or to be put in touch with a Steering Committee member.

If you are interested, send a letter explaining why you want to join the Steering Committee and what you can do to help the Partnership achieve its goals. Send the letter to Jessica Speed (jessica.speed@tu.org) by May 1st, 2024.

Filed Under: [Dates and Updates](#), [News](#), [presentations](#), [Uncategorized](#)

Legislative Visits in Juneau by Jim Sykes and Gabe Kitter March 5-7, 2024

SUMMARY

We were able to meet personally with every member of the Mat-Su delegation except Sen. Shower. Everyone was supportive of our legislative funding request and said they hoped the Mat-Su delegation would maintain unanimous support. The Susitna-Yentna River basin is in Senator Shower's district and we look forward to talking with him soon.

We visited a total of 25 legislator's offices, meeting with legislators personally with the addition of some staff. In five instances we met only with legislative staff members. There seemed to be a good deal of enthusiasm and optimism that our request can be funded, but many cautioned that funding could be slim this year. Sen. David Wilson who is working on the Finance Committee capital budget was more optimistic.

We spoke about the federal takeover of Lower Cook Inlet waters and specific project needs of Chelatna weir, coho genetic information and Sockeye mark and recapture projects as priorities. We also emphasized that no one wanted to leave federal matching funds for fish passage culverts on the table. We also noted that over 1000 river miles had already been re-opened to fishing with new culverts.

We put emphasis on the fact that the Susitna-Yentna Drainage has the capable habitat to largely contribute to the strength of the Cook Inlet fishery as a whole. The main issue we have at this point is a fully funded department to be able to have the data and better manage the Northern District.

It was a fast-moving pretty concentrated visit to the Capitol. We both believe our timing was good and that it was important we were there in person. We need to keep the contacts and flow of information going as the budget may not be resolved until the end of the legislative session.

Tuesday March 5.

Jim arrived at Capitol about 2pm. Met with John Harris and got some copies of the MSB Memo describing three specific projects that we are asking for support within the 2.5 million dollar ask on our priorities. John started to make appointments with legislators.

The projects outlined were Chelatna weir, coho genetic study and the sockeye mark and recapture. Most of the rest of the 2.5 million ask would go to federal match for passage culverts. I did not have the CAPSIS request that was made by the borough as part of state priorities, but we eventually found it thanks to Former MSB Assembly Member Jody Simpson who now works for Sen David Wilson.

Senator Scott Kawaski, Resources Committee

Jim started visiting offices without appointments and Sen Scott Kawasaki was available. Jim sized up the Mat-Su situation, spoke about the EEZ and our requests to the state. Senator Kawaski is a member of Senate Resources, and was genuinely interested and supportive. He said his family would drive from Fairbanks years ago and fish at Montana Creek, where others from Fairbanks also fished.

House Speaker Cathy Tilton

When Jim stopped Speaker Tilton's office she found time to talk. She asked good questions and they were answered. The Speaker said she was supportive and said it would be helpful if all the Mat-Su delegation was firmly in support. She also recommended we talk with Representative DeLena Johnson. It was a good positive visit.

Minority Leader, Representative Calvin Schrage

He was available to chat, was interested and very supportive. He is an Anchorage Independent and was glad for the update, had good questions and found "It Takes Fish" to be interesting and helpful. A good positive visit.

Wednesday March 6Representative Kevin McCabe, Resources

Rep. McCabe is on the House Resources and has often joined our Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings and also attended the December 7 special meeting, with Fish and Game, in person. He was up to speed on most of our activities. We discussed the federal takeover of Cook Inlet EEZ, the Conservation Corridor and our proposed projects. He was definitely supportive and we had a good meeting.

Senator Matt Claman, Resources and Finance

Gabe arrived at the Capitol and joined Jim to visit with Sen. Claman, who wasn't real familiar with our issues. We explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific asks. He asked a lot of good questions. Many answers were in our "It Takes Fish" booklet. He liked the booklet and seemed to understand pretty quickly. Senator Claman was supportive and it was a positive meeting.

The House went into session at 11:00 and before we entered the gallery we ran into Rep. Sumner and asked him to introduce us. We sat in the front row, and both Reps. Johnson and Rauscher came to visit with us before the start. We were introduced along with other people in the galleries. When they got to the main agenda, Gabe continued to watch while Jim searched for lunch.

Representative David Eastman

After the session we visited Representative Eastman who was interested and asked good questions. We covered the federal takeover, the proposed projects, the Borough Requests and CAPSIS. He said he would be supportive and hoped that the rest of Mat-Su delegation would be as well. Another positive meeting.

Senate President Gary Stevens

Senator Stevens is very familiar with a lot of fisheries issues, being from Kodiak. He was not aware of the EEZ details, or our particular situation, but he grasped it very quickly, asked thoughtful questions, and felt it was very important to take a closer look at the tough situation we face. He was very supportive and visibly impressed as he thumbed through "It Takes Fish." It was a very positive meeting.

Senator Shelley Hughes

Senator Hughes is on the Alaska Food Strategy Task Force Exec Board, among other committees. She was very interested and asked good questions. We had good answers for the conceptual ones, but she also asked about some legislative and budget details we did not have, like the CAPSIS request and whether it is in the capital or operating budget. Those would have been good to know in advance, but we told her we didn't know, but would find out and get back to her. She was very supportive and also said it would be good if the entire Mat-Su delegation was together in support. It was a positive meeting, and we took a photos with Senator Hughes after we concluded.

Rep. George Rauscher, Resources

Rep. Rauscher was keenly interested about federal management and about our funding request details. He was definitely supportive and suggested getting additional resolutions of support in addition to what we already have. We didn't get to talk about the egg and milt project he was also proposing, which seems like a good idea. It was a good, positive meeting. We emailed him a copy of the booklet "It Takes Fish" shortly after the meeting.

Rep. Mike Cronk, Finance and Resources

Rep. Cronk Chairs the Fish and Game subcommittee on the Resources Committee and is also a member of the Finance Committee. His staff member, Dave Stancliff seemed to be well acquainted with fishing issues and understood our EEZ problem as well as the asks for weirs and culvert matching funds. He was very supportive and it was a positive meeting.

Thursday, March 6Senator Bill Wielechowski, Rules Chair, Resources

Senator Wielechowski wasn't real familiar with our issues. We explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific asks. He asked a lot of questions, many we could show in our "It Takes Fish" booklet. He said he used to fish Mat-Su in the previous times, but now drives to the Kenai Peninsula like so many other people who go where the fish is. He seemed to understand pretty quickly and was supportive. It was a positive meeting.

Representative Edgemon, Finance Committee, staff Laib Allensworth

He wasn't real familiar with our issues but was well acquainted with fishing in general. We explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific asks. He asked a lot of questions, many we could show in our "It Takes Fish" booklet. He seemed to understand pretty quickly and was supportive. It was a positive meeting.

Senator Forrest Dunbar, Resources

Senator Dunbar was also not real familiar with our issues. We explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific project requests. He asked a lot of questions, many we could show in our “It Takes Fish” booklet. He seemed to grasp the issues pretty quickly and was supportive. It was a positive meeting. He also mentioned the importance of the Mat Su delegation being unified in support of the request.

Representative Sumner

Representative Sumner was pretty familiar with most of our issues. We explained the latest on the EEZ, the problems and detailed our legislative requests. He understood the situation pretty quickly and was very supportive. He mentioned funding might be skinny and that Mat-Su delegation support is important. It was a positive meeting.

Senator David Wilson, Finance

While most of the legislators we visited were concerned that their might only be 50-55 million dollars for discretionary spending, Senator Wilson was more optimistic. He felt there was a good chance to get our needs funded, especially if the entire Mat-Su delegation was supportive. He is on the Finance Committee actively working on the capital budget, we hope that the needed funds will be found.

Representative DeLena Johnson, Finance

Representative Johnson was familiar with most of our issues and has been actively working on the operating budget. Her staff member, Matt Gruening, was well versed in fisheries issues and said he knew how to get some detailed information that could be useful. We later met with Rep. Johnson again in hopes of clarifying a detail about funding for Judd Lake. From what we know at the moment it appears that both Larson and Judd lake weirs are funded. We will report anything new we learn.

Representative Stanley Wright, Resources

Rep. Wright was not familiar with our issues, but his staff, Forrest Wolfe seemed to have a deep fishing background. Both asked good questions and Rep. Wright seemed very interested and supportive. We emailed a copy of the booklet “It Takes Fish” to Rep. Wright shortly after the meeting.

Rep. Jenni Armstrong, Resources

She wasn't real familiar with our issues. We explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific requests. She asked a lot of questions, many we could show in our “It Takes Fish” booklet. We mentioned that salmon runs in Anchorage waters could possibly be positively affected by increased salmon runs making it to the Northern Cook Inlet. She seemed to understand pretty quickly and was supportive. It was a positive meeting.

Senator Clic Bishop, Chair Senate Natural Resources (Fin Sub), Finance, meeting with staff

Jim met with staff member Alexander Hanna who seemed to be well acquainted with fishing issues, but not real familiar with ours. Jim explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific asks. Mr. Hanna asked a lot of questions. Many answers were in our “It Takes Fish” booklet, which we emailed to him after the meeting. He seemed to understand pretty quickly. We should follow up with Senator Bishop if possible. It was a good and positive meeting.

Senator Lyman Hoffman, Finance, staff meeting

Sen. Hoffman was not available and we met with staff. As with other legislators outside Mat-Su we explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific requests. Jim answered a lot of questions, many we could show in our “It Takes Fish” booklet. He seemed to understand pretty quickly and was supportive. It was a positive meeting. A copy of the booklet “it takes fish to make fish” was emailed to him shortly after the meeting. It would be good to follow up with Senator Hoffman if possible.

Senator Bert Stedman, Finance, staff meeting

Sen Stedman was not available, but we got the chance to speak to staff member Dave Scott. He wasn't real familiar with our issues but seemed to have good experience in fisheries issues. Mr. Scott has a commercial fishing back ground and understood the importance of a healthy fishery. He had heard very little about the federal takeover of the EEZ but after a quick explanation, understood the importance of what we were requesting. We used the “It Takes Fish” booklet to explain a lot. He seemed to understand pretty quickly and seemed supportive. We emailed copy of the booklet “It Takes Fish” to Senator Stedman shortly after our positive meeting, and we hope to have further contact.

Representative Donna Mears

Representative Mears wasn't real familiar with our issues. We explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific asks. She asked a lot of questions and we referred to portions of the “It Takes Fish” booklet. She seemed to understand pretty quickly and was supportive. It was a positive meeting. We emailed a copy of our booklet shortly after the meeting.

Senator Mike Shower, staff meeting

We met with staff member Shonda Erickson, who was somewhat familiar with our issues. We reviewed the EEZ situation, our problems and our specific requests. She asked good questions and we answered many of them with our handy “It Takes Fish” booklet. She seemed to understand and was supportive. It was a positive meeting and we emailed copy of our booklet to her after the meeting.

Representative Tom McKay, Chair House Resources

Rep. McKay wasn't real familiar with our issues, but has been around a long time, and asked good questions. He seemed to be enthusiastically interested with full attention and humor near the end of the day. We explained the situation with the EEZ, our low return problems and our specific requests. Rep. McKay really liked our "It Takes Fish" booklet. He seemed to grasp our situation pretty quickly and was very supportive. He also mentioned the importance of the Mat Su delegation having unified support and seemed to think that would help with the success of our request. He also mentioned that it was important to have support from Rep. DeLena Johnson. It was a very positive meeting.

Representative DeLena Johnson, and staff

After meeting with Representative McKay, were called to join Representative Johnson, who was conferring with Manager Mike Brown and Assembly members Nowers and Gamble. We were unable to add detailed information about weir funding for Judd lake. We followed up later in an effort to find the answer on the record.

Senator Jesse Kiehl, Finance Committee

Jim stopped by the Senator's office at the end of the day and the Senator made time to meet. While he wasn't real familiar with our issues, he is familiar with Southeast fishing issues and asked good questions. We explained the basics of the EEZ, the problems and our specific requests. He liked our "It Takes Fish" booklet. Senator Kiehl seemed to understand and was very supportive. It was a very positive meeting. We emailed a copy of "It Takes Fish" was emailed after the meeting, as we had given away all our other copies.

We believe our personal visits to legislators were very important and we need to follow the budget process carefully to monitor the progress of our requests.

Respectfully submitted,

Gabe Kitter and Jim Sykes