

Organizational Structure and Operating Framework

The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership formed in 2005 to bring together local communities, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies, and residents to protect salmon habitat through conservation, education and restoration. Mat-Su Salmon Partners share a common vision of *thriving fish, healthy habitats, and vital communities in the Mat-Su Basin*.

The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership is a collaborative effort. This focus on a bottom-up, locally driven, voluntary and non-regulatory effort was inspired by the approach outlined in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP; www.fishhabitat.org). The mission of NFHAP is to “protect, restore, and enhance the nation’s fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.”

Organizing and Operating Principles

The partnership formed and operates with these principles for decision-making and collaboration:

- Strive to work and make decisions by consensus;
- Ensure accountability and transparency for all Partnership activities;
- Focus Partnership activities on issues pertaining to habitat conservation - **not** fishery management allocation decisions. For purposes of the Partnership, ‘conservation’ includes land and water protection, habitat and fish passage restoration, and habitat enhancement, and the development of scientific information that informs decisions about salmon conservation;
- Apply the best available scientific information to Partnership funding and management decisions and the development and evaluation of partnership projects;
- The Partnership is a voluntary self-directed organization actively working to achieve the goals and objectives of the Strategic Action Plan.
- Individual member groups of the Partnership retain their various missions and activities and participate in the Partnership to the extent they are able to support the Partnership’s vision, mission, and strategic plans. All resource agencies who are members of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership maintain all statutory authorities and do not relinquish any of their responsibilities for managing fish and wildlife resources or budgetary responsibilities per their agency missions through partnership participation.

Organizational Structure

The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership works to achieve the goals of its Strategic Action Plan through collaboration of its partners and guidance from standing and ad hoc committees.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the advisory body for the Partnership. The Steering Committee will be consistent in composition with the National Fish Habitat Board and be comprised of

representatives of local, state, and federal governments, academia/conservation, Native Alaskans and other organizations interested in fish habitat conservation. There are a total of nine seats. Six seats will be held by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, The Nature Conservancy, and Chickaloon Village Traditional Council. Additional organizations will be selected from the partnership to fill three At-large seats.

The At-large seats will be for two year terms with the opportunity to extend for an additional term. The term of one seat will be staggered with the other two so that all three seats do not turn over each year. Letters of interest in the open At-large seat(s) will be solicited in November, the Steering Committee will select new members at a special meeting in December, and the terms will begin in January. Letters of interest will explain why the partner organization wants to join the Steering Committee and how they expect to contribute to the guidance of the partnership. Attachment 2 lists Steering Committee member organizations and representatives since 2005.

The Steering Committee shall:

- Act as the guiding body for the Partnership;
- Serve as a forum and mechanism to work jointly and promote cooperation to restore, enhance and protect habitat that supports the fishery and aquatic resources of the Mat-Su Basin;
- Actively seek and encourage partner participation;
- Support partner projects through endorsements for funding, technical assistance, and recommendations for collaboration and funding sources;
- Make recommendations, as requested by granting agencies and organizations, on distribution of funds for fish habitat projects in the Mat-Su Basin;
- Prepare an annual report of Partnership activities for the partners, NFHB, and other funding organizations;
- Complete, maintain, and implement a strategic action plan that prioritizes conservation strategies and locations for fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin;
- Ensure that the MatSu Partnership follows guidelines set forth by the NFHB.
- Convene meetings of the Partnership annually or more frequently as required.
- Coordinate with other NFHAP Partnerships where there is geographic overlap with species and habitats;

Steering Committee operating procedures:

- The committee meets on the 2nd Tuesday of odd months from 1:30 – 4:00 in Palmer. These meetings shall be open to all partners and the public. The steering committee may also meet at other times and may change meeting days to accommodate committee members.
- Positions of Facilitator and Notetaker shall rotate by meeting among Steering Committee members.
- Five member organizations constitute a quorum, and decisions will be made by consensus.

Expectations of Steering Committee members:

- Each organization on the Steering Committee shall identify one person who will attend most regular meetings (6 per year), meetings to select At-large seats and projects for NFHAP funding, and other special meetings as may be required to advance the Partnership's goals. Attendance may be either in person or via teleconference. When that person is unable to attend, s/he will notify the coordinator or another steering committee member and assign a substitute to attend, if possible.
- Act as Facilitator and/or Notetaker approximately once per year.
- Participate on a standing committee or ad hoc committee.
- Evaluate partner proposals for NFHAP funding.
- Participate in national NFHAP activities that have particular relevance to the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership or one's organization. These activities might include regular teleconferences of fish habitat partnerships, review of the national fish habitat assessment in Alaska, and meetings with other partnerships that work in Alaska.

Standing Committees and Working Groups

Several committees and working groups have been established to implement goals of the partnership and its plan. Additional committees or work groups may be formed to perform particular tasks or projects of the Partnership.

- **Science Working Group:** This working group was initially formed to provide a science-based foundation for development of the Strategic Action Plan. This working group continues to meet on an as-needed basis to implement science goals and strategies in the plan. Members of this group are biologists, hydrologists, and ecologists from partner organizations.
- **Fish Passage Working Group:** This working group was formed to implement fish passage restoration goals in the Strategic Action Plan, including development of a Fish Passage Improvement Plan. Members of this group are biologists, hydrologists, and project managers from partner organizations involved in fish passage restoration.
- **Outreach Committee:** This committee works to build the partnership through outreach to potential partners, supporters, and funders.
- **Planning Committee:** This committee tracks progress toward goals in the Strategic Action Plan, provides recommendations to the Steering Committee on distribution of NFHAP funds to achieve progress, and assists the Steering Committee with implementation of the plan through development of procedures and guidelines to improve effectiveness of the Steering Committee and partnership.

Ad Hoc Committees and Working Groups

Additional committees or work groups may be formed on a temporary basis as needed to perform particular tasks or projects of the Partnership.

Partner Organizations

The Partners will include agencies, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, businesses, Native Alaska entities, and private citizens.

The Partners shall:

- Promote conservation of fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin;
- Work to meet Partnership goals by contributing funds, people, equipment, or access to shared activities;
- Attend annual meetings of the Partnership;
- Serve on Partnership committees and working groups;
- Be listed on all Partnership publications;
- Endorse and support the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan
- Be eligible for funding that comes through the Partnership to implement the Strategic Action Plan, if eligible by the criteria of the funding source.

Coordinator

A Mat-Su Partnership Coordinator would assist the Steering Committee in accomplishing goals and objectives, provided that funding becomes available to support that position. The coordinator would provide primary staff support to the Steering Committee. He/she would be responsible for disseminating information, coordinating meetings, coordinating and facilitating overall implementation of actions and projects of the Partnership, outreach activities, and pursuing funding and grant opportunities. The coordinator would be employed and provided office support by one or more of the member agencies or organizations.

Until funding is available for the partnership to hire a coordinator, The Nature Conservancy shall serve as interim coordinator in the following capacity: coordinate and support steering committee and other Partnership meetings, produce a quarterly newsletter, manage the Partnership mailing list, and act as primary contact with NFHB and other fish habitat partnerships.

Project Endorsement

The Steering Committee identified three scenarios under which the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership would conceivably provide advice or make recommendations on projects: (1) allocation of funding made available through NFHAP; (2) periodic reviews of ongoing projects, and (3) other funding opportunities, e.g. State Wildlife Grant. This section explains the Partnership's role under the third scenario.

The Steering Committee will review proposed projects within or affecting the Mat-Su Basin. Proposed projects may be submitted by any Partner organization. The Steering Committee will consider approving submitted projects and decide whether or not to approve the project on its merits. The Steering Committee will not endorse specific grant proposals. However, following Steering Committee approval, projects may be submitted for funding under any program(s). This allows the approved project to be submitted, if an agency chooses, as part of a proposal(s) for consideration by any number of grant agencies and allows time for the Steering Committee to review requests. In this manner, the Steering Committee envisions serving as a clearinghouse for potential project and grant opportunities.

The Steering Committee will also assist Partner organizations in developing projects. For example, the Steering Committee could direct people or organizations with project ideas, as opposed to fully developed projects, to the next step for development. The next step might be a technical expert, an agency with experience with the type of project idea, or a funding opportunity.

Projects submitted for approval or assistance must comply with the five criteria listed below. If a project submitted fails any one of these criteria, it will not be approved by the Steering Committee. Projects must:

1. directly apply to conservation of or increasing knowledge of fish and/or fish habitat
2. affect the Mat-Su Basin
3. address the goals and strategic actions of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership Strategic Action Plan
4. be consistent with the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan
5. be apolitical in nature

The following information should be submitted for each project:

- Date submitted:
- Project name and location:
- Lead organization and contact information:
- Brief description (not to exceed one page):
- Funding source(s) anticipated and status:
- Potential for Mat-Su Salmon Partnership involvement and how the project helps achieve partnership goals
- Other information deemed important by the proposer:

The Steering Committee will endorse projects by consensus and will try to review projects within three weeks of receiving all of the information listed above. The endorsement will follow the format shown in Attachment 1. The Steering Committee will re-assess this process for project endorsement if it proves too time consuming.

Attachment 1: Project Endorsement Template Letter

Name of Project Proponent
Proposing Agency
Address

Dear :

The Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership formed in 2005 to bring together local communities, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies, and residents to prevent the negative impacts that development could have on salmon habitat. Mat-Su Salmon Partners share a common vision of *thriving fish, healthy habitats, and vital communities in the Mat-Su Basin*. The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership is a collaborative effort. This focus on a bottom-up, locally driven, voluntary and non-regulatory effort was inspired by the approach outlined in the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP; www.fishhabitat.org). The mission of NFHAP is to “protect, restore, and enhance the nation’s fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people.”

In 2008 the partnership completed a Strategic Action Plan that outlined goals for protecting and restoring salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin. Implementation of the plan and achievement of its goals will happen through efforts of partner organizations, like [Proposing Agency]. This project to [fill in project title or objective] addresses goals of the partnership that are identified in the plan. Specifically, this project will address the plan’s goal to [fill in plan goal or action that was identified in the application]. In addition, this project increases conservation of or knowledge of fish and/or fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin and is consistent with the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

Please consider this letter an endorsement from the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership of [fill in project title}. We look forward to working with you on this project and wish you success in finding funding.

Steering Committee signature

Steering Committee Member Name

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership

Attachment 2: Steering Committee Organizations

2006:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mike Roy
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith

2007:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, John DeLapp
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden (At-large)
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large)

2008:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden (At-large)
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large)

2009:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large)
AlaskChem Engineering, Ralph Hulbert (At-large)

2010:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden
Friends of Mat-Su, Kathy Wells (At-large, term end 2010)
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2011)
Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, Catherine Inman (At-large, term end 2011)

2011:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mary Price
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tom Brookover
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Dryden-Winnestaffer
Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, Jeff Davis (At-large, term end 2012)
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2011)
Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District, Catherine Inman (At-large, term end 2011)

2012:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bill Rice
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeanne Hanson
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Sue Rodman
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Winnestaffer
Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, Jeff Davis (At-large, term end 2012)
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2013)
Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District, Laura Allen (At-large, term end 2014)

2013:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bill Rice
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Eric Rothwell
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Roger Harding
Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Frankie Barker
The Nature Conservancy, Corinne Smith
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Jessica Winnestaffer
Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, Jeff Davis (At-large, term end 2014)
Great Land Trust, Kim Sollien (At-large, term end 2013)
Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District, Laura Allen (At-large, term end 2014)