

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

350 E Dahlia Ave., Palmer, Alaska 99645

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Andy Couch

VICE CHAIR

Pete Probasco

MSB STAFF

Maija DiSalvo



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Larry Engel

Tim Hale

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Kendra Zamzow

Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Regular Meeting September 26, 2024

[Supplemental Handout – Table of Contents](#)

- 1 = Draft FWC Comments re: ACR 3
- 3 = Nelchina Caribou Herd Update
- 4 = Susitna Valley Gas Exploration Maps

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

Planning and Land Use Department - Planning Division

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Planning and Land Use Department

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To: Alaska Board of Fisheries

From: Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish & Wildlife Commission

Date: September 26, 2024

Re: Support of Agenda Change Request #3

The Matanuska Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) supports Agenda Change Request #3 (ACR 3) recommending the designation of Little Susitna River coho salmon as a Stock of Yield concern. In consideration of the regulatory Yield Concern definition in 5AAC 39.222 the Policy for Management of Sustainable Salmon Fisheries (SSFP), we believe this definition clearly fits the current run status of the Little Susitna River coho salmon. This is supported when reviewing historic sport coho salmon harvests from the river compared to recent harvest trends. We also agree with the proponents of ACR 3 that the current situation is an accelerating concern, and if it is not addressed immediately, could possibly lead to a Management Concern before the next Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting.

We believe it imperative the Board focus on the regulatory language in 5AAC 39.222 (42):
“‘yield concern’ means a concern arising from a chronic inability, despite the use of specific management measures, to maintain expected yields, or harvestable surpluses, above a stock’s escapement needs; a yield concern is less severe than a management concern, which is less severe than a conservation concern.”

ACR 3 demonstrates the current level of lost yield compared to a 5-year period (2000-2004) with good public access through the Little Susitna River Public Use Facility and a two coho salmon daily sport bag limit. During this period, harvest estimates ranged from 13,672 to 20,357. In reviewing the attached historical harvest data from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) you will note even higher coho harvests from 1991- 1996. For a 24-year period from 1988 - 2010 there were only 4 years with sport coho salmon harvests less than 10,000 fish, with the lowest harvest estimate of 7,497 occurring in 1990. This data clearly supports the Little Susitna River’s long history of strong coho salmon production and yield in the sport fishery. It is very concerning comparing historical data to the most recent 5-year period which estimates the Little Susitna River coho salmon harvests (2019 - 2023) averaging only 2,499 coho salmon per year.

We agree there is management uncertainty, with high water events partially compromising coho salmon weir counts from the Little Susitna River. Incomplete escapement counts may cause

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uncertainty in consideration for **Stock of Yield/Management Concern**. However, the low weir counts in 2022 - 2024 are supported by low, and continually declining yield as clearly indicated by the in-river sport fishery. The SSFP fully supports this as a yield concern and should be designated as such and an action plan developed, for what has historically been one of the most significant and productive coho salmon stocks in Upper Cook Inlet.

Therefore, the FWC unanimously supports ACR 3, and encourages the Board of Fisheries to give it full consideration (for conservation reasons) and schedule it to be heard during the 2024 / 2025 Board meeting cycle.

Sincerely,

Andy Couch
Chair, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish & Wildlife Commission

Providing Outstanding Borough Services to the Matanuska-Susitna Community.



Fwd: Nelchina Survey Information

From Pete and Eileen Probasco <peprob@mtaonline.net>

Date Mon 9/23/2024 8:34 AM

To Maija DiSalvo <Maija.DiSalvo@matsugov.us>

[**EXTERNAL EMAIL** - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Good morning,

Here's the information I requested from ADF&G regarding the survey results for the Nelchina caribou herd. Please make copies for our Thursday meeting. Thanks

Pete

From: "Rinaldi, Todd A (DFG)" <todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov>
To: "peprob" <peprob@mtaonline.net>
Cc: "Hatcher, Heidi L (DFG)" <heidi.hatcher@alaska.gov>, "Peltier, Tim C (DFG)" <tim.peltier@alaska.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 2:04:03 PM
Subject: RE: Nelchina Survey Information

Hi Pete,

Glennallen staff were able to complete both a minimum count survey and a photo census of the Nelchina herd within days of each other this summer. Typically, we don't get conditions for a photo census so this will provide a unique opportunity to compare results. Analysis of the photos is ongoing, but we can report that have a minimum count of ~12,000 animals from the minimum count survey and the summer composition ratio was 46 calves:100 cows and 26 bulls:100 cows. We should be able to provide results of the photo census within a few weeks.

Let me know if you have any additional questions.

Best,
Todd

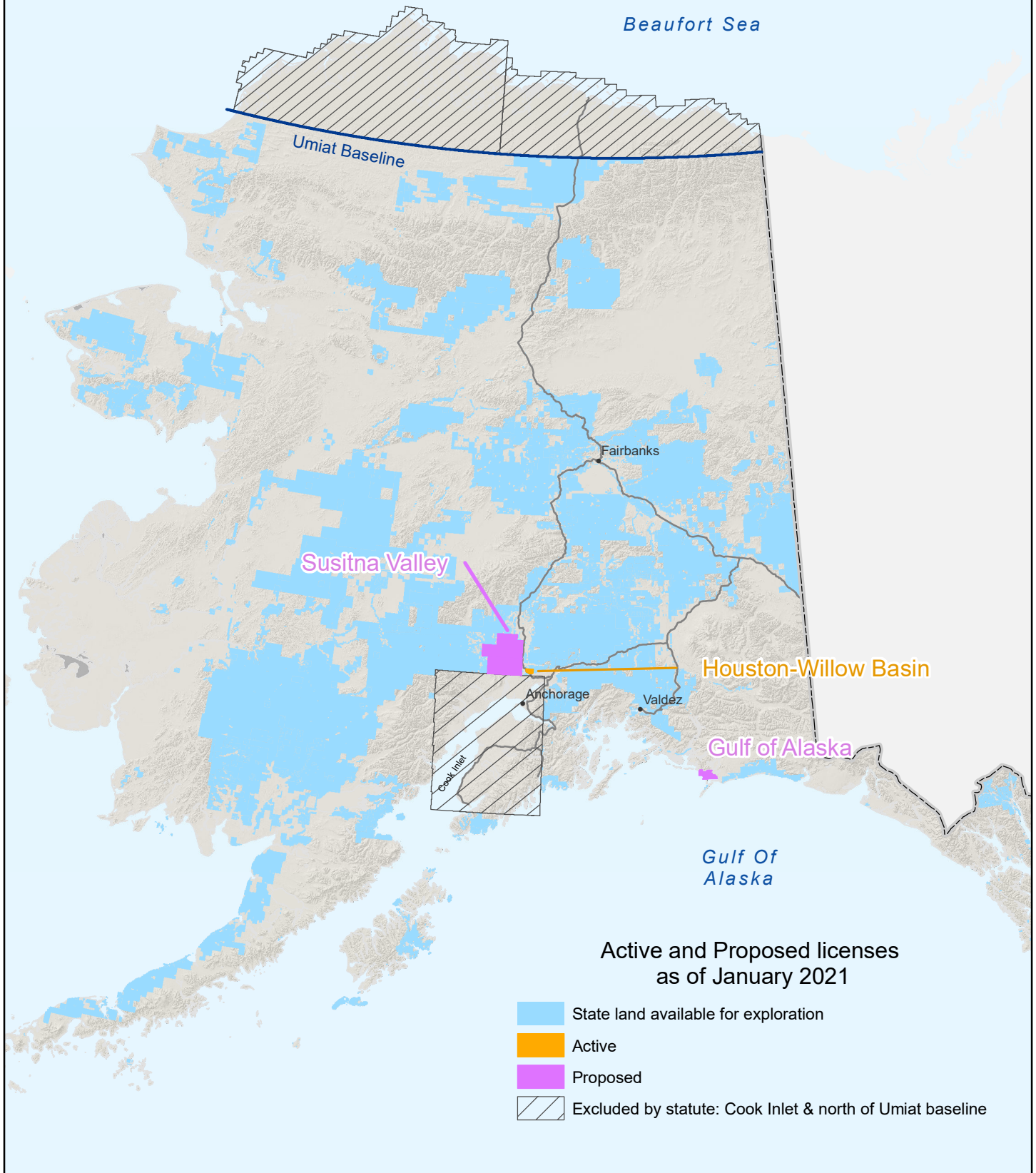
Todd A. Rinaldi
Regional Management Coordinator

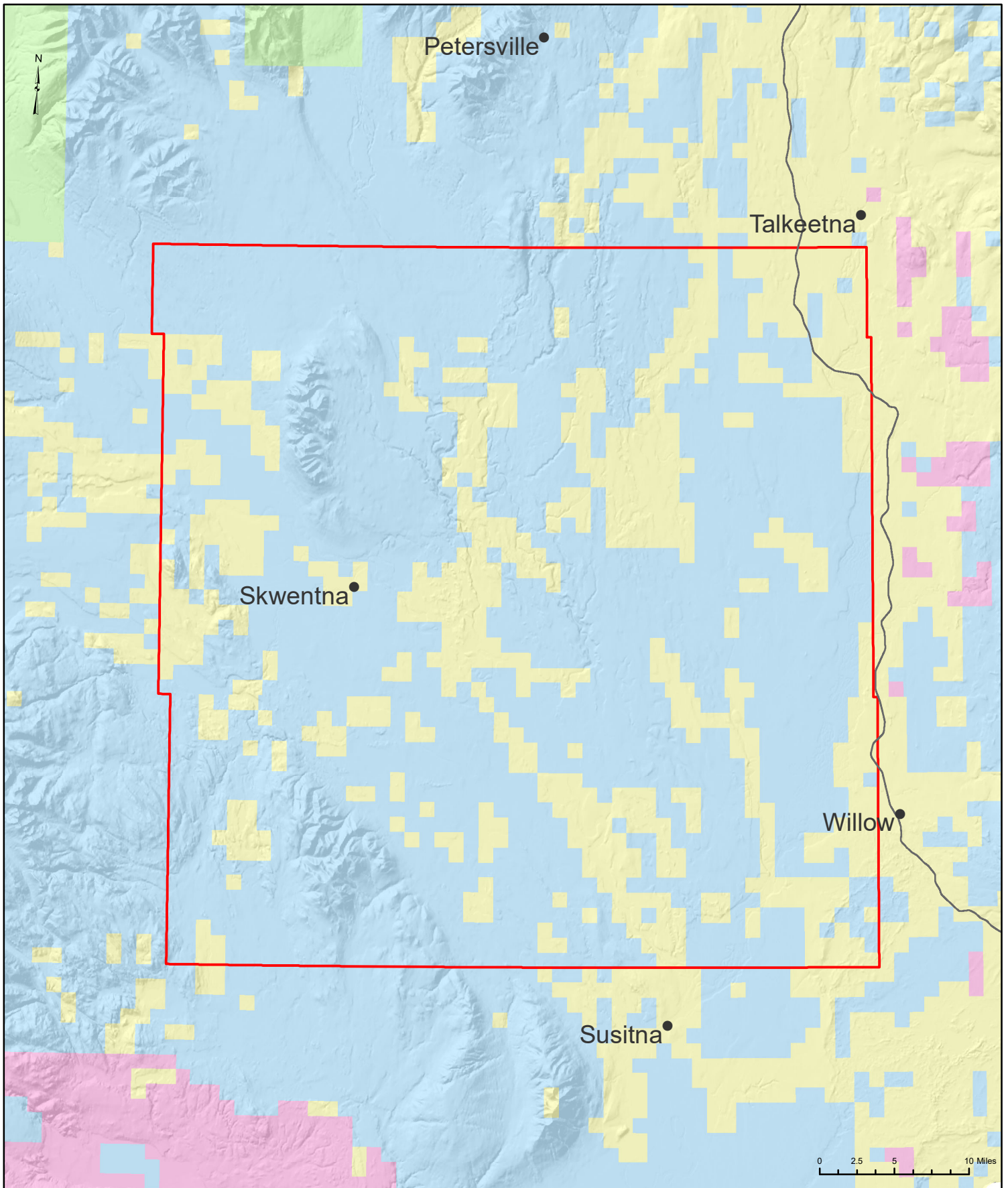
Alaska Dept of Fish and Game
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1801 South Margaret Way, Suite 4
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Department of Natural Resources Division of Oil and Gas Exploration Licensing Program





2024 Susitna Valley Exploration License

Solicitation Area Boundary Map

This map was created, edited, and published by the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil and Gas, and is for informational purposes only.

Legend

- Solicitation Bndry
- Parks Highway

General Land Status

- State of Alaska
- Federal Conservation Sys
- Native Corporation
- Municipal or Private

