Conserving Salmon Habitat in the Mat-Su Basin: Organizational Focus and Updated Conservation Strategies of the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership

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Addendum to the 2013 Partnership Strategic Action Plan - June 2019

**Organizational Priorities Updated June 2021*

Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership Steering Committee

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Acknowledgements:

The Partnership strategic focus was developed by the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership under guidelines provided by the National Fish Habitat Board's National Fish Habitat Action Plan and created through the dedication of its partners. Many local organizations, agencies and individuals provided in-kind support and input at Mat-Su Salmon Symposiums, surveys, planning meetings and a workshop. Thank you to everyone who provided input, and their organizations for providing staff time to this project. A complete list of contributors is in Appendix 1.

Financial support was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, ConocoPhillips Alaska, and BP.

The Future of the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership

The Matanuska-Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership formed in 2005 to address increasing impacts on salmon habitat from human use and development in the Mat-Su Basin. Modeled after the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP), this coalition of now 65 organizations uses a collaborative, cooperative, and non-regulatory approach that brings together diverse stakeholders.

This document is an addendum to the Partnership's 2013 Strategic Action Plan. It contains the Partnership's organizational priorities, and updated conservation objectives for the next five years. These updates are intended to ensure our efforts remain relevant and strategic, improve our overall effectiveness as an organization, and increase our ability to achieve our conservation goals. Note that the Organizational Priorities do not replace the 12 Conservation Strategies described in this Addendum and 2013 Partnership Strategic Action Plan; these strategies remain relevant today and provide specific actions to address the greatest potential threats to salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin. To learn more about how this Addendum fits into the Partnership's larger scope of work and strategies, see Appendix 2 on page 14.

Although some factors will be beyond the Partnership's control, achievement of these goals and objectives will depend upon commitment by partner organizations and collaboration between partners. The history of salmon in other parts of the world indicates that wild salmon cannot persist in their full abundance unless stake holders work together to protect salmon habitat. Within this Partnership, each partner has unique capabilities, responsibilities, and resources that can address a key component for salmon habitat. Only in working together, can all the key components for salmon habitat be protected to ensure healthy, abundant salmon runs in the Mat-Su Basin into the future.

Organizational Focus

This organizational focus document identifies actions where the Partnership as an organized coalition should strategically focus particular attention and resources over the next five years (2019-2023) to most effectively meet our conservation goals. Learn more about the organizational focus document in Appendix 2 on page 14.

Organizational Focus (2019 – 2023)

CORE PURPOSE To support abundant wild salmon and healthy habitat that coexist with vibrant communities.

CORE VALUES Collaboration ♦ Information Sharing ♦ Diverse Expertise ♦ Science-Based

ENVISIONED FUTURE (2023):

- *Functioning riparian habitat is valued and prioritized as critical to healthy salmon populations in the Mat-Su Basin.*
- *The Partnership is widely recognized as a trusted source of science-based information. The Partnership uses science to guide partnership decision-making and to inform the community and relevant public policy.*
- *Through a highly effective education and outreach program, community members understand the value of healthy salmon habitat, what salmon habitat needs are, and what salmon-friendly land ownership, recreation and development looks like.*
- *The Partnership has developed a coordinated and effective method to address aquatic invasive species prevention, detection, and eradication, with the immediate focus on Elodea and adaptability to address emerging invasive species threats.*
- *The Partnership is adequately staffed and sustainably funded.*

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES (2021-2022)

1) **Encourage the development and dissemination of relevant science-based information.**
   - The Science and Data Committee will focus on providing technical expertise within and outside the partnership, including identifying and filling data gaps, inform and establish best practices, and interpreting research on Basin habitat impacts.
   - Identify and implement strategy to improve dissemination of relevant science-based information.

2) **Support the development of an Elodea and other emerging aquatic invasive species management framework that includes prevention, early detection, rapid response, eradication, and monitoring.**
   - Under the umbrella of existing agency plans, support coordination of resources to specifically address elodea and other emerging aquatic invasive species eradication in the Mat-Su Basin.

- Encourage use of the Elodea management framework as a template to respond to other emerging invasive species issues.

3) **Continue to provide and allocate strategic grant funds in support of prioritized salmon habitat projects.**
   - Establish a process for identifying annual Partnership conservation priorities to guide organizational activities and ensure that projects funded through the National Fish Habitat Partnership program align with local Partnership priorities.
   - Track implementation of ACE Act and proactively engage to ensure the Partnership remains competitive.
   - Streamline and automate RFP Process

4) **Provide effective and inclusive outreach and education focused on healthy salmon habitats.**
   - Grow and utilize the ability of the Partnership to be an effective convener on salmon habitat issues.
   - Improve community knowledge, awareness, and understanding that leads to informed decision making and works towards salmon-friendly land use and development.
   - Target outreach to community members and leaders to improve inclusion and engagement and demonstrate Partnership successes and accomplishments.
   - Develop and implement an annual event directed to a community audience.
   - The Partnership will work collaboratively with ACE Act funded agencies, Alaska Fish Habitat Partnerships, northern Cook Inlet local governments and partners to address larger scale issues with regional impact.

5) **Continue to strengthen the Salmon Partnership's internal organizational capacity.**
   - Continue to develop and implement a sustainable staffing plan – explore strategies for increasing staff capacity, including additional paid staff, consultant capacity and/or contractors with a vision to longer term stability.
   - Deepen existing engagements with partner organizations to increase their involvement and contributions to Partnership business.
   - Continue to diversify the partnership's revenue stream – decrease reliance on federal dollars.

Conservation Threats and Strategies

The Mat-Su Salmon Partnership's broad goals are to protect salmon and their habitats in the Mat-Su Basin and Upper Cook Inlet, mitigate threats to salmon and their habitats, restore connectivity between salmon habitats, and increase knowledge about salmon and their use of freshwater and marine habitats. These strategies fall into four broad categories: protection, restoration, education and science, and echo those that the National Fish Habitat Partnership uses to guide work at the national and partnership level. The 12 threats and strategies listed below address the sources of the impacts and the impacts themselves, and are composed of objectives, which define a vision of success and strategic actions that will achieve the objectives.

These conservation strategies encourage collaboration among multiple partners to achieve common objectives that would be difficult for any one partner to accomplish alone and are actions that the Partnership thinks it can accomplish in the next 5 years.

In 2018, the Partnership Steering Committee worked with the Science and Data Committee and subject matter experts within the Partnership to provide minor updates to conservation objectives from the 2013 Strategic Action Plan. See updated objectives below and find a glossary of technical terms in Appendix 3 on page 17.

1. Overarching Science Strategies

Objective 1.1: Anadromous Waters Catalog

By 2023, increase existing catalogued miles of anadromous waters by 10% (approximately 475 stream miles). Adding streams to the Anadromous Waters Catalog provides basic protections afforded under state law. Efforts to catalog anadromous fish should identify life stage information and document non-anadromous fish.

Objective 1.2: Habitat Quality

By 2023, characteristics of habitats that are important for salmon at each life stage (spawning, rearing, and overwintering) will be identified for 3 selected watersheds and used to develop critical habitat definitions to identify places that provide these habitats.

Objective 1.3: Comprehensive Surface and Groundwater Studies

By 2023, an increased understanding of locations where surface and groundwater exchange occurs (other useful information could include quantities, flows, and variability) will be sufficient to aid in identifying critical salmon habitat for each life stage in the Mat-Su Basin.

Objective 1.4: Water Quality Monitoring

By 2023, use currently available information to identify case study watersheds and implement a monitoring program to measure freshwater productivity to understand the relationships between salmon, habitat health, water quality, and changes induced by human activities and climate change.

2. **Alteration of riparian areas**

Objective 2.1: Identification of Priority Riparian Areas for Salmon
By 2020, at least 50% of riparian areas adjacent to the identified 35 priority water bodies in the Mat-Su, will be field surveyed, mapped, and prioritized for long term legal protection and/or restoration.

Objective 2.2: Protection of Priority Salmon Riparian Habitat
By 2023, secure long-term protective status (e.g., conservation easements, designated parks, land acquisition, local ordinance) for at least 10% of priority riparian habitats that have not been significantly altered.

Objective 2.3: Restoration of Priority Riparian Habitat
By 2023, an additional 5% of priority riparian habitats that have been altered are restored.

Objective 2.4 Impacts to Salmon and Salmon Habitat
By 2021, synthesize existing relevant knowledge about the function and importance of riparian areas to salmon and salmon habitat.

3. **Climate Change**

Objective 3.1: Comprehensive Baseline and Monitoring for Stream Temperatures.
By 2021, comprehensive baseline and monitoring program for stream temperatures exists to track regional changes while thermal heterogeneity of salmon habitat and the impacts on salmon are assessed within priority Mat-Su Basin watersheds. Data should meet minimum data collection standards for Alaska, site information should be posted on the Alaska Online Aquatic Temperature Site (AK OATS) and temperature data should be available to the public by request or archived online.

Objective 3.2: Integrate Climate Change into Priorities.
By 2023, integrate climate change vulnerability into habitat conservation strategies and prioritizations.

4. **Culverts that block fish passage**

Objective 4.1: No New Barriers
By 2021, update all design standards to modern fish passage best management strategies and continue to ensure no new barriers are constructed in the Mat-Su Basin below MSB standards across all entities (MSB, DOT, AKRR, DNR, Private).

Objective 4.2: Fish Passage Restoration
By 2023, fish passage will be restored in 15 (3 per year) priority culverts that currently block passage of juvenile or adult fish.

Objective 4.3: Evaluate Effectiveness
By 2023 evaluate fish passage effectiveness for 25% of restored culverts that are over 5 years old**.**

Objective 4.4 Impacts to Salmon and Salmon Habitat
By 2021, synthesize existing relevant knowledge about the impacts to salmon and salmon habitat from culverts that block fish passage.

5. **Filling of Wetlands**

Objective 5.1: Identify, Map, Assess Functions and Prioritize Wetlands for Salmon
By 2023, prioritize wetland conservation through a thorough understanding of wetland presence, function and vulnerability inside the Mat-Su core area. Map wetlands outside of the core area using the best available technology and classification. Focus mapping on salmon bearing streams and areas outside of the Cook Inlet Classification of Wetlands.

Objective 5.2: Conserve Wetlands for Salmon
By 2020, strive for achievement of a no-net-loss of wetlands policy through research, education, and public comment. Loss of wetlands that are important for salmon either as spawning or rearing habitat, recharge of streams, or filtration of streams, will be avoided, minimized, or mitigated with protection, management, and enhancement.

6. **Impervious Surfaces and Stormwater Pollution**

Objective 6.1: Minimization of Impacts on Water Quality
By 2023, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, and the Cities of Palmer and Wasilla will enter into a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit with the State of Alaska to reduce polluted stormwater runoff by implementing activities highlighted in the 2013 Stormwater Management Plan, Salmon-Safe Development Guidelines and other best management practices.

Objective 6.2: Minimize Road Runoff
By 2023, the extent and potential of road runoff as a contributor to water quality issues at more urbanized core area salmon streams will be known and BMPs implemented to minimize impacts.

Objective 6.3: **Imperviousness Impact Assessment**
By 2023, understand the magnitude of impact of impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff in the most developed watersheds.

7. **Aquatic Invasive Species**

Objective 7.1: Prevention
By 2023, identify potential vectors for introducing or spreading aquatic invasive species (AIS) in the Mat-Su and conduct outreach to further inform and influence target audiences so that their activities do not introduce or spread AIS.

Objective 7.2: Early Detection and Surveillance
By 2023, conduct plan-directed surveillance surveys designed to have a high likelihood of detecting AIS at an incipient stage of infestation will be completed. Priorities are determined based on level of risk for introduction of AIS.

Objective 7.3: Rapid Response
By 2021, procedures are in place to respond rapidly to any newly discovered introductions or to newly detected expansion of existing AIS.

Objective 7.4: Control
By 2023, an effective program of integrated pest management for aquatic invasive species is developed and implemented, including elements of future prevention, containment, eradication, control, restoration, and education.

Objective 7.5 Impacts to Salmon and Salmon Habitat
By 2021, synthesize existing relevant knowledge about the impacts to salmon and salmon habitat from AIS.

8. Large-scale Resource Development

Objective 8.1: Education and Outreach about Large-scale Resource Projects
The public will have access to information about proposed large-scale resource development projects and their potential to affect salmon and their habitats.

Objective 8.2: Agency Assistance for Large-scale Resource Projects
By 2023, state and federal agencies and stakeholders involved in permitting processes for largescale resource development projects have the data, analytical tools, and expertise that they need to understand the potential to affect salmon and their habitat.

Objective 8.3: Address Data Gaps
Data gaps for large-scale resource development projects will be identified and filled on an ongoing basis as feasible, for the licensing and permitting processes.

9. Loss or alteration of water flow or volume

Objective 9.1: Instream Flow on Anadromous Waters
By 2023, partner organizations have filed 5 new applications for reservations of water with ADNR to preserve the flow regimes of priority anadromous lakes and streams.

Objective 9.2: Community Water Needs Study
By 2021, develop a groundwater alternatives analysis that includes a summary of existing knowledge, data gaps, and cost estimates for a future study that will answer groundwater-surface water management questions in the growing communities of the Mat-Su Basin.

10. Loss of estuaries and nearshore habitats

Objective 10.1: Salmon Ecology of Cook Inlet

By 2023, improve understanding of salmon ecology in the estuaries and nearshore habitats that support Mat-Su salmon populations through identifying and supporting Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership priorities within the Knik Arm Salmon Ecology Integrated Research Plan (HDR, 2010), and identify other important data gaps to fill in key Upper Cook Inlet estuaries and nearshore environments.

Objective 10.2: Conserve Estuaries for Salmon

By 2023, identify and prioritize threats to estuaries to support assuring no long-term impairments of vulnerable coastal habitats from incompatible shoreline developments. In collaboration with Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership, update strategic plans to identify the current threats to estuaries in Cook Inlet, and provide information on how the threats could affect salmon and salmon habitat. Use the strategic document to inform groups trying to understand effects of particular development practices, and support identification of what compatible shoreline developments are.

Objective 10.3: Identify joint conservation goals

By 2021, identify joint conservation goals with the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership that address issues affecting fish habitat in Cook Inlet. Undertake the following joint efforts:

- Ensure one speaker on estuarine, nearshore or marine habitats at every Mat-Su or Kenai Science Symposium to elevate and provide a learning opportunity for the Partnerships and general public.

- Fund one nearshore project every 2 years in either Mat-Su or Kenai Fish Habitat Partnership area that meets goals outlined in respective Partnership Strategic Plans or joint Partnership nearshore goals.
    - Ensure all National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) funded projects will be viable and analyzed for climate change factors.
    - Create linkages in NFHP funded projects to ensure all salmon life stages are considered, with a possible examination of Chinook salmon declines shared by both fish habitat partnerships.

11. Motorized Off-road Recreation

Objective 11.1: Impacts to Salmon and Salmon Habitat

By 2021, synthesize existing relevant knowledge about the impacts to salmon and salmon habitat from off-highway vehicle (OHV) use (e.g. stream morphology and water quality).

Objective 11.2: Mitigate OHV Use at Streams

By 2023, establish effective and publicly acceptable mechanisms to support stream health near OHV trails and at stream crossings.

12. Wastewater Management

Objective 12.1: Improved On-Site Wastewater Disposal

By 2023, a majority of new subdivisions will be using publicly owned or privately owned utilities including localized or regional Publicly Owned or Privately Owned Treatment Works (POTWs) that discharge secondary treated effluent, or better, in order to reduce polluted contributions to groundwater.

Objective 12.2: Expanded Wastewater Infrastructure

By 2023, Mat-Su Borough and its communities will have improved wastewater treatment infrastructure and treatment facilities that can handle sewage

Objective 12.3: Wastewater Pollution Prevention

By 2023, through education, outreach, and improved GIS onsite disposal system (OSDS) mapping, minimize wastewater pollution in at least one priority watershed (selection based on population density outside of city sewer areas) and maintain water quality to state water quality standards.

Objective 12.4: Impacts to Salmon and Salmon Habitat

By 2021, synthesize existing relevant knowledge on the impact of wastewater discharges to salmon and salmon habitat.

Appendix 1: Participants in Strategic Plan Update Process

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Appendix 2: The Partnership's Strategic Planning Process

In 2007, the Partnership brought together a wide range of scientists, agencies, community groups and fishing interests to develop a Strategic Action Plan that identified major potential threats to salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin, and conservation strategies to address them. The Partnership selected eight conservation strategies to address plus three over-arching science strategies to increase our knowledge about the location and characteristics of salmon habitat in the Mat-Su: fish distribution and life-cycle use, water quantity, and water quality.

The Strategic Action Plan identified Partnership long-term goals and strategies and provided a tool the Partnership, and others could use to prioritize projects and voluntary actions related to fish habitat goals in the Mat-Su Basin. The plan was developed under the guidance of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, which clearly identifies fish habitat as the focus for partnerships. Thus, the planning process focused exclusively on habitat-related issues to remain consistent with the intent of the NFHP and the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership. The plan scope included not only freshwater fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin, but also nearshore, estuarine, and marine habitat in Upper Cook Inlet. The three specific purposes for the plan were:

1. Identify important habitats for salmon and other fish species in the Mat-Su Basin.
2. Prioritize fish habitat conservation actions, including protection, enhancement, and restoration of key habitat, education and outreach, research, and mitigation.
3. Identify potential collaborations and funding sources for partners to address fish habitat conservation.

Identifying the need to update its plan every 3-5 years, the Partnership revised its plan in 2013 using the Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process. This robust and in-depth methodology enabled a broad look at salmon and their habitat and provided an integrated approach for prioritizing issues, implementing strategies, and measuring success of projects. The updated plan addressed new information in the Mat-Su Basin: continued population growth and development, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game designation of salmon populations as Stocks of Concern, and the Partnership's progress in addressing the conservation strategies in the 2008 Strategic Action Plan. As in the original plan, impacts from human use and development were still found to be the greatest threat to salmon and salmon habitat. Changes to the 2013 plan included: the addition of four new threats; climate change, motorized off-road recreation, large-scale resource development and aquatic invasive plants, as well as a new organizational goals section and identification of annual measures to track Partnership success.

In late 2017, the Partnership began a scoping process to assess the need for another update to its Strategic Action Plan. With input from the Science and Data Committee, the Steering Committee evaluated existing and future potential threats to salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin, reviewed Partnership progress toward its conservation goals, and obtained input from the Partnership through engagement at Mat-Su Salmon Symposiums. This feedback suggested that a large-scale update of the plan that included new threats or significant changes was not warranted. The Steering Committee recognized the immense and thorough effort invested in the 2013 CAP process and concurred that the potential threats to salmon habitat and the conservation strategies to address those threats are still relevant today. The Steering Committee decided to complete a light update to the Partnership's Strategic Action Plan, along with the identification of the

actions where the Partnership as an organized coalition, should strategically focus particular attention and resources over the next five years to most effectively meet our conservation goals. A Strategic Planning Committee was formed with the goal of leading an update to the Plan and organizational focus in 2018.

Relationship Between Organizational Focus Document and Partnership's Strategic Action Plan

The Partnership Strategic Plan Committee engaged the Foraker Group to facilitate the development of the Partnership's focus. This process involved evaluating progress on partnership conservation goals, surveys, and input from a half day workshop in August of 2018. The workshop involved 18 people representing all partnership committees along with subject matter experts with significant Mat-Su and Partnership knowledge and experience. As a result of this facilitated process and input from the Partnership through the Mat-Su Salmon Symposium and other Partnership committee review, the Steering Committee outlined the organizational focus of the Partnership for the next 5-year period, 2019-2023 (see on pg. 4).

The organizational focus document consists of four primary parts: Core Purpose, Core Values, Envisioned Future, and Organizational Priorities described in the table below.

Focus Document Section	Description	Timeline
Core Purpose	Foundational core of Partnership	Ongoing
Core Values	Foundational core of Partnership	Ongoing
Envisioned Future	Describes what the Mat-Su Basin can be in 2023 if the Partnership accomplishes its organizational and habitat conservation goals.	Applies to entire 5-year strategic focus period (2019 – 2023)
Organizational Priorities	These priorities improve organizational effectiveness. They identify broad objectives for the Partnership as an organization and describe specific actions to take to accomplish these objectives.	Relevant for the first two years of the strategic focus period and will be reevaluated and revised for the subsequent 2-year period, 2021-2022.

Descriptions of each of the focus sections are in the table above, including their relevant timeline. Note that when it is time to reevaluate the organizational priorities, the Partnership may identify that today's priorities remain relevant, or, perhaps, other higher priorities will have emerged over the next two years. The organizational priorities do not replace the 12 Conservation Strategies described in this Addendum and the Partnership's 2013 Strategic Action Plan and; those strategies remain relevant today and provide specific actions to address the greatest potential threats to salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin.

Further, the conservation strategies and associated actions continue to provide partners with guidance on the types of assessment, protection, restoration and education projects likely to be supported by the Partnership. Cognizant of limited resources, the Partnership will prioritize which of the 12 conservation strategies to address annually through the annual Request for Proposals for National Fish Habitat Partnership funds process. This will ensure the Partnership is responsive to changing land and water conditions, improvements in our science knowledge, and progress toward our conservation targets, such that the Partnership will invest our time and energy into activities providing the greatest benefit to Mat-Su Basin salmon habitat.

In addition to identification of Partnership strategic focus, the Steering Committee worked with the Science and Data Committee and subject matter experts within the Partnership to provide minor updates to conservation objectives found in this Addendum and 2013 Strategic Action Plan.

In summary, the Strategic Plan Committee envisioned that the Organizational Focus document would provide the Partnership with an organizational roadmap for the coming years. Concurrently, the 2013 Strategic Action Plan, with updated conservation objectives in this Addendum, continues to provide the Partnership and partner organizations with guidance on which actions to take to best achieve the Partnership's goals for salmon habitat protection and restoration in the Mat-Su Basin.

Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

ACOE
Army Corps of Engineers

ADFG
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

ADNR
Alaska Department of Natural Resources

AIS
Aquatic invasive species

AKRR
Alaska Railroad

Anadromous
Pertaining to fish that spend part of their life cycle in the sea and return to freshwater streams to spawn. This includes for example, salmon, steelhead, smelts, lampreys, whitefishes. This document refers to streams with anadromous fish habitat as Anadromous Streams, though the more correct terminology is Anadromous Fish Streams.

AWC
Anadromous Waters Catalog.

BMP
Best Management Practices

CAP
Conservation Action Planning

Conservation
The protection, improvement and responsible use of natural resources to provide social and economic value for the present and future.

Conservation easement
An agreement between a landowner and a private land trust or government. The agreement limits certain uses on all or a portion of a property for conservation purposes while keeping the property in the landowner's ownership and control. The agreement is usually tailored to the particular property and to the goals of the owner and conservation organization. It applies to present and future owners of the land.

Conservation Strategy
Composed of objectives, which define a vision of conservation success, and strategic actions that will achieve the objective.

DOT
Alaska Department of Transportation

Floodplain
Relatively flat area found alongside the stream channel that is prone to flooding and receives alluvium deposits from these inundation events.

Estuary
Somewhat enclosed coastal area at the mouth of a river where nutrient rich fresh water meets with salty ocean water.

FWS
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

GIS
Global Information System. A computer information system that can input, store, manipulate, analyze, and display geographically referenced data to support the decision-making processes of an organization. A map based on a database or databases.

Impervious Surfaces
Surfaces of land where water cannot infiltrate back into the ground such as driveways, streets, parking lots and roofs. Lawns with underlying soils compacted by heavy machinery can be impervious.

Invasive Species
A species of plant, animal or insect that is 1) non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and 2) whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasive species are most often spread through deliberate or accidental human transport.

MSB
The Matanuska-Susitna Borough, often referred to as the “Mat-Su Borough.”

NFHP
National Fish Habitat Partnership

NHD
National Hydrography Dataset

OHV
Off-highway vehicle

OSDS
Onsite disposal system. Also known as a septic system.

Riparian Area/Habitat/Zone
An area of land and vegetation adjacent to a stream, including the stream bank and adjoining floodplain, and is distinguishable from upland areas in terms of vegetation, soils, and topography. Zone width varies based on vegetation, geomorphology, and sensitivity of land to disturbance, though standard widths can be defined for classes of waterbodies.

USGS
U.S. Geological Survey

Watershed
A watershed is the area of land where all of the water drains to the same place (river, lake, estuary, or ocean) – this includes water that flows on the surface and water located underground. Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. Large watersheds may be composed of several smaller "subwatersheds", each of which contributes runoff to different locations that ultimately combine at a common delivery point.

Wetland
Wetlands are those areas where water saturation is the dominant factor determining the nature of soil development and the types of plant and animal communities living in the surrounding area. Wetlands are typically defined by one or more attributes: at some point of time in the growing season the substrate is periodically or permanently saturated with or covered by water; periodically, the land supports predominantly water-loving plants such as cattails, rushes, or sedges; the area contains undrained, wet soil which is anaerobic, or lacks oxygen in the upper levels. Wetlands subject to Clean Water Act Section 404 are defined as “areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.”