

Gabe Kitter
Fish and Wildlife Commission
Matanuska Susitna Borough
Public Testimony
2024 UCI Board of Fisheries Meeting

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board

For the record, my name is Gabe Kitter

I currently serve as a member of the Mat Su Fish and Wildlife Commission

- My testimony today will lay out the value of the Mat Su Basin and habitat it has to offer to the Cook Inlet fishery as a whole if fish are able to successfully migrate through to the Northern District.
- I would like you all to refer to PC-138 and see the majority of my testimony can be found on pages 21 through 24.
- As you turn to those pages of the Mat Su Booklet "*It Takes Fish To Make Fish*". I would like to start with the Map on Page 22. This map clearly lays out the minute area currently developed in (in Red) in comparison to the remainder of available and viable habitat amongst 4000 miles of tributary streams documented in the anadromous waters catalog.
- The Susitna Basin is approximately 20,600 square miles.
- At the heart of the Susitna basin is of course The Susitna River. From source to salt, the Susitna River is about 320 miles.
- This is home to everything from the sport fishing opportunities at the mouth of Fish Creek, the popular resident and guided sport fish opportunities of the Deshka, to the Subsistence fish wheels near Skwentna.
- This is not to mention the other habitat aside from the Susitna River like the Little Susitna, Jim Creek, Goose Creek, Cottonwood Creek and Big Lakes Fish Creek to name a few. All of which are surrounded by viable and healthy habitat.
- These systems are home to a multitude of opportunity for all users both for residents to fill the freezers and nonresidents to boost the local economy.
- The Susitna River supports Alaska's fourth largest population and second largest recreational King fishery. The Susitna River at one time was the 3rd largest Sockeye producer and could be a large contributor for coho.

- All of this area with good habitat is for nothing if it is not adequately provided with salmon.
- Think of the Susitna basin as a large portion of our field that has the potential and history to grow an abundant and sustainable crop. The land is there, the water is there, Now its time to seed the field.
- With a massive amount of habitat in the Susitna Basin, the passage of more fish north would improve the productivity of Susitna salmon, providing shared harvest opportunity for all users, from the commercial users at the lowest reaches of cook inlet to the subsistence fish wheels in Skwentna.
- All of this said, this land filled with fish habitat is here for the salmon to utilize and all of us to benefit from. We just have to allow the fish to get there and do the work for us.

Thank you all very much for your time and consideration