

ALASKAN SALMON PLAN WINS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

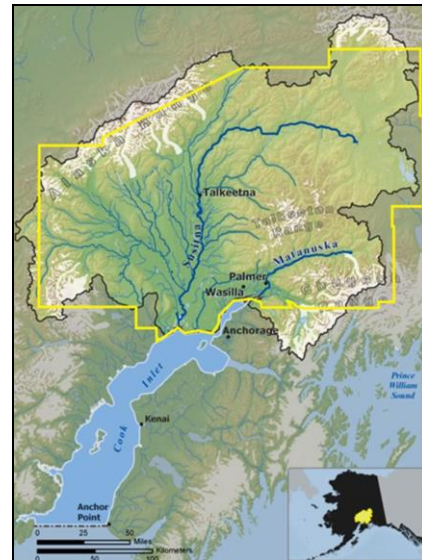
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The Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Salmon Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for Upper Cook Inlet, Alaska was the winner in the Environmental category of the Alaska Chapter, American Planning Association (APA) 2015 Awards program. The plan, which used the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to identify, structure and prioritize specific issues related to program goals and objectives, was showcased in November, 2015 during the APA's annual convention in Anchorage, Alaska. Ms. Frankie Barker, Environmental Planner with the Mat-Su Borough, and Terry Nininger, Fish and Wildlife Commission member, received the award.



Terry Nininger, Fish and Wildlife Commission Member (left), and Frankie Barker, Environmental Planner with the Mat-Su Borough accepting the 2015 Alaska American Planning Association Environmental Award

Initiated in June 2014, the plan was funded with a grant from the State of Alaska, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development to develop a strategic research plan that provides partners and governing agencies with information needed to manage, protect and improve Upper Cook Inlet salmon stocks for optimum benefits while maintaining biological productivity and diversity. The plan concerned all five species of salmon (Chinook, coho, sockeye, chum and pink). A comprehensive salmon research plan for Upper Cook Inlet had not been previously developed.



Mat-Su Borough and Upper Cook Inlet waters addressed by this plan

Guided by a Core Planning Team, the seven-member Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission established the plan's scope, goals and objectives. A stakeholder group, consisting of 15 representatives from local, state and federal government agencies, commercial, sport fishing and personal use fishing groups and environmental organizations participated in a two-day facilitated planning workshop to identify and prioritize specific issues related to plan objectives. In addition, the group brainstormed various options that could be implemented to address issues. The public was invited to attend the planning workshop, and review and comment on the draft plan prior to its finalization.

A total of 55 research, monitoring and evaluation issues were identified. Issue priorities reflected a combination of goal and objective priorities and issue significance discussed by the stakeholder group. Individuals in the group often had differing views on the significance of specific issues depending on their interest and expertise. Information-sharing and debate during the planning workshop improved agreement within the group. The final priority rankings reflected the combined perspective of the group.

With \$1.6 million available for funding, in 2015 the Commission used the final plan to solicit and rank salmon research, monitoring and evaluation project proposals, where proposal evaluation criteria included the priority of the issue addressed, as well as other criteria (i.e., scientific merit, expertise of the investigators, etc.). A total of 11 projects were selected for funding out of a total of 35 proposals received. These projects will be ongoing through 2018.

For more information, the plan can be downloaded from the Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission site: <https://www.matsugov.us/boards/fishcommission> .