

# South Knik River Comprehensive Plan



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CODE ORDINANCE

Sponsored by: Borough Manager  
Introduced: 02/18/14  
Public Hearing: 03/04/14  
Postponed to 06/17/14: 03/04/14  
Adopted: 06/17/14

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH  
ORDINANCE SERIAL NO. 14-042**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY AMENDING  
MSB 15.24.030(B)(36) AND ADOPTING THE SOUTH KNIK RIVER  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

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BE IT ENACTED:

Section 1. Classification. This ordinance is of a general  
and permanent nature and shall become a part of the Borough  
code.

Section 2. Adoption of plan. The Assembly hereby adopts the  
South Kink River Comprehensive Plan 2014.

Section 3. Amendment of paragraph. MSB 15.24.030(B) is  
hereby amended as follows:

**(36) South Knik River Comprehensive Plan.**

Section 4. Effective date. This ordinance shall take  
effect upon adoption.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 17  
day of June, 2014.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LARRY DEVILBISS, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Sykes, Beck, Arvin, Colligan, Salmon,  
Colver, and Halter

## **Acknowledgements:**

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Steve Colligan, Assembly District 4

Jim Sykes, Assembly District 1

Darcie Salmon, Assembly District 5

Mathew Beck, Assembly District 2

Jim Colver, Assembly District 6

Ronald Arvin, Assembly District 3

Vern Halter, Assembly District 7

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	1
PURPOSE OF PLANNING.....	1
BOROUGH PLANNING PROCESS .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	4
LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION.....	4
RESIDENTIAL PROFILE .....	5
HISTORY .....	7
GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGICAL HISTORY .....	7
NATIVE HISTORY .....	8
HOMESTEADING.....	12
AREA WIDE SETTLEMENT.....	13
SOUTH KNIK ROAD SETTLEMENT .....	14
REFERENCES .....	19
SOUTH KNIK RIVER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN .....	21
LAND USE PLAN .....	22
COMMUNITY CHARACTER .....	22
LAND OWNERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT.....	22
PUBLIC LANDS .....	22
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT .....	23
COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT .....	23
INDUSTRIAL & NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT.....	24
DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO THROUGH ROAD CORRIDORS.....	27
JUNKYARDS, JUNK, AND TRASH .....	28
PUBLIC FACILITIES PLAN.....	30
PUBLIC FACILITIES IN GENERAL .....	30
BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....	30
LIBRARY .....	30
POSTAL SERVICE.....	30
CEMETERY SITES.....	31

FIRE/AMBULANCE SERVICE .....	31
PUBLIC SAFETY/POLICE .....	32
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION .....	33
PUBLIC UTILITIES .....	33
PARKS, RECREATION & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE .....	35
PUBLIC RECREATION SITES.....	35
TRAILS AND PUBLIC ACCESS .....	37
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.....	40
TRANSPORTATION PLAN .....	43
STATE ROADS AND HIGHWAY .....	43
BOROUGH ROADS .....	44
AVIATION .....	45
NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION.....	47
APPENDICES: A-D	
APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOUNDARY MAP	
APPENDIX B: SERVICE AREA MAPS - ROAD & FIRE	
APPENDIX C: NATIVE ALLOTMENT LANDS	
APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS	

## PREFACE

### PURPOSE OF PLANNING

The purpose of planning is to provide the residents, property owners and other members of the community the ability to make effective decisions about the needs and goals of their community. In 1970 the Borough wrote the first Borough-Wide Comprehensive Plan, when the population was just 6,509 people. Since then, the population within the Borough has increased to over 89,000 people. As a result, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan has been recently updated (2005) to reflect the changing needs of Borough residents. There are a number of people who currently reside in the Borough that were not involved in the 1970 planning process. This comprehensive plan expands upon the Borough-wide 1970 plan and the Borough-wide 2005 update with recommendations developed specifically by the South Knik River Community.

A comprehensive plan is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public, of a community. It is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public's peace, health, and safety.

Alaska Statutes Title 29.40.030 requires that the assembly of a second-class borough adopt a comprehensive plan by ordinance. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough was incorporated as a second-class borough in 1964. Alaska Statute defines a comprehensive plan as "a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, and maps for guiding the physical, social, and economic development, both private and public," of an area. The comprehensive plan may include, but is not limited to statements of policies, goals, standards, a land use plan, a community facilities plan, and recommendations for implementation of the comprehensive plan.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Title 15.24.030 requires the Borough Assembly to prepare comprehensive plans designed to:

- Promote safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic, prevent congestion and preserve the function of roads;
- Secure safety from fire, flood, pollution, and other dangers;
- Promote health and general welfare;
- Provide for orderly development with a range of population densities, in harmony with the ability to provide services efficiently, while avoiding overcrowding of population;
- Provide adequate light and air;
- Preserve the natural resources;
- Preserve property values;
- Promote economic development;
- Facilitate adequate provision for transportation, water, waste disposal, schools, recreation, and other public requirements.

The comprehensive plan provides the community with a method of analyzing past development and influencing the future outlook of their community. Information about a community, its

economy, land use, public facilities, and transportation facilities are collected and analyzed. Projections of community growth and future needs are made. Through citizen participation, community goals and objectives are identified. Recommendation for land use, public facilities, and transportation facilities are developed based on these goals and objectives.

The effectiveness of a plan is determined by the extent to which it is used. Public agencies use a comprehensive plan as a guide when determining the best location of schools, parks, streets, and other public improvements. The comprehensive plan enables a community to reserve land necessary for public uses in advance of rising costs or competing land use. The plan is also a guide to individuals and private companies when making investment and development decisions. It should be used a guide whenever questions affecting development within the community arise.

Planning should be a continuing process. A comprehensive plan is based on information available at a particular time. In the future, new developments may occur and the needs of the community may change, at that time the plan should be reviewed and updated. Because of the rapid growth within the Borough and the potential development impacts to the South Knik River community, the Community Council requested that a comprehensive plan be created in 2006.

### **BOROUGH PLANNING PROCESS**

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough was incorporated January 1, 1964 as a second-class borough. Alaska Statute, Title 29, Chapter 40 directs that the assembly of a second-class borough, with the recommendations of the Planning Commission, adopt a comprehensive plan. Alaska Statutes further require the assembly, after receiving the recommendations of the planning commission, undertake an overall review of the comprehensive plan and update the plan as necessary.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission is required by State Law to develop a Comprehensive Plan for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. It is the intent of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough government to learn of and respect each community's desires for its present and future way of life and to insure that these desires become each community's portion of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan. It will be the responsibility of the community to determine the extent of, or lack of land use restrictions to be applied in the community.

Based on the Assembly's action, the Planning Commission established a process for developing community based comprehensive plans. Under the process, local planning activities may be initiated by request of a community or area. A request for local planning assistance is forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration. Upon Planning Commission approval of the request, planning staff advertises for members of a local advisory planning "team."

The Borough requires that an individual be a resident, property owner, business owner, or agency with an interest within the planning area boundaries in order to participate in the planning process. All applications for membership on the planning team were reviewed and appointments made by the Planning Commission.

In 2006, the South Knik River Community Council (SKRCC) made a formal request to the Planning Commission to create a comprehensive plan. Their request was approved by the



Planning Commission and a citizens' planning team was formed in 2007 for the development of the South Knik River Comprehensive Plan.

During the planning effort a community survey was conducted. The survey was prepared by the planning team and conducted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Department. In February 2009, these surveys were mailed to all South Knik property owners who have listed mailing addresses with the Borough's assessments department. These surveys have been useful in identifying community concerns and desires.

The planning team finalized their recommendations and released a draft plan for a 30-day public review and comment period in October of 2009. Comments were received from 9 individuals/organizations. The planning team met for several months following the comments and community feedback. A final plan containing the amendments based on community feedback was forwarded to the community council in February of 2011. Over the course of five months the community council reviewed and made additional amendments to the plan. A draft was approved and forwarded to the Planning Commission for adoption by the SKRCC on June 4, 2011 and finalized in their minutes in April of 2012. The Planning Commission adopted Resolution 13-01 in January of 2013, recommending Assembly approval of the plan. On March 4, 2014 the Assembly postponed the adoption of the plan to a time certain on June 17, 2014. Assemblymember Sykes made the recommendation to postpone in order to conduct additional public involvement. Assemblymember Sykes was concerned that due to the length of time that had passed since the community council had last handled the plan the community may no longer be reflected in the document. Based on the Assembly's request, staff worked with the community council and held several additional public meetings, opened a 30-day public comment period, and sent out a community-wide mailing. The community council held two meetings in May of 2014 where comments on the plan were discussed and changes to the plan were voted on. The amended plan was voted on and adopted by the community council on May 15, 2014 and was forwarded immediately to the Assembly for the June 17, 2014 Assembly meeting.

This plan shall be reviewed for suggested up-dates at least every five years by the SKRCC.

## INTRODUCTION

### LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION

South Knik River is an unincorporated community located in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in South Central Alaska. The community borders along the south side of the Knik River, which flows into the Knik Arm of the Cook Inlet. South Knik River is located 10 miles south of Palmer on the Old Glenn Highway. The planning area encompasses approximately 90.4 square miles of land and 2.8 square miles of water, identical to the boundaries of the SKRCC, a legal description of the planning area is described below.

*An area of land located within Township 16 North, Ranges 1 through 5 East, Seward Meridian, Palmer Recording District, Third Judicial District Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska, and more particularly described as follows:*

*T16N, R1E, Sections 1 through 3, 10 through 14, and 23 and 24 lying southerly of the thread (center of aggregate braided channels) of the Knik River and easterly of the centerline of the Glenn Highway as it leads north to its intersection with the Parks Highway approximately 4.5 miles distant.*

*T16N, R2E, All lying southerly of the thread (center of aggregate braided channels) of the Knik River.*

*T16N, R3E, Sections 2 through 36 lying southerly of the thread (center of aggregate braided channels) of the Knik River.*

*T16N, R4E, Sections 16 through 36 lying southerly of the thread (center of aggregate braided channels) of the Knik River.*

*T16N, R5E, Sections 29 through 33 lying southerly of the thread (center of aggregate braided channels) of the Knik River.*



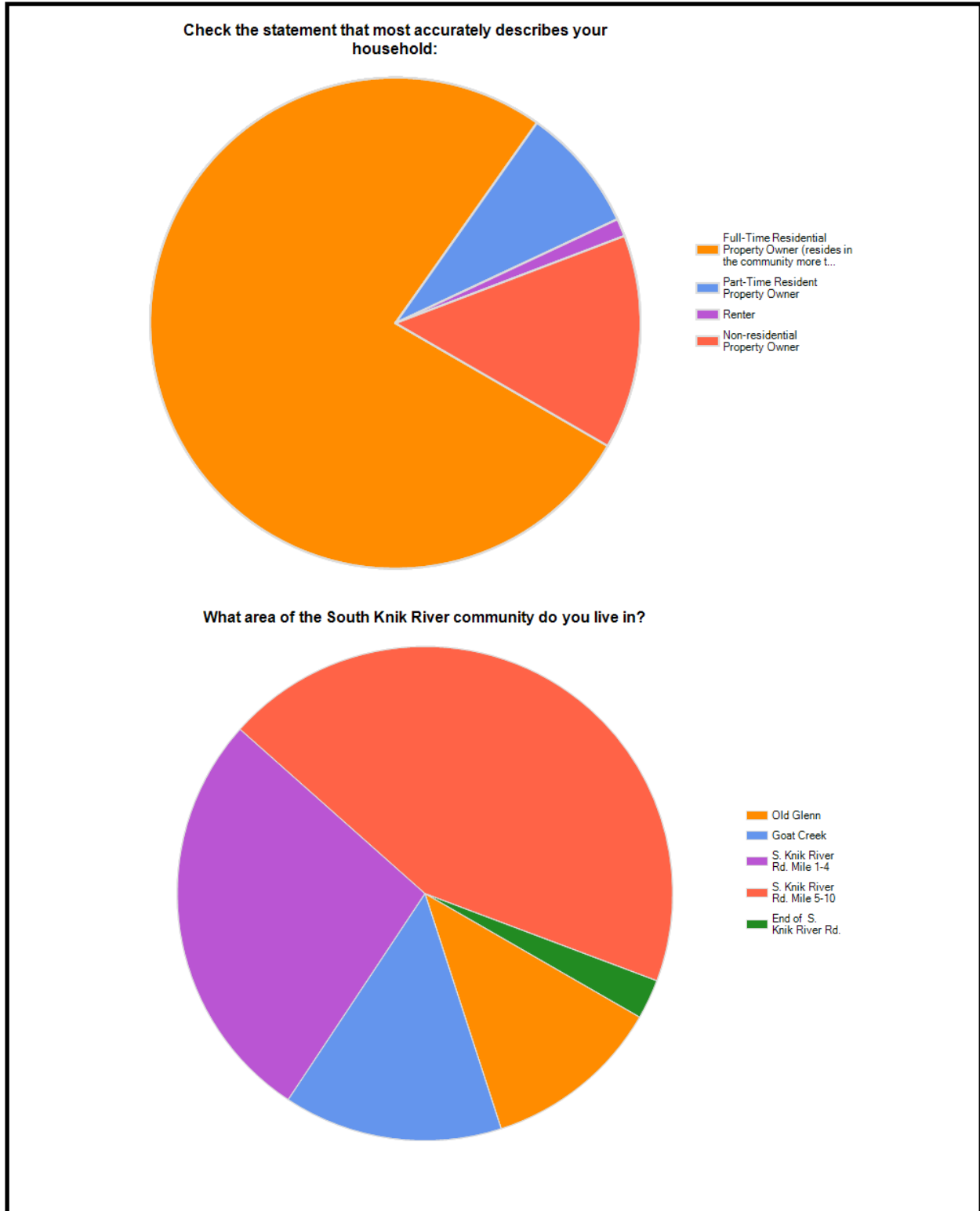
Photo By: Lauren Driscoll

### **RESIDENTIAL PROFILE**

The South Knik River Area is a diverse community. Many of the residents and their families have lived in the area for generations, while others have recently moved in. Through the community survey conducted in May of 2009, a snapshot was created that described the community's current residential profile. Questions were asked regarding where people lived in the community, where they worked, and if they were full time residents. Information gathered from these questions gave the citizen planning team information needed to help tailor the comprehensive to best reflect the South Knik River Community residents.

## 2009 SURVEY RESULTS: COMMUNITY PROFILE

Below are just two of the 19 questions asked on the survey. The survey was mailed to all residents of the community council, responses could be mailed in or entered on-line. See Appendix D for a full review of the survey questions and results.



## HISTORY

### GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

Carved by the recession of the last glaciation, Knik River Community Council area encompasses the Chugach Range and Pioneer Peak, the latter is one of the highest mountains in the Knik and Matanuska valleys.



Photo by: State of Alaska Archives

At the head of Knik River lies the Knik Glacier, one of three major glaciers that helped form the Matanuska, Susitna and Knik River valley. It was the most active glacier in the region during the late Pleistocene - early Holocene era. Unique geological features may be found at the head of Knik Arm as testament to Knik glacier's most recent activity dating between 22,000 and 9,500 years ago. The prominent Elmendorf moraine and Goose Bay formations, defining the Point MacKenzie region, was formed by a resurgence of the Knik Glacier. Other features easily recognized are the arterial streams, lakes and waterways, numerous terraces, knolls, and ridge complexes. The most well-known, geologically unique feature located at the head of Knik Arm is the Crevasse-fill-ridge complex known locally as the "Crevasse Moraine" (**Péwé and R.D. Reger: 200-209**).

The Knik Glacier feeds Knik River at the southeast end of the valley. Lake George Glacier joins the Knik Glacier from the south, above the Knik River Valley. Over the years melt waters have created a pond, forming Inner Lake George (created where the two glaciers come together).

Occasionally, melt-waters have overflowed the lake, causing major flooding in the lower reaches of the valley. Flooding from Lake George occurred on several occasions in the late Nineteenth to mid-Twentieth Century (ibid) often flooding villages and changing the course of the Knik River. Since the mid-1960s flooding ceased in the area due to the receding glacier.

Other geological activities that have helped define the Knik River region are earthquakes generated from several identified faults. The 1964 earthquake was reportedly the largest quake ever recorded in North America. Coastal lands were lowered in the Cook Inlet region, including what was known as the Hay Flats at the head of Knik Arm. Salt sea water in the estuaries inundated the land, causing trees, grasses and wildflowers to die. Today the region is on the rebound, the land is rising and fresh water is filling small ponds and diluting the brine-laden sea water. Fresh water ponds and sloughs are once again attracting small game and water fowl, in addition to supporting wild flowers.



Photo by: State of Alaska Archives

## NATIVE HISTORY

### Alutiiq

It is unknown when the earliest people arrived in the region, nor from whence they came. There have been conflicting theories, some say they came by land and others by sea. We do know the proto Alutiiq people were in the valley at least two to three thousand years ago (Kachemak Culture) (**Bill Workman pers. Com**). We also know that the earliest migrations of people into the valley, south of the Alaska Range occurred as early as circa 8,000 years ago. Evidence of their hunting camps have been found above the Chulitna, Susitna and Matanuska Rivers and as

far south as the Butte and Beluga Point, located on Turn Again Arm (**Yarborough's pers. Com.**) (**Seager-Boss, Stone and Wygal 2005**) and (**Reger 1981**) (**Dixon et. al 1985**). Stone tools have been found on numerous promontories marking campsites used as excellent lookouts for game movement above major waterways. The earliest hunters and gatherers came through the Alaska Range, following large Pleistocene game and caribou. Rivers were ideal conduits providing corridors for game and for early hunters in pursuit of them.

At the same time the valley was being settled by hunters and gatherers another phenomenon was taking place. As the climate changed, various types of forestation was occurring; by 7,000 years ago the first spruce trees began to appear and approximately 2,000 years later most of the vegetation experienced today could be found. Changes in vegetation ushered in small fur bearers in addition to enabling an anadromous fish to spawn by working their way up major waterways from the ocean.

The proto-Alutiiq (Kachemak people) enjoyed a Riverine occupation. Adapting to a coastal way of life they took advantage of marine mammals in addition to catching fish spawning in the inland waterways. Some inland Alutiiq sites have been excavated by archaeologists (**Greg Dixon 1996**) and others have been reported to Jim Fall and Jim Kari by Shem Pete (**Fall & Kari 2003**). Shem Pete reported sites as far north as Willow and there reportedly was a major battle that occurred with the Alutiiq west of Talkeetna near the Kahiltna Glacier.

It is probable that the upland hunters were of an Athabascan speaking people while the Riverine people were related to the Eskimo of Kodiak and Kachemak Bay (Alutiiq). Evidence of both cultures living in the region has been recovered by archaeological work.



Photo by: State of Alaska Archives

The Athabascan Dena'ina eventually pushed out the Alutiiq people from the coast and took over the Upper and Outer Cook Inlet region. Cook Inlet is the only coastal area the inland Athabascans populated. Because of the lushness of vegetation, the abundance of fur bearers and fish, the normally nomadic Athabascans settled into a more sedentary lifestyle. They became known as the rich people by their inland cousins because of the wealth in subsistence foodstuffs.

Before the Athabascans could be completely comfortable in their new environment there were numerous skirmishes between the two populations. One of the most important last battles between the Dena'ina and the Alutiiq reportedly occurred near Point Woronzof, at Campbell Point in Anchorage. There were apparently several versions of the story. They all related to the Alutiiq attacking a Dena'ina village on upper Knik Arm. At Campbell Point in Anchorage a fierce battle took place and most of the Alutiiq warriors retreated or were killed. The Dena'ina Chief in charge of the battle lived near what today is known as Knik, located on the west side Knik Arm (Fall & Kari 2003).

#### **Dena'ina Athabascans and the Copper River Ahtna**

The Dena'ina Athabascans referred to the Knik River as "Skitnu" "Mouth of brush River" where the small Athabascan village of Niteh "among the Islands" used to be. Although there are no Russian records mentioning an active trading post in Upper Cook Inlet, there were attempts at creating Russian settlements in Cook Inlet Region during a 10 year period from 1835-1845. Matanuska and Knik were mentioned as possibilities for colonization under an ambitious Russian program that included numerous communities in Cook Inlet (Okun 1951:174). Niniichik was the only agricultural success (Tikhmenev 1978:416). Although Russian settlements were not established on Knik Arm, that does not preclude construction of a trading post. It is likely that a Russian American Company (RAC) Trading Post operated near the confluence of Knik River with Knik Arm at least on a seasonal basis.





Copper River Athabascans had mentioned to Frederica de Laguna that they had traded at a Russian post at Knik. Jim Fall (1981:392) pointed out that both Wrangle's map of 1839 and Zagoskin's 1847 map indicated a settlement, "Dorf Nuchta" or post "Nikta," at the head of Knik Arm. At the time of the United States purchase of Alaska in 1869, the post at Knik may have been part of the RAC assets sold to a private business that later became the Alaska Commercial Company.

We do know however, that an American Commercial Company trading post was operating at the head of Knik Arm by the 1880s. The Ezi family lived near the confluence of Knik River with Knik Arm. Their extended family and helpers had a small village there. Their family was of mixed blood with the Copper River Ahtna who frequently travelled down the Matanuska River to fish with the Ezi family at Fire Island, a major gathering place for many Athabascan families during the summer. A young woman named Olga from Lake Tyone and daughter of a Copper River, Ahtna chief had fallen in love with a man at Point Woronzof while attending fish camp. During one winter she travelled down the Matanuska River alone to visit the young man she had met at the camp; his name was Basdut Isia (later called Simeon Ezi). Living with the family for a year she gave birth to a baby boy. It was not long thereafter that her father came to visit. It was during his visit that Lake George unleashed its waters washing away their village. At the same time the trading post was carried down river onto Fire Island with most of its contents intact. The goods ended up being washed ashore on the Island giving Athabascan fishermen a bonus in goods carried by the currents and waves. They salvaged suspenders, ties, hats and boots to name a few of the items deposited on the island.

Possessing traditional knowledge of the rivers and Inlet currents the young Olga's father suggested she tell her husband young Simeon to start looking for the Trading Post's safe. The

culmination of many days of probing the river bottom with a staff his father-in-law had given him finally had its rewards, the young man found the safe and the gold within. He became a wealthy man, sharing some of his good fortune by holding potlatches (Fall & Kari 293-95). He later owned a boat with which he not only gave transportation to his fellow Athabascans, but also for a fee, assisted in ferrying passengers and goods from Ship Creek, the deep water port to Knik on the west side of Cook Inlet. Between 1896 through 1916, west Knik town site played an important role as a redistribution hub for transporting people and goods to the interior Upper Cook Inlet gold mines.

### **Ahtna Athabascans**

The Ahtna Athabascans came into the area from the eastern Copper River valleys. Although they often had skirmishes with the Dena'ina they also visited, traded with and married Dena'ina people. In so doing the lower Matanuska and Knik River people were often fluent in both languages. Their intermarriage gave birth to a third group called the "mountain people," who lived in the Talkeetna Mountains between the two groups and enjoyed good relations and trading with both cultural affiliates. Ahtna people living on the eastern fringe of the valley from Chickaloon to Lake Louise enjoyed winters in the lower valley visiting relatives, often times staying for several weeks to get away from the harsh winters of the interior. Copper River Ahtna also came down in the summer to catch and dry fish at the numerous fish camps located in Upper Cook Inlet. Today, just as with the Ezi family, many of the lower valley people are related to both groups.

### **HOMESTEADING**

Between 1911 and 1915 a base cadastral survey of the valley was conducted. Choosing Seward Meridian as the centerline between East and West Townships and Ranges, a rectangular survey of the lower valley was surveyed and made available for homestead applications. Acting on a U.S. government initiative a number of farmers with equipment and stock arrived in 1913 and 1914 to start settling in the valley as homesteaders. Between January and March of 1915, 132 homestead applications were made (Seager-Boss & Roberts 1992). Most settled near the booming town of Knik. Established in 1898 Knik, situated on the west coast of Knik Arm, became a hub for miners traveling into Upper Cook Inlet. By 1913 it was well-established with numerous trails radiating to various mining concerns. Knik was a major stop on the Iditarod trail connecting it to the Iditarod-Innoko mining region. The town boasted a population of approximately 500 with miners swelling the population in winter when they came off the creeks. Integrated with the native community, 60 children were enrolled in the local school.

Many of the homestead applicants were miners and trappers who had already settled in the valley but had not registered or applied for homesteads due to the high costs of conducting surveys before a base survey had been mapped. In 1915 the U.S. Department of Agriculture started to build an Experiment Farm to support the homesteaders in their agricultural endeavors. That same year saw construction of a railroad from Anchorage to Fairbanks with a spur line connecting the coal fields of the Matanuska with the new railroad town of Anchorage. A siding went to Palmer.

### **Homestead Acts**

The 1862 Homestead Act allowed any head of household 21 years or older to acquire title to 160 acres of land from the public domain by cultivating at least 10% of the land and residing upon it

for 5 consecutive years. Although the United States acquired Alaska in 1867 it was not until 1898 that Congress extended the Homestead Act to Alaska. Alaskans however, could only file on 80 acres for a homestead and had to pay \$15 - \$20 a day for surveys to be conducted. The Enlarged Homestead Act was passed in 1909, enabling farmers to acquire 640 acres for agricultural use that enabled them to include grazing land for live stock. Homesteaders were still required to follow the same provisions set forth in the 1862 Act. In addition to problems with a short growing season, often clearing and planting crops within Alaska became a challenge due to thick boreal forests and thin inadequate soils for planting.

Title 43, Part 2560 enacted March 3, 1927 enabled the conveyance of five acres or less as home sites or headquarter sites at a cost of \$2.50 per acre. Families entering Alaska took advantage of the new category. Other initiatives were given to military personnel who were encouraged to file an application for homestead lands but did not have to follow the stringent requirements that civilians had to follow. World War II witnessed the building and growth of military bases outside of Anchorage. Following the end of the war many soldiers decided to apply for homesteads in the Matanuska and Susitna Valley.

Following Statehood in 1959 the State of Alaska created public land disposal programs. In 1977 the Homesite Law provided for "free land" with provisions similar those of the federal Homestead Act. In 1984, the Homestead Program was initiated, allowing for the claim of 40 non-agricultural acres or 160 agricultural acres of land. The requirements for homesteaders eventually came to include U.S. citizenship and residency in Alaska for one year prior to filing as well as certain surveying, clearing and building obligations. Homesteading in Alaska ceased in 1986.

### **Railroad Construction**

Construction of the railroad diminished Knik's importance and within a year the town was abandoned by the commercial sector. New towns were established along the railroad line. Wasilla was located at a major junction between Knik and gold mines in the Talkeetna Mountains. Even Homesteaders reapplied for new locations, allowing them to be reachable by the railroad, thereby enabling them to move their produce to the fledgling town of Anchorage. The Ezi family had to give up their traditional home near the confluence of Knik River to make way for the railroad.

Many of the early homesteaders left their farms at the outbreak of World War I to participate in the war. Only a handful of the original 400 stayed on to build their lives in the valley. The upper Knik River area became a favorite hunting region for Dahl sheep and bears. Many guides took their clients there with confidence of success in their hunting endeavors (Russel Annabel).

### **AREA WIDE SETTLEMENT**

Five other major events brought new people to the Valley. In 1935, during the Great Depression, under the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 204 families were brought from the Great Lakes States to the Matanuska Valley as part of a resettlement program. Twenty years of experimental farming had proven the Matanuska Valley could support farms. Referred to as colonists, families were chosen from the impoverished, upper reaches of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Given a chance to farm the Matanuska Valley and considered hardy enough to

withstand Alaskan winters most families were of Scandinavian decent. As the town was constructed and people moved into their government provided housing, part of the project money went into construction of a road connecting Palmer with Anchorage. Prior to that, the only means of travel to Anchorage was by rail a couple of times a week. The road and subsequent bridge across Knik River opened up new areas for settlement. Becoming the last hurdle to surmount, the Knik River Bridge was completed in 1937, linking Anchorage with the Colony settlement project in Palmer. With much fan fare and ribbon cutting, the mayor was there to open the new link to Anchorage.

World War II saw the region undergo a tremendous influx of people, equipment, and provisions of war. It created jobs for many settlers in the construction business, in addition to increased employment in the coal mines as demands came through to power the bases. At the end of the war numerous soldiers wanted to stay and settle in the Valley. Homesteading and applications for home sites spiked. A number of soldiers and civilians attached to the bases started looking into settling the Knik River Road area (although there was no road to speak of at the time).

An additional surge in homesteaders were brought in by better access and jobs related to the construction of the Eklutna Hydro Electric project in the early 1950s by the Department of Interior. In proportion to the smaller population of the time it was as significant as the Trans Alaska Pipeline would be 20 years later. The first permanent resident at the start of what would become Knik River Road also known as KRR, Lowell Simpson, was one of the original (early) regular employees at the power plant, retiring in the 1990s.

There were three very productive saw mills in the Goat Creek area that along with the Barnhardt Mill and others in the Butte which supplied lumber and house logs for the entire South Central area. The quest for timber led to a rudimentary trail approx 3 miles up the river. The “cat trail” was extended another three miles up the river in 1957 when the Military started preliminary work for Nike missile site. The Eisenhower administration reduced the program and after test wells and a helicopter pad were done, the area was abandoned.

Alaska statehood was achieved in 1959 bringing more people interested in the region. Once again the South Knik River area attracted new home builders and settlers. The largest influx of people into the area occurred when the oil pipeline was built in the 1970s from the Arctic to the port of Valdez. People poured into the valley seeking work on the pipeline and in the new oil fields opening up on the North Slope.

### **SOUTH KNIK ROAD SETTLEMENT**

To carve out a life and a living on South Knik River Road a person had to be hardy, ingenious, self reliant and ready for the unexpected. Life between the river and the mountain added extra challenges to an already rugged life. The river was subject to flooding that could ruin a person’s household goods and introduce several inches of mud into one’s living quarters. Another hazard (apart from the road being washed out) was the worry of avalanches in winter that sometimes swept down, moving a house or blocking the road. On occasion, Pioneer peak was known to shake its mantle, causing landslides without seeming provocation. If a family went into Anchorage for an evening event, they sometimes found themselves wearing high heels while trying to negotiate the washed out road that had occurred since leaving their home. In such

cases, the base of the mountain had to be climbed to bypass the roaring river. Other times when logs across George Creek were washed out, families had to relay children across the creek from one adult to another to keep them from being swept away (West, personal com.).



Photo by: State of Alaska Archives

Even in the rugged terrain of early life in South Knik River residents enjoyed the convenience of the Knik River Drive Inn. The Drive Inn was in operation throughout the 1950s, located at the south end of the Knik River Bridge. The Drive Inn offered the famous Husky Burger and ice cream. The Husky Burger is still enjoyed by many Valley residents still today at the fair and other summer festivals. The Drive Inn was run by South Knik River locals, Doris Simpson and Cynthia Plano (**Mark Simpson**). By 1959 and soon thereafter, people soon discovered there had been no surveys, no 'meets-and-bounds' and no road to access their homesteads or home sites. Hard work and the help of neighbors and friends enabled families to cultivate 20 acres or more and build their respective cabins. Some people acquired logs for their cabin from the military base. After reaching the river off the Old Glenn Highway (main road in those days) they had to drag the logs onto their site. It was not unheard of for families to winter over in a tent while clearing the land and building their house. The important fact was that everyone had to rely on each other to get by (**Knik River Community members**).



{Photo Caption: Circa 1966,  
(from left to right) Knik the dog, Jane Martin, Doreen Steffes, Sharon Martin}

The first Homestead beyond Bingham's Hill was the Steffes Family. Bingham's Hill (at mile 2) was a major impediment to the rest of the Knik River area. The Steffes' family were quickly followed by six more successful Homesteads (Dale Frie, Dick Feltman, Herb Newman, Joe Corneille, Lyle Straight, and Doc Jones). In 1966 the land up to Hunter Creek was no longer available for Homesteading due to a competing claim by the State of Alaska and Eklutna Inc, through the Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

Comforts taken for granted by most Americans in the 1950s through 1960s were not available on South Knik River. Few homes had indoor plumbing, and electricity was not available until 1978-1979. As late as 1979 a field phone was the only access people had for emergencies. To accommodate the lack of electricity, people made use of Aladdin or Kerosene lamps and the preferred methods of heat were barrel wood-burning stoves or oil stoves (ibid). As far as transportation, South Knik was limited; there was a two-track or trail, considered by locals to be a road. This "road" was subject to flooding on an annual basis during the spring and fall. Only two vehicles were available to traverse the lake in the road: the old reliable six by six 'ungainly' Jeep and a Dodge Power Wagon boom truck. Both vehicles saw extra work and volunteer hours by their respective owners when ferrying people and goods through the muck. Most residents had to leave their cars on the Glenn Highway side of the floods. The early Homesteaders upgraded the "cat trail" to a "jeep trail," as far as the Jones' Homestead, about Mile 7.5 on the current road.



There was a three-year period between 1966 and 1970 when land was open to entry up river from Hunter Creek. The second wave of Homesteaders was led by Jim Atkinson, John Nystrom and Barney Eberhardt in 1967 and 1968. Eberhardt bought an old cable blade D8 Cat and made a cat trail from the Jones' Homestead to the other side of Hunter Creek. Other Homesteaders soon followed and upgraded the trail to jeep status: the Fosters, the Read Brothers, The Lauxs, The Pogues, and Ed Rush.

These 16 Homesteads successfully wrestled away from the government anywhere from 5 to 160 acres of land. Today hundreds of people live along Knik River Road. Anyone beyond Bingham's Hill lives on acreages provided by one of the Homesteads.

This brings us to the final, and probably most important, development for the Knik Valley, construction of Knik River Road (KRR). In 1970 the Homesteaders formed the Knik River Homesteaders Association to lobby for the construction of an actual road. The jeep trail was often impossible for regular four wheel drive. The one lane trail was frequently blocked by stuck or broke down hunters or tourists. The school-aged population grew to more than 25 students and the Borough School District contracted for a special six-wheel-drive school bus to ferry the kids to the main highway.



The community cause of building an actual road was helped by the fact that the intent of the original Homestead Act was to promote agricultural development. The average Alaskan Homesteader just went through the motions to do the minimum to meet the requirements. The Knik area did foster some actual farming/ranching. The original Steffes Homesteaders harvested hay at home and on the two adjoining Homesteads as well as having a full complement of farm animals. The Read family had a commercially successful truck garden as well as 20 acres of bluegrass seed production that helped seed the reclamation work on the oil pipeline project. The area currently has an organic soil and a tree boutique business, two small livestock growers that cater to the specialty market, and is the headquarters for the Borough's largest beef cattle operation.

The fact that some of the Homesteaders were actually interested in agriculture impressed the then Speaker of the State House of Representatives, Jalmer Kerttula. It was indeed fortunate that the State had just taken in 900 million dollars for the Prudhoe Bay oil leases in 1969. Rep Kerttula secured a 1.2 million appropriation to build the road. It took an extra year for surveying and engineering but the contract for the construction was let out in 1971 for approximately \$808,000. The road was completed in May of 1972. Today's scenic drive along the new paved road traverses a higher elevation, belying the tribulations of the past. Many of the same families live along the road that once was such a challenge to their lives. The road is what propelled the



community forward from a tight knit but sometimes contentious pioneering group to a modern community that is part suburban-rural and part business-commercial.

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*A special thank you to Fran Seager Boss and Vickie Cole for helping to write and research this section of the Plan with local residents.*

# SOUTH KNIK RIVER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Community Goal

*“The South Knik River Community is a scenic, quiet, rural community. It is the desire of the community to preserve the area’s scenic and residential qualities including high air and water quality, quiet atmosphere, privacy and outdoor recreation opportunities.*

*Growth and development should be limited and controlled in a way that does not impact in a detrimental manner, the quiet, rural atmosphere desired by this community.”*



## LAND USE

The residents of the South Knik River Community have made a decision to live in the area not as a matter of convenience, but of choice. Members of the South Knik River Community reside in the planning area despite the lack of natural gas and other utilities, the lack of commercial amenities provided in a more urban environment, and often despite the need to work far from their residence. <sup>1</sup>From 2008 to 2010, the population grew from 677 individuals to approximately 744 residents. The overriding attraction of this area includes its incredible scenic views, quiet atmosphere, low moderate traffic volumes, clean environment, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Recent issues, such as a massive influx of tourism to the end of the road, frequent daily helicopter traffic, and its associated vehicular traffic through the community, the Knik River Public Use Area (KRPUA), excessive litter, transportation and traffic concerns, and the unsafe discharge of weapons prompted the creation of a South Knik River Comprehensive Plan.

It is the desire of the community to preserve the residential qualities that have made the South Knik River Community such an attractive place to live and control future amenities and development that are desirable to the community through prior approval by the SKRCC.

### COMMUNITY CHARACTER

When area residents were asked about the community's character, surveys and public comments show that for most residents, the area's quiet rural atmosphere is one of the top motivations for living in the South Knik River Community. This character includes low density housing, limited traffic, few governmental services, pristine views, presence of wildlife, and ready access to trails, rivers, lakes, and recreation. Strategies to maintain and enhance this rural character include:

#### Recommendation:

- **Protect air, water, wildlife, and land quality while reducing impacts to nearby properties from traffic, noise, pollution, lighting, etc.**
- **Protect recreation opportunities and enhance the quality of life for South Knik River Community residents.**
- **Ensure future development is compatible with adjacent properties and has gone through a review period that includes at least one meeting of the SKRCC.**

## LAND OWNERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

### PUBLIC LANDS

Publicly owned lands (which includes Federal, State and MSB land) represent approximately 74% percent<sup>2</sup> of the land in the South Knik boundaries, or 36,728 acres (57 square miles). It should be noted that much of the recognized public land will be or is in the process of being

<sup>1</sup> Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development. (2010, January 1). *Community Database Online*. Retrieved June 5, 2014, from

<http://commerce.alaska.gov/cra/DCRAExternal/Community/Details/995402bc-ed28-44f3-a42b-d8f5b28a13fd>.

<sup>2</sup> SKRCC boundary is 49,536 acres in size. Private land = 15 percent, public land = 74 percent, remaining percentages fall into the categories of Right of Way (ROW) or water bodies.

conveyed to Eklutna Inc., an Alaska Native Corporation. These lands are being conveyed as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Later in this document the section titled, Trails and Public Access, goes into greater detail on the subject of ANCSA conveyed lands and Appendix C gives two maps illustrating the change in land status.

### **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The 2009 community survey shows 42.1% of respondents indicate diverse recreational opportunities as an important part of why they live in the South Knik River Community. Many of the area's recreation activities are further supported by the community's other priorities, scenic views, quiet atmosphere, and low traffic volumes. Residents feel a lifestyle that supports recreational opportunities in a rural community is best achieved with minimal growth and low density. This communal attitude is reflected in the community survey with 65.5% of respondents choosing minimal growth for the community over the next 10 years. Vast views, space, and recreational opportunities are available in the community because of the current development pattern and residents would like to keep it this way.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **The need to preserve the rural character with minimal growth is of the utmost importance to the population through preservation of natural vegetation, open space requirements, and vegetative buffers on water bodies.**
- **Protect water quality, soil erosion, and ensure that development can adequately provide infrastructure needs, such as roads, emergency access, and other related concerns.**
- **Provide for a variety of lot sizes and development patterns throughout the community, utilizing subdivision design methods that encourage rural character and green space.**

### **COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY**

Currently there is minimal commercial development within the planning area. The majority of existing commercial development is composed of a gun smith, tourism-related business, self-employed contractors and various home occupations. A number of small businesses dot the area. Businesses located on the first two miles of the Knik River Road include a professional photographer and a welding shop. Near Mile 5 is the Knik River Trading Post and a trucking firm for gravel, soil and other earth materials. Future business plans include a bed and breakfast and glass blowing shop. Further into the community, business at Mile 8 include a rural electrification enterprise, a metal salvage business, and a glacier viewing business. Businesses at Mile 9, south to the hillside, include a natural beef ranch and a natural soils and tree farm boutique. As the road comes to an end you will find a gunsmith shop and the Knik River Lodge. Residents have expressed a need to preserve the esthetics of the Knik River Road corridor from dense commercial development. Although the community includes small cottage industries and home-based businesses, it is not the desire of the community to see Knik River Road become a series of strip malls. The community also would like to discourage any business that has an impact on neighbors. The community supports the following services: small-scale retail, a general store, public transportation, small home-based businesses, and tourism.

**Recommendations:**

- **Determine commercial development standards based on the impacts to land, air and water quality, and wildlife (e.g. traffic, noise, lighting pollution, increased impervious surfaces, and the mission statement set forward in this plan).**
- **Protect residential neighborhoods and associated values.**
- **Encourage vegetative buffers, or other screening techniques to shield properties from incompatible uses.**
- **For the purpose of the South Knik River Community and this comprehensive plan, it is recommended that activities meeting or exceeding the thresholds below obtain a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and comply with the corresponding provisions. These uses have been recognized by the community because of the health and life safety risks imposed. Additionally, these activities and those exceeding the thresholds, negatively impact the rural character of the community.**
  - **Signage: Any permanent sign**
    - **Shall be consistent with the most current version of the Alaska Sign Design Specifications (ASDS) as provided by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT).**
  - **Noise: Any noise greater than 90 decibels at the source**
    - **Shall only be allowed during the hours between 8am to 9pm.**
  - **Safety: Outdoor firing ranges open to the public or for commercial purposes**
    - **Shall only be permissible 1,000 yards or greater in distance from private or residential properties.**

**INDUSTRIAL & NATURAL RESOURCE ACTIVITIES**

Of the three basic land uses (residential, commercial, and industrial), industrial (heavy or light) land uses are of the greatest concern to a small community. Heavy industrial activities often have significant impacts related to noise, visual qualities, dust and air quality, and traffic safety and volume. Currently, there are borough regulations pertaining to the establishment of incinerators, industrial processing and fuel burning equipment (MSB 8.30.125 & 8.30.130), interim materials district (gravel/natural resource extraction – MSB 17.28), conditional use permit for earth materials extraction activities (MSB 17.30), borough-wide conditional uses (MSB 17.60), conditional use permit for coal bed methane exploration and development (MSB 17.62), and conditional use permit for waste incineration (MSB 17.64). The Borough Wide Comprehensive Plan 2005 Update encourages commercial and industrial development that is compatible with residential development and local community desires. The community does not want large scale mining activities that affect the rural character of the community.

Industrial uses have the ability to provide significant economic benefit to the community. A local gravel source may be beneficial to local infrastructure and the economy. The South Knik River Community does not fit the typical geography of an area sought out for natural resource extraction and industrial activities. The majority of the South Knik River Community is constrained geographically by water bodies and steep slopes. In a world where our resources are depleting and the cost of shipping is increasing, we are seeing at an exponential rate

manufacturing and extracting sites that are smaller and closer to “home.” Therefore, the South Knik River Community is no longer excluded and/or protected from future industrial activities.

The community requires notification and an opportunity to be active in the decision making process regarding any proposed heavy or light industrial land uses. The industrial uses will be reviewed by the SKRCC on a case-by-case basis and encourage the mitigation of any negative impacts.

The SKRCC may take appropriate actions on their recommendation by issuing a letter of recommendation, a resolution, or conducting a community-wide community council vote. The community’s recommendation can be shared with the Assembly, Planning Commission, developer and/or other interested stakeholders. Heavy industrial uses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and be allowed only if it is possible to mitigate any severe negative impacts.

### **Recommendations:**

#### Industrial Activities

- **The community has no desire to allow or encourage heavy industrial.**
- **In order to maintain air, water, and land quality, reduce noise, minimize visual impacts and lighting pollution to residential areas and the natural environment:**
  - **Heavy industrial uses may be allowed only if they meet conditional use permitting requirements and the goals and recommendations stated in this plan.**
- **For the purpose of the South Knik River Community and this comprehensive plan, it is recommended that activities meeting or exceeding the thresholds below obtain a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and comply with the corresponding provisions. These uses have been recognized by the community because of the health and life safety risks imposed. Additionally, these activities and those exceeding the thresholds, negatively impact the rural character of the community.**
  - **Signage: Any permanent sign**
    - **Shall be consistent with the most current version of the Alaska Sign Design Specifications (ASDS) as provided by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT).**
  - **Noise: Any noise greater than 90 decibels at the source**
    - **Shall only be allowed during the hours between 8am to 9pm.**
  - **Safety: Outdoor firing ranges open to the public or for commercial purposes**
    - **Shall only be permissible 1,000 yards or greater in distance from private or residential properties.**

#### Natural Resource Activities

- **Protect residential neighborhoods and associated property values.**
- **Identify, protect, and enhance the quantity and quality of the community’s watersheds and groundwater.**
- **Prevent degradation of fish and wildlife habitat, vegetation, and clean air resources.**
- **Protect natural systems and features from potentially negative impacts of human activities such as natural resource development.**

- Provide site restoration if a land surface modification violates borough, state, or federal regulations or activities do not occur within a reasonable amount of time.
- Protect natural systems and features including water and soils from potentially negative impacts of site restoration and reclamation activities.
- Minimize the impact of natural resource activities on recreational uses in the area.
- Limit construction site run-off.
- Identify and mitigate disturbances and impacts on culturally or historically relevant sites or resources.
- For the purpose of the South Knik River Community and this comprehensive plan, it is recommended that activities meeting or exceeding the thresholds below obtain a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and comply with the corresponding provisions. These uses have been recognized by the community because of the health and life safety risks imposed. Additionally, these activities and those exceeding the thresholds, negatively impact the rural character of the community.
  - **Signage:** Any permanent sign
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  - **Noise:** Any noise greater than 90 decibels at the source
    - Shall only be allowed during the hours between 8am to 9pm.
  - **Safety:** Outdoor firing ranges open to the public or for commercial purposes
    - Shall only be permissible 1,000 yards or greater in distance from private or residential properties.

In addition to the recommendations noted earlier in this section, the following recommendations are specifically for Water Resources, Soils, Forest Resources, Gravel Extraction, and Coal Bed Methane Development.

***Water Resources – Recommendations:***

- Limit activities in floodplains, wetlands and other water bodies.
- Monitor water quality and water availability during natural resource activities.
- Protect and improve steep slopes and erosion along water bodies.
- Provide a natural, vegetative buffer along water bodies and corridors.

***Soils – Recommendations:***

- Safeguard soils by reducing soil erosion, especially near water bodies.
- Protect steep or erodible slopes.
- To the extent possible, consider avoiding activities in high risk earthquake zones (fault areas).

***Forest Resources – Recommendations:***

- After natural resource activities, provide restoration of forest resources.
- Restore native species of vegetation.

***Gravel Extraction – Recommendations:***

- Protect groundwater supplies, water quality, and water availability.



- Prevent gravel extraction within floodplains and flood hazard areas or near water bodies.
- Provide visual screening and buffers.
- Provide noise mitigation.
- Identify and protect natural and cultural resources.
- After gravel extraction is completed, provide site reclamation and restore native species of vegetation.
- Due to the excess winds of the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys, mitigation of airborne particles is essential to ensure air quality. This can be accomplished through the maintenance of natural wind breaks, covering un-restored and disturbed land, and covering all loads during transportation.

***Coal Bed Methane Development – Recommendations:***

- Protect and mitigate negative impacts to surface property characteristics and values.
- Protect groundwater supplies, water quality, and water availability.
- Protect soils, air quality, vegetation and wildlife.
- Provide visual screening and buffers.
- Provide noise mitigation.
- Provide fire hazard mitigation.
- When methane extraction ceases, provide site reclamation and re-vegetation with indigenous species.

**DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO THROUGH ROAD CORRIDORS**

Knik River Road and a portion of the Old Glenn Highway are the only roads within the planning area connecting the South Knik River Community with communities and services outside the planning area. Knik River Road is of special concern to the majority of households because it is the only access to the main thoroughfares for residential living on the road. Residents in the South Knik River Community must rely on this transportation corridor for emergency services, and in many instances shopping and commuting. Hence, the functionality of this road is vital. Development and access along the road can have significant effects on safety and traffic flow, yet these effects can be significantly mitigated. Furthermore, it is a community desire to maintain the aesthetics of this route.

The majority of the road frontage is privately owned. However, it is recommended that portions of existing public lands along the Knik River Road be retained or land purchased when possible in the future to maintain some undeveloped lands adjacent to the road. In addition to scenic preservation, facilities such as trash containers, restrooms, and scenic pull-outs would help ensure traffic safety.

**Recommendation:**

*(These recommendations apply to both Knik River Road and the portions of the Old Glenn Highway that are within the community council area.)*

- The community should support the development of a corridor management plan to preserve the efficiency of the roads and protect the scenic value.
- Promote safe ingress and egress.

- **Provide an efficient transportation network within the area by continuing to develop a collector road system enabling residents to access businesses and residential property.**
- **Guide development along roads to minimize traffic, safety, and land, air, and water quality impacts.**
- **Where appropriate provide adequate and separated non-motorized use paths or shoulders along the roads.**
- **Where appropriate, preserve a scenic buffer adjacent to roads.**
- **Provide scenic pull-outs, restrooms, and trash containers as appropriate along the roads.**
- **Minimize impacts on private property owners related to through road corridors.**

### **JUNKYARDS, JUNK, AND TRASH**

Over the last ten years littering, abandoned vehicles, unwanted pets and discarded home refuses have become serious problems within the South Knik River Community. Recreational users from the surrounding area and Anchorage have increased, therefore, so has their waste and trash. Evidence of excessive littering can be seen along the trails used by off-road motor vehicles and along Knik River Road. Trash and litter from the neighboring Knik River Public Use Area and other neighboring recreational destinations washes up on the shore of the community and threatens the river's wildlife. It is the perception of the community that non-residents from Anchorage and the surrounding communities are unaware of the large residential community within the South Knik River area and presume it is uninhabited and therefore can be used as a dumping ground. In addition to littering, large abandoned items such as burned out cars, appliances, bags of trash, and even un-wanted pets and animal carcasses are continually left in the community. The planning team supports additional patrolling of the area by both MSB Code Compliance and State Troopers.

Extensive storage of junk and trash can create groundwater and surface water contamination problems that threaten residential drinking water supplies and salmon streams. It is the opinion of the community that the outdoor storage of large quantities of junk and trash is unsightly or creates a public nuisance and a public hazard. Therefore, regulations dealing with this issue should be enforced according to local, state and federal regulations.

Junkyards are a land use which can have detrimental effect on an area. The Borough regulates commercial junkyards as conditional uses (MSB 17.60) and also regulates noncommercial accumulation of junk and trash that is visible from public roads or which creates a public nuisance (MSB 8.50). These rules are effective borough wide. Citations for violation may be issued and other legal action (such as requests for restraining orders and injunctions) may be taken; in addition, littering is also prohibited by state law as described in Alaska State Statute 46.06.080.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Storage of extensive quantities of junk and trash should be regulated in order to prevent a public nuisance, and health and safety problems.**

- **Protect and enhance natural resources including watersheds, groundwater supplies, and view sheds.**
- **Protect residential neighborhoods and associated property values by encouraging the removal of junk and trash.**
- **Encourage expansion of the free junk car removal program offered by the borough. Offer conveniently located dumpsters for trash disposal.**
- **Create a community sign identifying the area to non-residents.**
- **Post signs along trails about litter and locations of the nearest waste receptacles.**

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES**

### **PUBLIC FACILITIES IN GENERAL**

The South Knik River Community is small, rural, and strategically located at the fringe of multiple urban areas. With a commute distance of 20-30 minutes to Palmer, 10-20 minutes to the Butte, and 40-50 minutes to Anchorage, many of your typical public facilities are not necessary or sustainable within the South Knik River Community. The surrounding resources can more than adequately sustain the community's need for power, education, books, traffic, and mail. Residents would rather focus South Knik River Community resources on those things residents need closer to home and cannot acquire from neighboring communities. Survey results from the 2008 South Knik River Community survey show cell phone service, natural gas, cable, parks and recreation, satellite, and public transportation as the community's top public facilities concerns.

### **BUTTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

The educational services for the South Knik River Community are administered by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. Butte Elementary had an enrollment of 294 students as of September 2013.<sup>3</sup> This enrollment figure has grown to 325 by June 2014. The school is designed for a capacity of up to 400 school children. Butte Elementary School serves kindergarten through fifth grades. The service area of Butte Elementary School runs north on the Old Glenn Highway to Robin Lane, and south across the river, and veers left the length of Knik River Road, and right along the Old Glenn Highway to the boundaries of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

There is no middle or high school in the planning area. Currently, students are bused to Palmer Junior Middle School and Palmer High School. The 2009 community survey showed little to moderate community support for any type of school within the South Knik River Community.

### **LIBRARY**

The Palmer Library primarily services Mat-Su Borough residents who reside in the communities of Palmer, South Knik River, Butte, and portions of the core area. As a part of the Matanuska-Susitna Library Network, the Palmer Library shares its collection with all residents of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and receives the benefit of collaborating with other borough and city libraries. The 2009 community survey did not show strong community support for the creation of a South Knik River Public Library.

### **POSTAL SERVICE**

The South Knik River Community does not have a post office. The Green Store located in the Butte is a contract station with the United States Postal Service. The Green Store is located at 3655 South Old Glenn Hwy, approximately six miles from the boundary of the South Knik River Community. Residents can drop off items to be mailed, buy stamps and pick up packages from The Green Store. Daily non-parcel mail is delivered to mailboxes and PO boxes at a variety of locations throughout the community. The nearest full service post office is located within the

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<sup>3</sup> Esary, Catherine. MatSu School District - Public Information Officer Interview by author. Email interview.

City of Palmer. The 2009 community survey indicated 43.9% of those surveyed do not support a post office in the South Knik River Community.

### **CEMETERY SITES**

Currently, there are no cemeteries within the South Knik River Community. There are two cemeteries located in the neighboring communities of Palmer and Butte. The community survey indicated 55.6% of those surveyed are not supportive of a cemetery in the South Knik River Community.

The Palmer Pioneer Cemetery is located at 901 E. Arctic Ave. in Palmer. This seven-acre cemetery is owned and operated by a non-profit corporation. The cemetery was founded in 1936 with the land donated by the Alaska Rural Rehabilitation corporation (AARC). It was the support of local churches and community service organizations that helped with the formation and original operations of the cemetery. Neither the City of Palmer nor the Borough are associated with the operation of the Palmer Pioneer Cemetery. Currently there are approximately 1,600 burials in the cemetery with available space for an additional 1,600. In addition to traditional below ground burial, the cemetery offers column barium for the purpose of entombing cremated remains. For those who chose, a memorial marker wall is available for memorial placards.

The Valley Memorial Park and Cemetery is located near the Butte at Mile 12.8 on the Old Glenn Highway. This seven-acre cemetery was established in 1962; Angelus Management assumed care of the Park in 1983. Valley Memorial Park is a non-denominational cemetery and families may choose traditional ground burial or above-ground garden crypt entombment. There is also a special garden dedicated for cremation burials. Only flat bronze or flat granite markers are permitted in the cemetery.

State law allows the burial of individuals on private property rather than an established cemetery, but transfers of land ownership often create problems if a new property owner is interested in development. Also, care and access are not assured without establishing a cemetery trust fund and cemetery organization. State law exempts up to 80 acres of cemetery land from taxation if the property is transferred to a non-profit cemetery association. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has a general policy of not owning, managing or operating cemeteries.

### **FIRE/AMBULANCE SERVICE**

The South Knik River Community is supported by the Butte Fire Service Area (BFSA). The BFSA is 27,299 acres or 42.6 square miles in size. The boundaries of the BFSA incorporate the entire South Knik River Community in addition to portions of the Butte Community Council Area. The BFSA is served by two fire stations: Station 2.1 and Station 2.2. Station 2.1 is located on the Old Glenn and is approximately 5 miles from the South Knik River Community boundary. The second fire station is Station 2.2, located within the community council boundaries on Ben Hur Road. Primary fire, vehicle rescue and ambulance services for the planning area are provided from Station 2.1. Station 2.2 has two fire trucks, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) equipment available to serve the planning area, as well as a 911-emergency phone on the outside of the building providing immediate access to 911 operators.

The BFSAs are the third smallest fire service areas in the Borough. Because of the limited property tax base for the fire service area, the BFSAs mil rate as of 2014 is 3.24. Other funding sources include state revenue sharing, Borough rental of ambulance space, FEMA fire assistance grants, Department of Homeland Security grants, and matching grants from the state Division of Forestry Department. Fire service area funds do not provide for capital improvements to the fire service station or emergency vehicles. These items are usually obtained through grants.

As of 2014, Station 2.2 only had one volunteer firefighter. Over the past ten years the number of firefighters volunteering at Station 2.2 has rarely exceeded two or three. One of the biggest concerns of the community is increasing the number of volunteer firefighters and maintaining a positive ISO rating. The ISO rating is important because the better the ISO rating, the better the insurance premiums for homeowners in the community. The ISO rating for the Butte Fire Service Area is 6A, an improvement from 8B awarded in past audits. ISO ratings are related to home distances from the fire station and the response time of those stations. Without a sufficient number of firefighters for Station 2.2 the ISO rating is unlikely to improve more.

One of the most important factors in responding to an emergency is being able to quickly arrive at the site. Highly visible street signs and house or driveway numbers are needed. This is especially important in areas such as the South Knik River Community where a wrong turn down one of numerous dead ends, substandard roads, and long driveways can effectively trap large emergency vehicles. Geography can also be a challenge in the South Knik River Community. Due to steep slopes many driveways and roads can be inaccessible during the icy winter months. Maps provided to firefighters for the South Knik River Community are very inaccurate, outdated and need more detail. Better maps, street signs, and visible signs would ensure the best emergency response time for all members of the community.

A map of the Butte Fire Service area can be found in Appendix B.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Recruit and maintain a full force of volunteer firefighters for Station 2.2.**
- **Install highly visible street signs and house or driveway numbers.**
- **Encourage construction of through streets and loops rather than dead ends on public streets.**
- **Encourage the construction of adequately sized turnabouts on dead end streets, long driveways, and other areas that would otherwise trap a large emergency vehicle.**
- **Plan for emergency access when prioritizing and developing road improvement projects and allocating road maintenance funds.**
- **Plan for emergency access and egress during the subdivision development process.**
- **Encourage the installation of water sources for fire protection such as holding tanks in new subdivisions and in difficult to access locations.**

#### **PUBLIC SAFETY/POLICE**

Public safety for the planning area is provided by the Alaska State Troopers stationed at either the Palmer or Mat-Su West locations. The troopers do not have defined boundaries but typically respond to calls from the Knik River Bridge to Mile 100 of the Old Glenn Highway, and to Mile

64 of the Parks Highway. Depending on availability and location of the occurrence, troopers from either station may respond. Generally, there are four troopers per shift serving this entire area, not counting investigators, etc. The troopers' response time is, therefore, often unsatisfactory due to travel distance. It is not anticipated that this situation will change in the foreseeable future.

Members of the public have expressed a desire for a greater police presence in the area. With the tremendous amount of littering, vandalism, poaching, and gun fire, residents feel that a greater police presence may hinder many of these activities.

**Recommendations:**

- **Provide and enhance the public safety, health and welfare of all South Knik River Community residents.**
- **Provide regular patrolling to increase the prevention of crimes to personal property and community wide vandalism.**
- **Encourage the creation of a community watch program within the South Knik River Community.**

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

The South Knik River Community is currently an unincorporated community and therefore the local governing body is the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly. The Borough recognizes the SKRCC as an advisory entity.

To encourage community participation, leadership, and sound community decision making policies, the following recommendations are encouraged.

**Recommendations:**

- **Improve communication among the SKRCC, residents, and borough, state, tribal, and federal entities.**
- **Maintain communication with residents by maintaining a comprehensive website.**
- **Maintain and strengthen the advisory capacity of the Community to represent community-wide agreed-upon policies and goals on borough, state, and federal issues.**

**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

**Electrical**

Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) provides electricity to this area. MEA started running electricity to the South Knik River Community in the 1960s. Services have been expanded as growth has accrued. The current transmission lines are running at 14,400 volts with additional capacity for at least the next 100 years based on current growth projections.

**Recommendations:**

- **Provide underground utilities wherever feasible to reduce utility visibility, animal migration barriers, the probability of vandalism, and the risk of outages.**

**Natural Gas**

Though the community would very much like the option of natural gas available to them, Enstar Natural Gas currently does not provide natural gas within the South Knik River Community. Community survey results show that over half or 56.6% of respondents support natural gas within the South Knik River Community. The community is aware that the area is not practical for natural gas at this time due to a lack of residential density and the financial impracticality of large lots with small cabins paying in excess for the gas. The Borough does offer the ability for land owners to pursue a special tax assessment for a line improvement district (LID). This is a common tool used by communities to bring natural gas to an area. An LID as regulated and described in MSB 3.28.010.(A) is a districts *"for the purpose of acquiring, installing or constructing capital improvements, all or a portion of the costs of which may be paid by assessments against the property benefited."* For more information about the LID process and requirements see MSB 3.28, Special Assessments.

**Recommendations:**

- **Continue to work with natural gas suppliers and explore options for service to the community.**
- **Provide underground utilities wherever feasible to reduce utility visibility, animal migration barriers, the probability of vandalism, and the risk of a natural gas leak.**



## PARKS, RECREATION & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Residents in the South Knik River Community enjoy the many amenities the area offers such as the quiet rural atmosphere; clean air and water; easy accessibility to public land, lakes and rivers; trails and recreational opportunities; and abundance of wildlife. Retaining and protecting these amenities and their privacy is foremost in the minds of residents. In order to provide this protection, it is important to identify the existing features and offer suggestions for methods to retain them.

This chapter addresses parks and public recreation sites; trails and public access; and green infrastructure. Green infrastructure addresses the interconnectivity of wildlife corridors, recreational trails, forests, wetlands, waterways, parks, open spaces, and other natural areas.

### PUBLIC RECREATION SITES

#### Manmade Lake

Manmade Lake is located on a sand bar attached to the shores of the Knik River near Mile 3 of South Knik River Road and is visible from the road. A small area has been cleared on the bank to allow cars to drive down; minimal parking is available. Manmade Lake is not an official park but it is part of the Knik River Public Use Area, an area designated for recreation by the State of Alaska. The area is maintained by the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW). Trash is picked up and the area is patrolled by DMLW, in addition, overtime funds from DMLW help fund extra patrols by state troopers. The area is signed, posted and an informational kiosk is available with maps. Within the South Knik River Community, Manmade Lake is used as a family swimming hole and also as an emergency water pumping location for fires. Locals try to keep the area clean and a portable outhouse is provided during the summer months.

#### Knik River Public Use Area (KRPUA)

"The Knik River Public Use Area<sup>4</sup> (KRPUA) was created through a legislative process and signed into law by Governor Frank Murkowski on June 30, 2006 (House Bill 307). Land within the KRPUA boundary encompasses approximately 200,000 acres of state owned lands, and another 60,000 acres of federally owned lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (Friday Creek and Hunter Creek drainages). There are also approximately 1,000 acres of privately owned lands within the KRPUA boundaries. Private and federally owned lands within the area are not subject to KRPUA enforcement regulations and management objectives.

Like other Public Use Areas in the state, the purpose for establishing the KRPUA is to preserve, perpetuate, and enhance public recreation, enjoyment of fish and wildlife, and the traditional use of fish and wildlife resources. The area provides for a full-spectrum of outdoor recreational opportunities, and is open to motorized and non-motorized recreational pursuits. Activities common to the area include riding of off-highway vehicles (OHV's), hunting, fishing, trapping,

<sup>4</sup> "Knik River Public Use Area." *Knik River Public Use Area*. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 June 2014. <<http://www.knikriver.alaska.gov/>>

target shooting, boating, flying planes, horseback riding, biking, hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing."

The KRPUA is managed through a land use plan and enforceable regulations. The regulations applicable to the KRPUA were broken into two phases. Phase one of the regulations was adopted in November 2008 and the fines that coordinate with the regulations were adopted in May 2009 during phase two. The land use plan that addresses goals and recommendation for the KRPUA was adopted in 2008 and later modified in 2012. As a part of the public process conducted by the state during the creation of KRPUA, many community residents, including those from South Knik River, participated in public meetings, open houses, and submitted written comments.

<sup>5</sup>Land managers with DNR's Division of Mining, Land, and Water, Southcentral Regional Office actively manage the area through partnerships with the Alaska State Troopers, Alaska Wildlife Troopers, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. DNR land managers also receive input and support from local community councils, local residents, and regional outdoor recreation interests groups and non-profit organizations.

Prominent land features of the region include the Knik Glacier, Knik River, Pioneer Peak, Jim Creek, Bodenburg Creek, Friday Creek, Metal Creek, and Hunter Creek. The high elevation Chugach Mountains that form the Knik River Valley make for a dramatic backdrop to the alluvial gravel bars and winding braids of the Knik River. Specifically applied to the South Knik River Community, the KRPUA encompasses a large area which extends all the way to the ordinary high water line on the south side of the river, inclusive of many of the gravel bars that are used on the south side of the river by local residents and visitors alike. In addition, substantial portions of the south side of the river near Hunter Creek are included in the KRPUA .

Overall the area is rugged and remote, which is what makes it such a popular destination for campers, off-road enthusiasts, fixed wing aviators, horseback riders, and boaters. A sprawling network of lakes and wetlands on the north side of the river are popular among bird watchers, boaters, anglers, and hunters. The area as a whole offers a wide range of multi-use outdoor recreational pursuits for people of all ages and interests.

Many of the nuisance activities on the northern shores of the river where the impetus of the KRPUA began, have also historically impacted the southern shores of the river and the South Knik River Community. Even with the creation of the KRPUA, there are still activities originating on the north side of the river that manage to negatively affect South Knik River Community. Even before the KRPUA existed, recreational users from the "Jim Creek" area would shoot across the river at homes and residents. Trash, trespassing and environmental degradation have also continued even after the creation of the KRPUA. Residents near the beginning of the road report that noise, shooting, and trespassing have decreased significantly since the formation of the KRPUA. On the other hand, residents further down the road have

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<sup>5</sup> "Knik River Public Use Area." *Knik River Public Use Area*. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 June 2014. <<http://www.knikriver.alaska.gov/>>

seen an escalation in nuisance activity. The community feels this increase is due to recreational users looking to escape the regulations of the KRPUA.

### **Chugach State Park**

Though not located in the community, Chugach State Park is immediately adjacent to the South Knik River Community. A portion of the Chugach range runs along the South to South East boundary of the community. The park starts at the top of these peaks and continues all the way to Turnagain Arm. Historically residents of the area used various trails up the mountains as a gateway to the area now known as the Chugach State Park. Prior to August 8, 1970 the park had not yet been created, allowing abundant hunting and fishing opportunities to South Knik River Community residents. Today residents can still hunt and fish but only within designated areas of the park. Please read below for a brief overview of the Chugach State Park from the Department of Natural Resources:

*<sup>6</sup>Beyond the foothills at Anchorage's edge lies the third largest state park in America - a half-million acres of some of the most accessible hiking, skiing, camping, wildlife viewing, snowmachining, rafting, and climbing in Alaska. Those of us lucky enough to live here feel the influence of Chugach State Park almost daily. The mountainous backdrop to Anchorage reminds us that, although we live in an urban setting, we really reside in the middle of a vast wilderness. The Chugach foothills are a beacon for changing weather, and resident wildlife have been known to wander into town. Chugach is listed as one of the top ten state parks in the country by America's Best.*

*Those of you who are visiting are able to discover Chugach State Park and take home memories of high alpine wildflowers, browsing moose, soaring eagles, roaring glacier-fed rivers, the howl of a wolf, unrivaled mountainous vistas, clear water streams dancing through a mature spruce forest, and maybe even a glimpse of a grizzly bear.*

*As a resident or visitor, Chugach State Park is awaiting your discovery. Whether you prefer front country trails, backcountry bushwhacking, one of our three campgrounds at Eklutna Lake, Eagle River, or Bird Creek, a visit to the Eagle River Nature Center, or just to gaze upon the mountain view from town, we at Alaska State Parks are dedicated to helping you safely enjoy your visit and most importantly, to ensure you have fun.*

### **TRAILS AND PUBLIC ACCESS**

The South Knik River Community contains very little public access to land but, for those that own property the area boasts spectacular scenery and excellent recreational opportunities. Many residents and visitors enjoy access to world class recreational opportunities literally “right in their own backyard.” However, easy access to the back country can also have a negative impact

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Natural Resources - Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. (n.d.). *Chugach State Park, Alaska State Parks*. Retrieved June 6, 2014, from <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/chugach/>.

by increasing the potential for private property trespassing, vandalism, illegal trash dumping, and trail degradation.

This area was first settled by homesteaders in the 1940s when the Old Glenn Highway was built from Palmer to the junction of the new Glenn Highway. With the homesteads, came the first Knik River Road. The first Knik River Road was just a walking trail and a 10-yard-long floating bridge that needed to be hitched every spring. Because travel was strenuous and lengthy, early founding families of the South Knik River Community used the land to provide for their families. Many of the well-trafficked trails of today spur from the original hunting and trapping trails carved by the community's pioneers.

Because the area of South Knik River has such little dedicated public land, the majority of trails in the area are on private property. Many of the existing trails crossing private land have no dedicated public access. Unless dedicated public access is obtained, it is likely these trails will eventually be blocked or closed by a present or future landowner. When community members were asked in the 2009 community survey about the use of present and future public land in the area, 63.9% supported non-motorized trails and 30.5% supported motorized trails.

Historically the community of South Knik River was surrounded by both state and federal lands. These public lands acted as a gateway for South Knik River citizens to access Alaska's back country, to the south Chugach State Park and the Chugach National Forest, and to the north the Knik River and Knik Glacier. In the last five years the situation has changed because the majority of governmental lands in SKRCC have been conveyed to Eklutna, Inc., an Alaska Native Corporation. These lands were conveyed as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act<sup>7</sup> (ANCSA). Passed in 1971, ANCSA extinguished Native land claims to almost all of Alaska in exchange for about one-ninth of the state's land plus \$962.5 million in compensation. By conveying Native land titles to 12 regional and 200 local village corporations chartered under Alaska state law, ANCSA changed the relationship between Natives and the land from one of co-ownership of shared lands to one of corporate shareholding. Eklutna, Inc. is the largest private landowner in Anchorage, owning 90,000 acres within the Municipality of Anchorage, including Eagle River, Birchwood, Chugiak, Peters Creek and Eklutna. Additionally, Eklutna, Inc. has significant holdings in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, with an approximate 67,000 additional acres due to be conveyed from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Appendix C of this plan contains two maps that show the lands within the South Knik Community Council Boundary that are designated by BLM as either Native Selected or as Native Allotment lands. BLM records show that the majority of selected lands shown on the map are in the process of being conveyed but have not been finalized. BLM of Alaska provides a great web resource through the Spatial Data Mapping Service (SDMS) to research all lands that are a part of the BLM system. Through the SDMS system, users can create maps, research plats, conveyance documents, and easements.

BLM of Alaska - Spatial Data Mapping Service  
<http://sdms.ak.blm.gov>

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<sup>7</sup> About Us. (n.d.). *Eklutna, Inc.*. Retrieved June 4, 2014, from <http://www.eklutnainc.com/2013/about-us/>.

**Pioneer Ridge - Austin Helmers Trail**

The Pioneer Ridge-Austin Helmers Trail is a steep hiking trail traversing the northeast slope of Pioneer Peak, climbing over 5,000 feet in 4.5 miles. The first part of the trail traverses forested areas of old growth cottonwood, spruce, birch, alder and aspen. Near the 2,000 foot elevation the trail starts to switch back and forth up the steep nose of a ridge, where the vegetation thins and views of the valley below are around every corner. Fiberglass trail markers placed every 200 feet guide the way up to the ridge where at about 3,200 feet the trail is less steep and hikers reach the ridge crest. The hike to the ridge and back can be completed in a long day; some may prefer to camp overnight. The trail offers wonderful views of the Knik and Matanuska Rivers valleys, the Talkeetna Mountains, and the Knik Glacier. The trail is physically challenging and tends to be muddy and slippery after a rain or frost. Caution is advised. The more adventurous can continue on a very primitive route to Pioneer Peak (elevation 6,398 feet) about three miles to the southeast. Climbing beyond the ridge trail to the actual summit of Pioneer Peak should be attempted only by those experienced and equipped for rock climbing. Anyone traveling beyond the marked trail should also have topographic maps and a compass, and be skilled in their use.

In 2000 the Borough adopted the MSB Recreational Trails Plan. The MSB recreational trails planning process began in 1995 through an extensive planning and public involvement process. The resulting overall goal of the trails plan is:

*<sup>8</sup>Within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough there exists awe inspiring landscapes and world class recreational opportunities. Many of these areas and recreational opportunities require trails for access and enhanced enjoyment. It is the desire of the Borough to provide exciting trail recreation opportunities for visitors and residents alike in conjunction with the desires of its populace.*

*The local desire and initiative for trail development and maintenance already exists and is producing significant results. It is not the Borough's desire to usurp these trail development efforts but rather to complement these efforts and provide local government support.*

*The Borough should work in cooperation with community councils, cities, the state of Alaska, businesses, property owners and trail advocacy groups to provide a system of trails throughout the Borough to enable the public to engage in outdoor recreation activities and to ensure future preservation of trails. The Borough should work to coordinate the numerous local trail development efforts into an effective and efficient recreational trail system and preserve the existing popular recreational trails. Trail facilities are to provide for the ever increasing outdoor recreation needs of the resident population and recreation industry.*

The plan goes on further to establish goals, policies and objectives on the specific topics of primitive trails, separated paths, legal access, impacts on private property, liability, management recommendations (reduce conflicts and degradation), trail information, trail funding, and the

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<sup>8</sup> Matanuska Susitna Borough. (*Recreational Trails Plan*). Palmer, AK. 2000. [www.matsugov.us/](http://www.matsugov.us/). (June 3, 2014).

evolution of trails into roadways. Trails in and around the South Knik River Community were identified by the planning team during the comprehensive planning process.

There are several threats to the existing primitive (unpaved) trails within the planning area including:

- Closure of trails by private landowners;
- Degradation of trails due to erosion and mud resulting from overuse or misuse; and
- Degradation of trails due to overuse by motorized vehicles.

#### **Trails and Access Recommendations:**

- **Establish a recreation and trails committee in the community to examine trail maintenance and funding.**
- **Engage residents to take an active role in the maintenance of existing public trails.**
- **Update and inventory trails within the South Knik River Community. Consider a trails master plan.**
- **Inventory, maintain, and protect existing trail uses (both motorized and non-motorized), public access points, and public facilities.**
- **Solicit input from community members on trail concerns and issues.**
- **Ensure sustainability of trails.**
- **Seek trail designation for a balance of motorized and non-motorized uses.**
- **Encourage coordination with borough, state, and federal entities to ensure that reclamation efforts include developing and dedicating trails on former mined lands.**
- **Ensure that reclamation efforts (re-vegetation and re-contouring) occur in a timely manner following mining activity to ensure safety of trail users, prevention of erosion, maintenance of high water quality, and restoration of habitats for wildlife.**
- **Trails should be rerouted off of private property whenever possible.**
- **The Borough and the South Knik River Community should negotiate with private landowners to obtain voluntary dedications of public access.**
- **The community should work with the Borough and Alaska DNR to identify funding opportunities to legalize trails and trail heads, maintain trails, and enforce appropriate trail use.**
- **The community and the Borough should work to identify financial incentives such as tax deductions or other measures that may encourage property owners to dedicate a trail.**

#### **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Just as communities benefit from planning their “grey infrastructure” (roads, subdivisions, schools, fire stations, and utilities), communities can benefit from interconnected wildlife corridors, recreational trails, forests, wetlands, waterways, parks, open spaces, and other natural areas, also known as “green infrastructure.”

An interconnected system of open space such as forests, agricultural lands, farms, wetlands, wildlife corridors and parks can help to preserve the community’s natural resources and assets, and provide benefits to the residents, resources, and wildlife. By preserving this interconnected

system, clean air, water quality, and natural resources can be sustained for future generations and enhance the quality of life in the South Knik River Community.

As land is subdivided and converted, open space is often fragmented into smaller and more isolated patches which can alter the way natural systems, such as wetlands, function. As these natural areas diminish, habitat diversity declines, and the degradation of water, natural resources, and fish and wildlife populations occurs. The goal is to place development and open space where it is most needed and most appropriate, and to design development to minimize the long-term impacts.

Identifying and maintaining the green infrastructure in the South Knik River Community is a much easier task than in, for example, the Core Area between Palmer and Wasilla, or Meadow Lakes, where rapid development has already threatened the infrastructure. Wildlife corridors and hunting opportunities near the urban centers have diminished, major drainage systems have been blocked or re-routed causing flooding, and traditional trails are no longer available. Those denser areas are now struggling to regain some of the connectivity, trails, water sources and corridors that have been lost. By identifying these significant features in this South Knik River Comprehensive Plan update, protective measures can be put in place to ensure that future development occurs in a way that minimizes negative impact to the land, the wildlife, and the community's quality of life.

Proactive planning can help guide future land development decisions, accommodating population growth while protecting community assets and natural resources. It is important to understand that preserving environmental resources, such as water quality and water availability, does not require or imply public ownership of all of the land in the system.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Provide property owners with information about development options that enhance environmental features and that minimize negative impacts to wildlife corridors.**
- **Identify development options that protect natural functions (such as the recharge of ground and surface water supplies, and wildlife habitat and corridors) while respecting the needs and desires of the landowners and other stakeholders such as the open-space subdivision option outlined in Title 27 - Subdivisions.**
- **Encourage mapping of outdoor recreation and trail networks.**
- **Encourage protection of local natural resources of community importance.**
- **Protect natural systems prior to development.**
- **Where possible, link waterways, wildlife habitat and corridors, trails, etc. to create an interconnected system of natural corridors in the South Knik River Community.**
- **Ensure that additional mining reclamation efforts be coordinated with the input of the South Knik River Community and the Borough.**
- **Ensure thoughtful community consideration of attempts to reclassify, lease, or sell public lands for mining and natural resource extraction.**
- **Manage activities affecting air, water, and land to maintain or improve environmental quality, to preserve wildlife habitat, to prevent degradation or loss of natural features and functions, and to limit risks to life and property.**

- **Identify, monitor, protect, and enhance the quantity and quality of the available watersheds, and clean air resources, and groundwater. Best available technology should be used.**
- **Encourage site specific development that preserves environmental quality such as air, water, scenic viewshed, night sky, and land quality. Site design that carefully takes into account open space, soils, slope, erosion, and pollution should be considered.**
- **Encourage the use of the conservation subdivision concept and open space subdivision incentives to ensure protection of the area’s natural features.**
- **Encourage the Borough to develop a method to compensate private property owners (e.g. tax incentives) for conservation efforts.**



## TRANSPORTATION

### STATE ROADS AND HIGHWAY

#### Old Glenn Highway

The Old Glenn Highway is a state owned and maintained transportation route providing the only road access to the South Knik River Community. The most recent (2011) estimate of traffic volume data<sup>9</sup> collected along the Old Glenn Highway indicated Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) count of 1040 heading southbound and 320 heading northbound between the Parks Highway interchange and the city of Palmer. Traffic volume data collected between the intersection of Knik River Road and Palmer has an AADT of 807, with 187 of those trips passing the Hunter Creek Bridge.

Reconstruction of the Old Glenn Highway between Milepost 11.5 to 18 was completed in 2009. Rehabilitation to the highway included improvements to grade, alignment, drainage, additional shoulder width, a new pathway, lighting, and signal modification.

#### Knik River Road

Knik River Road is a state owned and maintained transportation route providing the only road access through the South Knik River Community. The most recent (2011) estimate of traffic volume data<sup>10</sup> collected along the South Knik River Road indicates an average of 613 automobiles per day.

Knik River Road was constructed from the Old Glenn Highway to Hunter Creek in 1971 thru 1972. The original cost of the unpaved road was \$1.25 million dollars; funds were allocated to the area by the state legislator for \$875,000. The road was only one lane, not even wide enough for the school buses to turn around. The community received another appropriation from the state in 1973 to extend the road to today's present location. In 1996, after a flood washed away the Scottie Creek Bridge, it was replaced with a new two-lane bridge from a neighboring area. The road was paved and extended to its present length in 1999-2000. As of 2012, paving the remaining portion of the road was approved through state funding along with a resurface and modification project for Mile 0 thru 9.72. The money for paving also includes funding for site specific improvements along the entire length of the road, particularly at Tempera Road and Bingham Hill. These improvements will create a unified width throughout the entire road for greater safety, flow, and line-of-sight for traffic.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **When road improvements or new development construction are proposed, adequate access for emergency vehicles and services should be considered.**

<sup>9</sup>State of Alaska. 2011. "Annual Traffic Volume Report - Central Region". *Department of Transportation and Public Facilities*. Anchorage, AK. [www.dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/transdata/traffic/cen\\_reports/2011\\_ATVR.pdf](http://www.dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/transdata/traffic/cen_reports/2011_ATVR.pdf). (Accessed June 3, 2014)

<sup>10</sup>State of Alaska. 2011. "Annual Traffic Volume Report - Central Region". *Department of Transportation and Public Facilities*. Anchorage, AK. [www.dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/transdata/traffic/cen\\_reports/2011\\_ATVR.pdf](http://www.dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/transdata/traffic/cen_reports/2011_ATVR.pdf). (Accessed June 3, 2014)

- **Encourage minimizing individual highway driveway accesses onto the Old Glenn Highway.**
- **Encourage development with interconnectivity of roads.**
- **To improve vehicular safety and traffic circulation, provide adequate right-of-way, appropriate road design, road access, lighting, signage, speed limits, and possible bus turn-around locations.**
- **Encourage cooperation between state, borough, and Tribal entities to improve road maintenance such as grading, snow removal/plowing, dust management, surface improvements, vegetation removal, and sealing.**
- **Work with the state in planning improvements to the Old Glenn Highway and Knik River Road to include a separated bike path between Palmer and the Eklutna Hatchery.**
- **Construct and improve roads in a way that protects air, water, wildlife, and land quality.**
- **Accommodate a pedestrian/non-motorized path in all future road upgrade projects.**
- **Improvements to state roads should take into consideration community desires.**

### **BOROUGH ROADS**

Other publicly maintained roads in the South Knik River Community include subdivision roads the Borough has accepted for maintenance. Borough maintenance is contracted to private firms from Butte Road Service Area (BRSA) funds. Decisions about allocation of BRSA funds are made with input from a local citizen's advisory board. As of 2014 the BRSA mill rate is 3.45. A map of the BRSA can be found in Appendix B.

Currently, proposed subdivisions must adhere to the road construction standards identified in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Subdivision Construction Manual unless the proposed subdivision would create no more than four new parcels of property, each of which is five acres or larger, and has dedicated (not necessarily constructed) legal access. A number of the public roads within the BRSA have not been constructed to current Borough standards. Most of these substandard subdivision roads were created prior to the adoption of the current standards.

Adequate road construction standards better enable emergency responders to quickly access life threatening situations. Other public services also are not ensured if a road is substandard or not maintained. A number of common problems specific to the planning area are inadequate ditches for snow storage, snow drifting, undersized cul-de-sacs for emergency vehicle turnaround, only one access point in and out of a subdivision, and excessively steep grades. Borough acceptance of road maintenance responsibilities may be conditioned upon design considerations to minimize maintenance such as clearing, alignment, and raising the road surface to facilitate wind scouring. The Borough has avoided assuming maintenance responsibilities for poorly designed roads.

The community has not identified a need to revise the road construction standards; however, other recommendations previously stated encourage construction of multiple access points and adequate vehicle turnabouts.

The Borough's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was updated in 2007. Borough roads in the South Knik River Community are identified in Chapter 4.4, Rural Area Road System. The LRTP says, in part:

*<sup>11</sup>“The road system outside the central area of the Borough is not included in the transportation modeling process. Population and employment in the rural areas are widely distributed and the road system is functioning well with a few exceptions. Rural road needs tend to be based on providing access to new neighborhoods and a second connection to larger developed areas for the sake of emergency access and convenience. During the development of comprehensive plans for the Mat-Su communities, local transportation needs are examined and projects and other improvements are recommended. The approved comprehensive plans plus those in the final stages of development and approval were reviewed for transportation related recommendations.”*

The LRTP defers to local community comprehensive plans for recommendations outside of the core area.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **The community recommends construction of through streets and loops rather than dead ends on public streets.**
- **The community recommends the construction of adequately sized turnabouts on dead end streets, long driveways, and other areas that would otherwise trap a large emergency vehicle.**
- **Identify potential road improvement/construction projects through the Borough's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process.**
- **Regularly nominate and update South Knik River's transportation projects and priorities.**
- **Encourage coordination of transportation planning efforts with the state, borough, and Tribal entities.**
- **Provide regularly for residents' input regarding road expenditures in the BRSA.**

#### **AVIATION**

Aviation activity within the South Knik River Community has increased significantly in last five years. This increase is directly related to tourism-oriented aviation. This increase in aviation traffic has created a series of negative externalities like noise and environmental disturbances that are effecting the rural charters of the community. The community feels it is appropriate and respectful for aviation activity within the South Knik River Community to maintain at least a one mile line of sight between the aircraft and residential homes. In addition, activity within the flight routes should also be limited to the hours between 8am and 9pm.

In 2007 the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly adopted the Regional Aviation Systems Plan (RASP) which consisted of two components. The first component was to identify the current

<sup>11</sup> Matanuska Susitna Borough. (*Long Range Transportation Plan*). Palmer, AK. 200. [www.matsugov.us/cpd/docuemtns](http://www.matsugov.us/cpd/docuemtns). (June 3, 2014).

state of aviation in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, how that might change over the next 20 years, and any actions that should be taken to ensure aviation can grow in a positive way for MSB citizens. Part of this component was to take an inventory of existing air strips, both registered and unregistered, within the Borough. The second component of the plan was to identify potential locations for additional public airports or airstrips in the Borough, including a public seaplane base for float planes. Within the RASP, the only registered airstrip identified near the South Knik River Community is the Butte Municipal Airstrip. FAA records show it is a private strip with public access. While not listed in the RASP or registered with FAA, local residents also identified a small number of private airstrips throughout the area. The <sup>12</sup>RASP also identifies the potential future need for an advisory route over the Knik Glacier:

**Advisory Routes/Corridors** - This alternative would establish preferred routes into and out of certain high-traffic areas within the core area of the MSB. Such corridors are commonly used in large urban areas for VFR traffic and over National Parks for all traffic. The Anchorage Part 93 airspace even includes designated routes for small aircraft.

Areas in the MSB that might require corridors include the Knik Glacier, the Matanuska River valley, and the core area between Willow and Palmer. Most members of the TAC and public felt that these sorts of corridors are not yet required, but should be kept as long-term ideas to be implemented when necessary.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **South Knik River should continue to be aware of the need for emergency aircraft landing sites and maintain an active list of potential sites or investigate other options for a permanent landing site.**
- **South Knik River should work with the MSB Emergency Services Department to create a comprehensive emergency evacuation plan.**
- **For the purpose of the South Knik River Community and this comprehensive plan, it is recommended that aviation activity abide by the following recommendations. This activity has been recognized by the community because of the negative impacts it produces like noise and environmental disturbances that effect the community's rural character.**
  - **All aviation activity should maintain at least a one mile line of sight between the aircraft and residential homes.**
  - **All aviation activity within the SKRCC should also be limited to the hours between 8am and 9pm.**

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<sup>12</sup> Matanuska Susitna Borough. (*Regional Aviation Systems Plan*). Palmer, AK. 2008. [www.matsugov.us/cpd/docuemtns](http://www.matsugov.us/cpd/docuemtns). (June 3, 2014).

## NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION

The Borough has recently finalized the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), to meet requirements of the Federal Hazard Mitigation Act of 2000. The plan is intended as a guide for reducing losses, both human and economic, due to natural disasters. The document follows the required processes of identification of hazards, mapping the potentially impacted areas, tallying risks and vulnerabilities, and presenting mitigation strategies.<sup>13</sup> The primary goals of the plan are:

- Minimize injuries and loss of life;
- Minimize damages;
- Facilitate post-disaster restoration of public services; and
- Promote economic development.

To attain these goals, the MSB HMP includes measures to:

- Save lives and reduce injuries;
- Prevent or reduce property damage;
- Reduce economic losses;
- Minimize social dislocation and stress;
- Maintain critical facilities in functional order;
- Protect infrastructure from damage; and
- Protect legal liability of government and public officials.

In the event of certain natural disasters, the South Knik River area has the potential of being “cut off” from Palmer, Wasilla, or Anchorage, should there be damage to Knik River Road or the Old Glenn Highway. The geography of the community, coupled with limited access, create the perfect storm. The Chugach Mountains rise sharply to the south/south east of Knik River Road and are primed for snow or mud slides, avalanches, and spring flooding. As the winter snows melt in the spring, many creeks along Knik River Road surge and often flood. There are three primary mountain creeks that intersect with Knik River Road: Hunter, Doc, and Goat. In 1996 Hunter Creek flooded and washed away the bridge. It took several weeks before another bridge was taken from a different area to make the much needed repairs. Limited access to the community also creates a dangerous situation in the case of emergencies. Knik River Road is the community’s only access and it serves as the main artery of transportation through the entire planning area. With the community’s geography adding to the potential for emergencies and the road limiting access, the community is in agreement that additional steps need to be taken to ensure better community emergency preparedness.

The community should be prepared with an alternate emergency transportation plan, should the need arise. The potential natural disasters in the South Knik River area identified by planning team members include:

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<sup>13</sup> Matanuska Susitna Borough. (*Hazard Mitigation Plan*). Palmer, AK. 2014. [www.matsugov.us](http://www.matsugov.us). (June 3, 2014).

- Rock slides;
- Snow slides;
- Wildfire;
- Flooding;
- Earthquakes;
- Volcanic ash;
- Erosion; and
- Severe weather conditions.

**Recommendations:**

- **Work with MSB emergency services to ensure the community is prepared to respond to any of these natural disasters.**
- **Work with MSB emergency services to identify appropriate natural hazard mitigation measures and a cost/benefit analysis of each measure.**
- **Incorporate natural hazard information into the community’s long term planning efforts.**
- **Identify alternate transportation options, should there be damage to any bridges in the South Knik River area.**
- **Identify opportunities for funding to implement hazard mitigation measures for potential natural disasters.**
- **Develop and disseminate information about natural hazard areas to inform property owners of at-risk areas.**

# **Appendices: A-F**

**APPENDIX A: Community Council Boundary Map**

**APPENDIX B: Service Area Maps - Road & Fire**

**APPENDIX C: Alaska Native Allotment Lands**

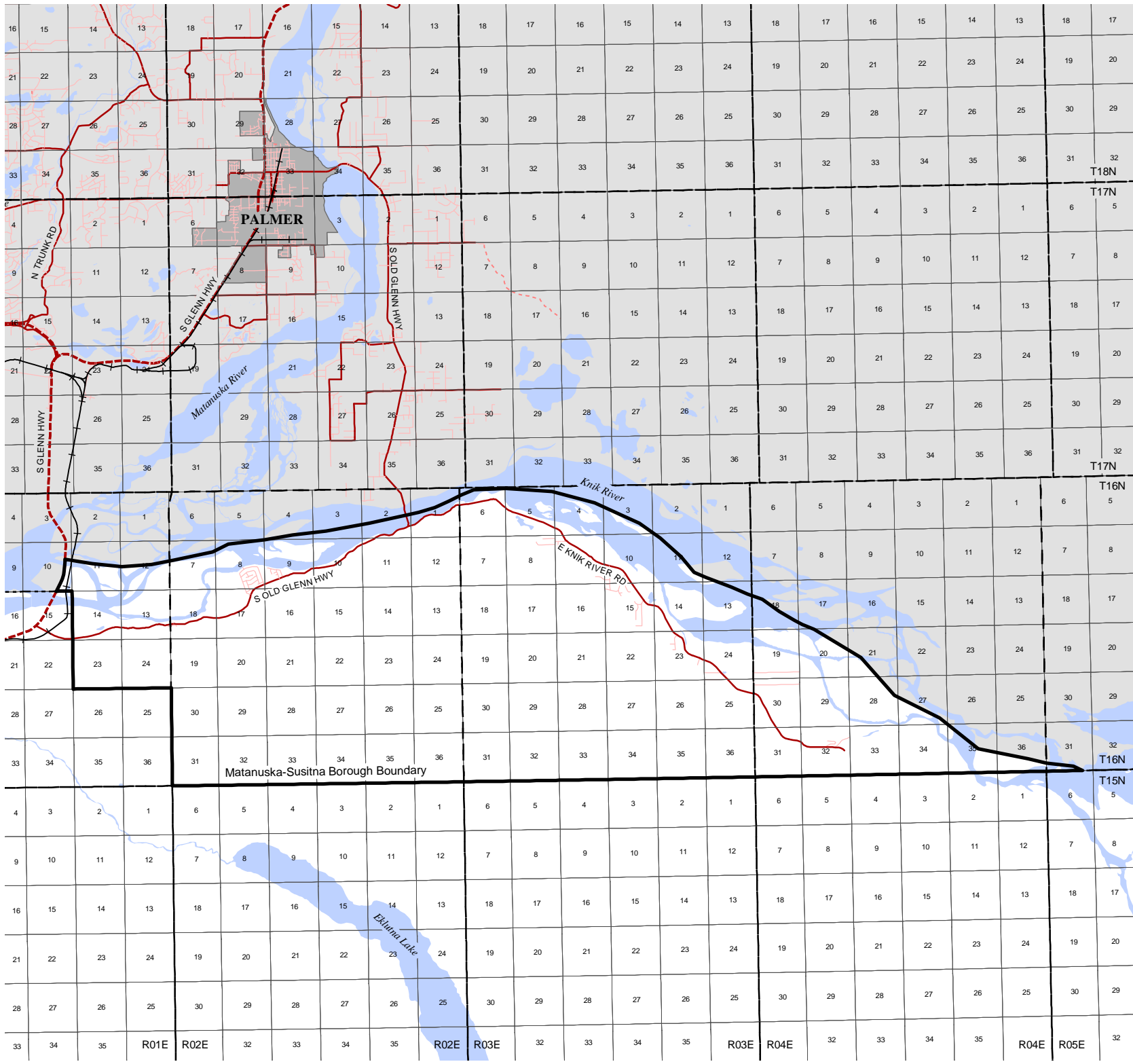
**APPENDIX D: Community Survey Results**

# **Appendix A**

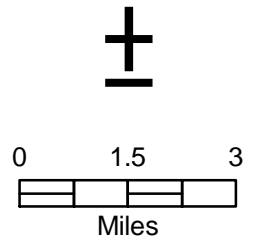
## *Community Council Boundary Map*



# SOUTH KNIK Community Council



- Legend**
- COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOUNDARY
  - CITY BOUNDARY
- Road Classifications**
- HIGHWAY
  - MAJOR
  - MEDIUM
  - MINOR
  - PRIMITIVE
  - THE ALASKA RAILROAD



This map is solely for informational purposes only. The Borough makes no express or implied warranties with respect to the character, function, or capabilities of the map or the suitability of the map for any particular purpose beyond those originally intended by the Borough. For information regarding the full disclaimer and policies related to acceptable uses of this map, please contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough GIS Division at 907-745-4801.

MSB Information Technology Dept./GIS  
July 16, 2009

**Appendix A**



# **Appendix B**

*Service Area Maps - Road & Fire*

BUTTE  
FIRE SERVICE AREA  
#2

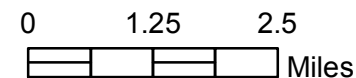
Appendix B

Legend

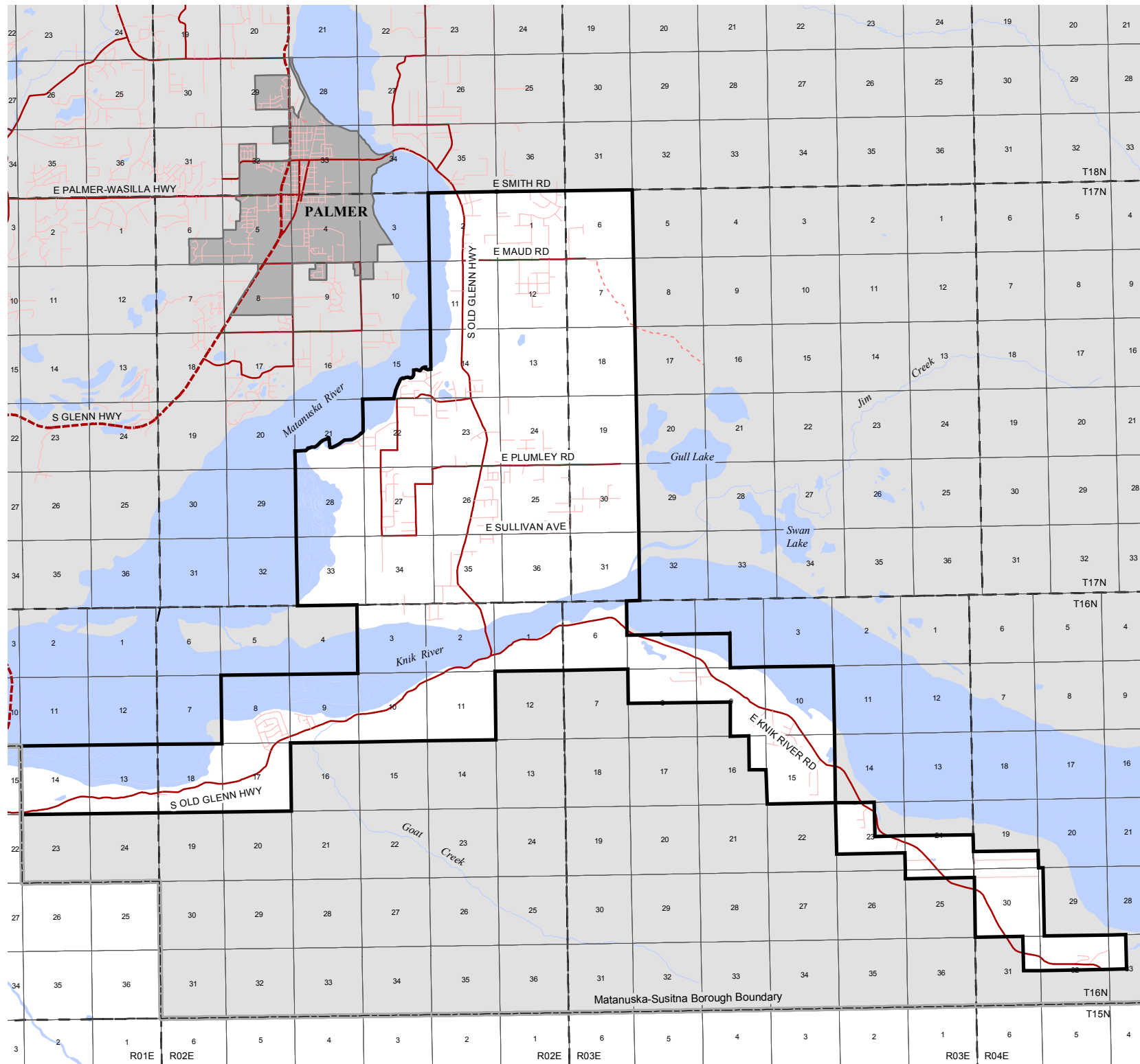
-  FSA BOUNDARY
-  CITY BOUNDARY

Road Classifications

-  HIGHWAY
-  MAJOR
-  MEDIUM
-  MINOR
-  PRIMITIVE



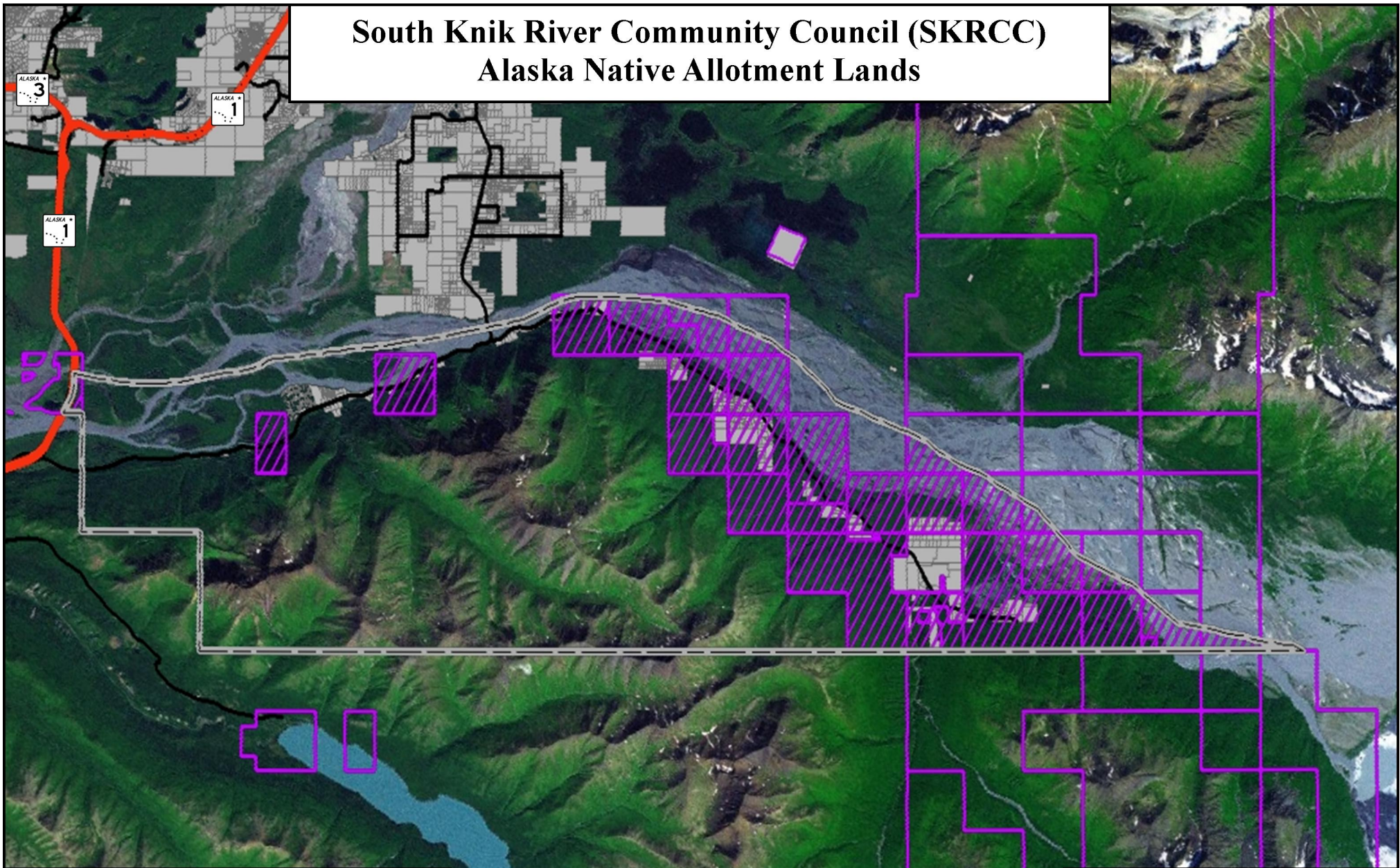
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# **Appendix C**

## *Alaska Native Allotment Lands*

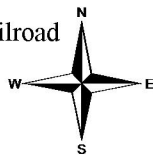
# South Knik River Community Council (SKRCC) Alaska Native Allotment Lands



### Legend

- SKRCC
- Native Allotments within SKRCC
- Butte
- Native Allotments
- Highway
- Major Road
- Railroad

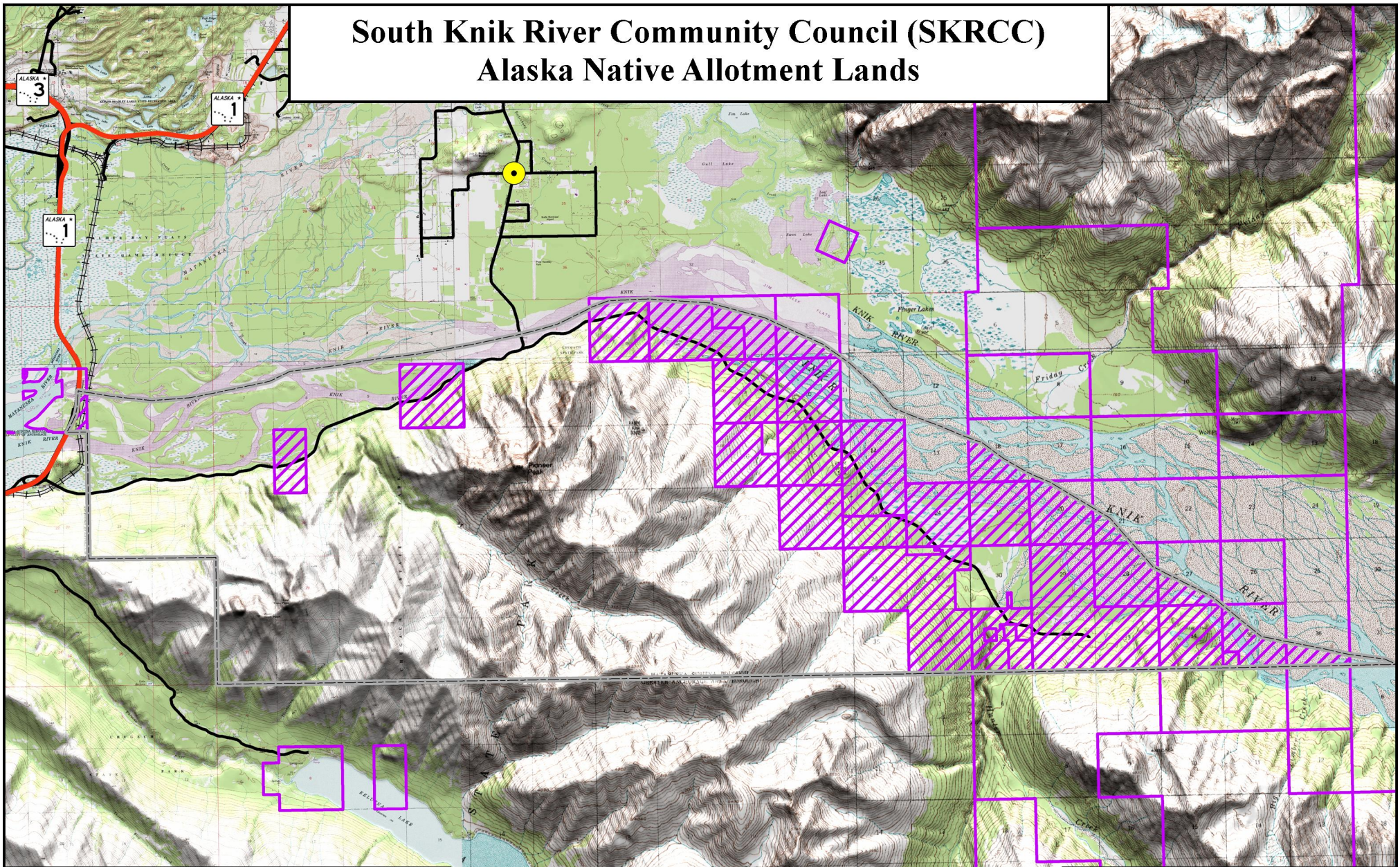
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 (1 inch = 2 miles)



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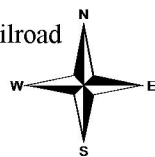
# South Knik River Community Council (SKRCC) Alaska Native Allotment Lands



### Legend

- SKRCC
- Native Allotments within SKRCC
- Butte
- Native Allotments
- Highway
- Major Road
- Railroad

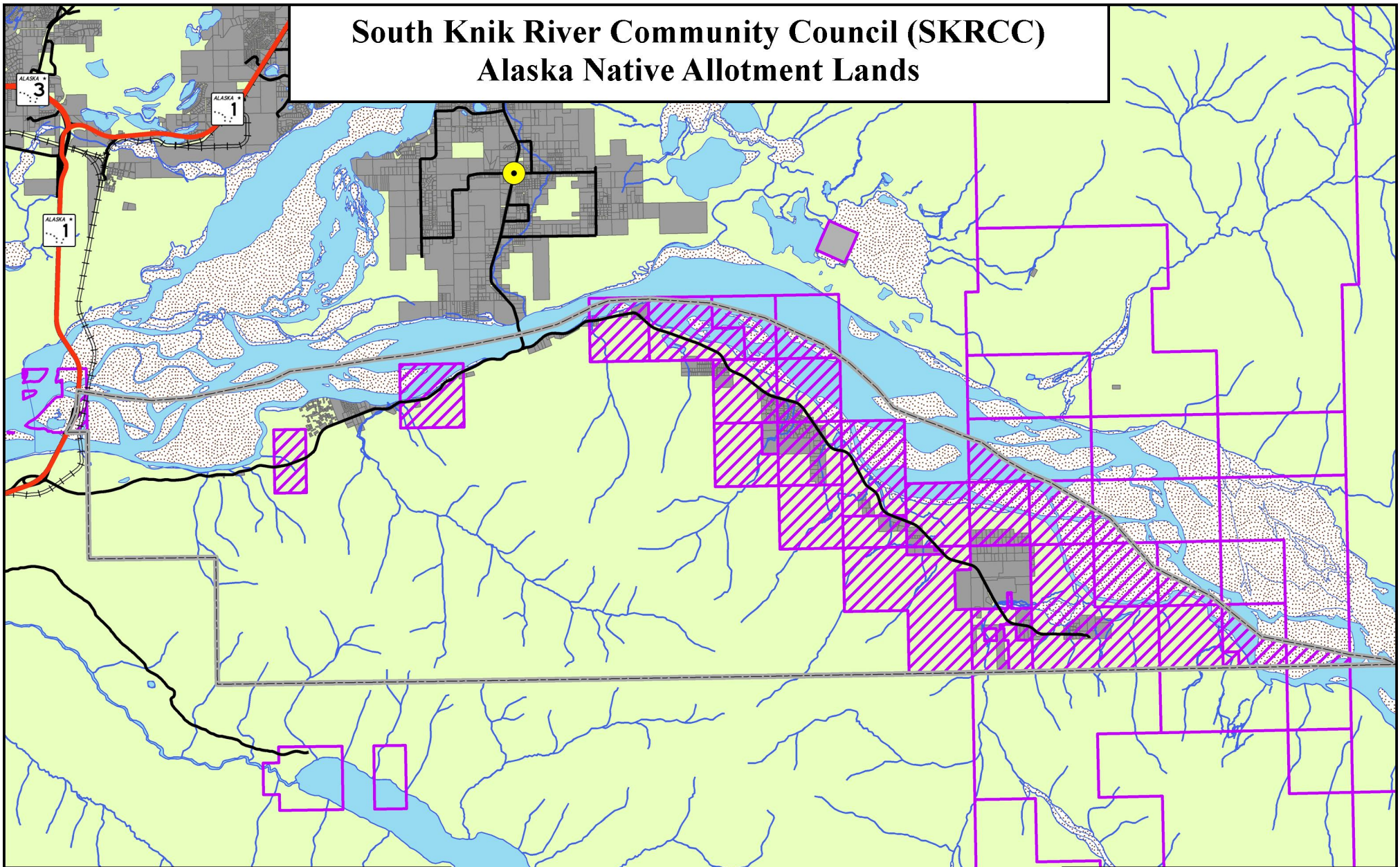
0 1/2 1 2mi  
 (1 inch = 2 miles)



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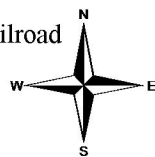


# South Knik River Community Council (SKRCC) Alaska Native Allotment Lands



### Legend

- SKRCC
- Native Allotments within SKRCC
- Butte
- Native Allotments
- Highway
- Major Road
- Railroad



0 1/2 1 2mi  
 (1 inch = 2 miles)

Created by: Joshua Allen, Planner II - June 4, 2014

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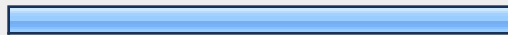


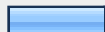




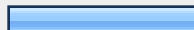
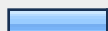



# **Appendix D**


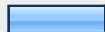
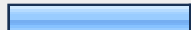
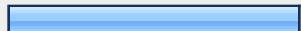

## *Community Survey Results*



# South Knik River Community Comprehensive Planning Survey

1. Check the statement that most accurately describes your household:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Full-Time Residential Property Owner (resides in the community more than 6 months per year)		77.4%	65
Part-Time Resident Property Owner		8.3%	7
Renter		1.2%	1
Non-residential Property Owner		14.3%	12
<i>answered question</i>			<b>84</b>
<i>skipped question</i>			<b>3</b>

2. If you are a full time resident (more than 6 months per year), how long have you lived in the South Knik River area?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
0-5 years		17.9%	12
6-10 years		23.9%	16
<b>11-20 years</b>		<b>28.4%</b>	<b>19</b>
21-30 years		14.9%	10
31-40 years		9.0%	6
41-50 years		1.5%	1
50+ years		4.5%	3
<i>answered question</i>			<b>67</b>
<i>skipped question</i>			<b>20</b>

3. What area of the South Knik River community do you live in?				
			Response Percent	Response Count
Old Glenn			11.8%	9
Goat Creek			14.5%	11
S. Knik River Rd. Mile 1-4			27.6%	21
<b>S. Knik River Rd. Mile 5-10</b>			<b>44.7%</b>	<b>34</b>
End of S. Knik River Rd.			2.6%	2
			Other (please specify)	5
			<i>answered question</i>	<b>76</b>
			<i>skipped question</i>	<b>11</b>

4. How many people are in your household?									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	NA	Response Count	
Ages 18 and over	23.8% (19)	<b>63.8%</b> <b>(51)</b>	3.8% (3)	3.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	1.3% (1)	3.8% (3)	80	
Ages younger than 18	31.3% (10)	12.5% (4)	6.3% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.1% (1)	3.1% (1)	<b>43.8%</b> <b>(14)</b>	32	
								<i>answered question</i>	<b>80</b>
								<i>skipped question</i>	<b>7</b>

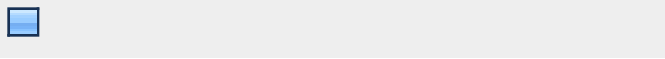
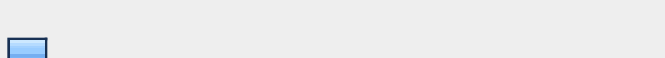
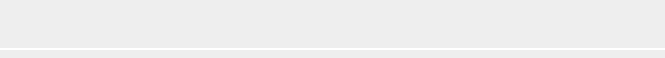
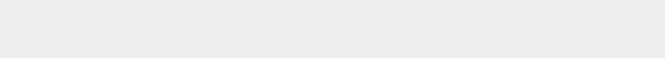
5. List the location of employment for the employed adults (18 and over) in your household:

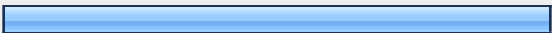


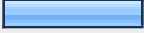
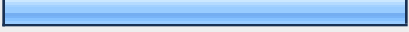
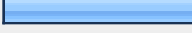
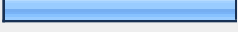
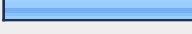


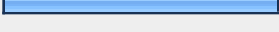
	Palmer	Wasilla	Other Mat-Su areas	Anchorage	Within the S. Knik River Community Boundaries	North Slope	Other	Response Count
Adult 1	21.2% (14)	9.1% (6)	6.1% (4)	<b>43.9% (29)</b>	9.1% (6)	4.5% (3)	21.2% (14)	
Adult 2	16.3% (7)	9.3% (4)	9.3% (4)	<b>41.9% (18)</b>	2.3% (1)	4.7% (2)	30.2% (13)	
Adult 3	<b>50.0% (2)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (1)	
Adult 4	0.0% (0)	<b>50.0% (1)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>50.0% (1)</b>	
Adult 5	<b>100.0% (1)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	
Other (please specify)								
<i>answered question</i>								
<i>skipped question</i>								

**6. Which occupations do the adults (18 and over) within your household work in? (Choose more than one occupation per adult, if applicable.)**

	Adult 1	Adult 2	Adult 3	Adult 4	Adult 5	Response Count
Government	<b>100.0% (15)</b>	6.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	15
Military	<b>100.0% (1)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1
Education	<b>61.5% (8)</b>	38.5% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	13
Retail	<b>100.0% (1)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1
Clerical	33.3% (3)	<b>44.4% (4)</b>	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	9
Industrial	<b>33.3% (1)</b>	<b>33.3% (1)</b>	<b>33.3% (1)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3
Home Occupation	40.0% (2)	<b>60.0% (3)</b>	20.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	5
Transportation	<b>87.5% (7)</b>	12.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8
Construction	47.1% (8)	<b>52.9% (9)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	17
Retired	<b>76.9% (10)</b>	46.2% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	13
Health Care	<b>66.7% (8)</b>	50.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	12
Hospitality	<b>100.0% (2)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2
Tourism	<b>100.0% (4)</b>	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4
Self Employed	<b>73.3% (11)</b>	53.3% (8)	6.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	15
(Optional) Please feel to be more specific or list other occupations not listed above:						19
<b><i>answered question</i></b>						<b>68</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>						<b>19</b>

7. Homesteading has long been a part of the community's history. For historical information, please indicate your homesteading status. Please note, this question is referring specifically to homesteading within the South Knik River area.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Original homesteader		4.0%	3
Direct descendant of a homesteader living on the original homestead		5.3%	4
Direct descendant of a homesteader living within a 30 mile radius of the original homestead		0.0%	0
NA		90.7%	68
Other (please specify)			2
		<b>answered question</b>	<b>75</b>
		<b>skipped question</b>	<b>12</b>

8. Why do you live in the South Knik River community? (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one at a minimum.)			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Natural Beauty		84.2%	64
Recreational Opportunities		42.1%	32
<b>Quiet Rural Atmosphere</b>		<b>85.5%</b>	<b>65</b>
The Glacier		21.1%	16
Seclusion		61.8%	47
Good Neighbors		28.9%	22
Good Commute Location		35.5%	27
Reasonable Property Prices		28.9%	22
Family Tradition		10.5%	8
Subsistence Living		9.2%	7
Density/Lot Size		42.1%	32
		Other (please specify)	7
		<b>answered question</b>	<b>76</b>
		<b>skipped question</b>	<b>11</b>

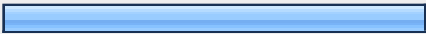
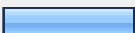



9. What, if anything, do you dislike about living in the South Knik River community?		
		Response Count
		54
		<b>answered question</b>
		<b>54</b>
		<b>skipped question</b>
		<b>33</b>

**10. Which of the following services and facilities would you like to see offered in the South Knik River community? (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one at a minimum. The scale is from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most supportive and 4 being the least supportive.)**

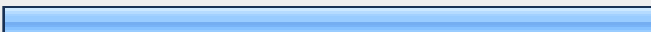
	1	2	3	4	Rating Average	Response Count
U.S. Post office	40.5% (17)	11.9% (5)	4.8% (2)	<b>42.9% (18)</b>	2.50	42
Transfer Station (solid waste)	27.5% (11)	12.5% (5)	5.0% (2)	<b>55.0% (22)</b>	2.88	40
Cemetery	11.1% (4)	11.1% (4)	22.2% (8)	<b>55.6% (20)</b>	3.22	36
Library	30.2% (13)	7.0% (3)	18.6% (8)	<b>44.2% (19)</b>	2.77	43
Municipal Water	20.5% (8)	17.9% (7)	10.3% (4)	<b>51.3% (20)</b>	2.92	39
Municipal Sewer	27.5% (11)	7.5% (3)	10.0% (4)	<b>55.0% (22)</b>	2.93	40
Junior/High School	17.5% (7)	7.5% (3)	7.5% (3)	<b>67.5% (27)</b>	3.25	40
Elementary School	19.5% (8)	7.3% (3)	17.1% (7)	<b>56.1% (23)</b>	3.10	41
Athletic Fields	15.0% (6)	7.5% (3)	20.0% (8)	<b>57.5% (23)</b>	3.20	40
Playgrounds	28.9% (11)	13.2% (5)	21.1% (8)	<b>36.8% (14)</b>	2.66	38
Senior Housing	13.9% (5)	22.2% (8)	25.0% (9)	<b>38.9% (14)</b>	2.89	36
Senior Center	13.2% (5)	13.2% (5)	31.6% (12)	<b>42.1% (16)</b>	3.03	38
Community Center	21.4% (9)	23.8% (10)	<b>28.6% (12)</b>	26.2% (11)	2.60	42
Day Care	10.5% (4)	10.5% (4)	28.9% (11)	<b>50.0% (19)</b>	3.18	38
Natural Gas	<b>59.6% (34)</b>	10.5% (6)	8.8% (5)	21.1% (12)	1.91	57
Cable	<b>51.0% (25)</b>	18.4% (9)	10.2% (5)	20.4% (10)	2.00	49
Quick Mart/General Store	30.2% (13)	16.3% (7)	18.6% (8)	<b>34.9% (15)</b>	2.58	43
Park and Ride Facilities (for commuting)	<b>36.2% (17)</b>	27.7% (13)	8.5% (4)	27.7% (13)	2.28	47
Public Transportation	<b>35.7% (15)</b>	26.2% (11)	9.5% (4)	28.6% (12)	2.31	42
Cell Phone Service	<b>63.5% (33)</b>	13.5% (7)	5.8% (3)	17.3% (9)	1.77	52
Satellite	<b>42.9% (18)</b>	14.3% (6)	14.3% (6)	28.6% (12)	2.29	42
Other (please specify)						6

	<i>answered question</i>	74
	<i>skipped question</i>	13

**11. The population of the South Knik River community is approximately 652 people. What type of population growth would you prefer to see during the next 10 years?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Minimal Growth: 0-20%(0-130 people)</b>		65.0%	52
Slow Growth: 20-40%(131-261 people)		20.0%	16
Moderate Growth: 40-60%(262-391 people)		11.3%	9
Moderately Fast Growth: 60-100% (392-652 people)		1.3%	1
Rapid Growth: 100% or more(653+ people)		2.5%	2
	<i>answered question</i>		80
	<i>skipped question</i>		7

**12. Is preserving the rural character of the South Knik River community important to you?**



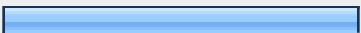

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		100.0%	79
No		0.0%	0
	<i>answered question</i>		79
	<i>skipped question</i>		8





13. Please answer the following questions in the box provided below: How would you define "rural character?" and/or What makes this community "rural" to you?

		Response Count
		65
	<i>answered question</i>	65
	<i>skipped question</i>	22

**14. In trying to preserve "rural character" which of the following "tools" do you think the community should use? (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one at a minimum.)**

		Response Percent	Response Count
<p><b>VEGETATIVE BUFFERS ON WATERBODIES:</b> A vegetative buffer zone is an undeveloped area directly adjacent to a body of water or other natural habitats. Buffers can be comprised of existing plants on the site and/or new plantings. Buffer zones include aquatic plants in shallow water, moisture-loving plants along the shore, or upland plants in dry soils.</p>		56.0%	42
<p><b>CLUSTER SUBDIVISION DESIGN:</b> Cluster developments provide landowners with a flexible approach to subdivision design so that the dwelling units can be concentrated on a smaller portion of their land, allowing most of the land to be left in its natural open space condition. Cluster developments, also known as conservation or open space subdivisions, promote the wise use of land, create more efficient street and utility patterns than conventional subdivision, and preserve the natural and scenic qualities of open land.</p>		33.3%	25
<p><b>DENSITY/LOT SIZE REQUIREMENTS:</b> Regulations regarding the lot size allowed in an area, generally specified by a zoning ordinance.</p>		54.7%	41
<p><b>OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS:</b> Open space lands consist of land valued for natural processes and wildlife, for agricultural production, for active and passive recreation, and/or for providing other public benefits. Open Space regulation can be used to require developers retain a certain amount of open space when planning a</p>		56.0%	42

development.			
<p>GREENBELT: A greenbelt is a continuous area of open land surrounding a city or residential development. Greenbelts are often part of a natural creek, river or storm water drainage path, and as such are flood prone and ill-suited to development. In their natural state, they provide a habitat for wildlife and native plants, and may include nature trails for walking and biking during normal weather. Development is restricted within the greenbelt.</p>		54.7%	41
<p><b>PRESERVATION OF NATURAL VEGETATION: The principal advantage of preserving natural vegetation is the protection of desirable trees, vines, bushes, and grasses from damage during project development. Vegetation provides erosion control, storm water detention, biofiltration, and aesthetic values to a site during and after construction activities.</b></p>		61.3%	46
		Other (please specify)	8
		<b><i>answered question</i></b>	<b>75</b>
		<b><i>skipped question</i></b>	<b>12</b>

**15. How do you feel about the following facilities and activities locating in your community? (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one at a minimum. The scale is from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most supportive and 4 being the least supportive. You may choose NA if the choice does not apply)**

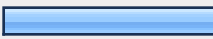
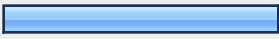
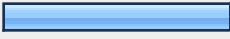

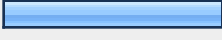
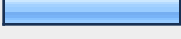
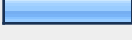
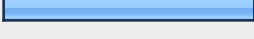
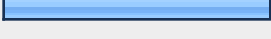
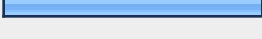

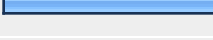
	1	2	3	4	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Cell Tower	<b>33.9%</b> <b>(21)</b>	19.4% (12)	19.4% (12)	25.8% (16)	1.6% (1)	2.38	62
Amateur/Ham Radio Tower	9.4% (5)	20.8% (11)	18.9% (10)	<b>45.3%</b> <b>(24)</b>	5.7% (3)	3.06	53
Prison	4.7% (3)	1.6% (1)	6.3% (4)	<b>78.1%</b> <b>(50)</b>	9.4% (6)	3.74	64
Medical Waste Incinerator	1.6% (1)	1.6% (1)	6.6% (4)	<b>82.0%</b> <b>(50)</b>	8.2% (5)	3.84	61
Race Track for Motorized Uses	6.5% (4)	9.7% (6)	4.8% (3)	<b>72.6%</b> <b>(45)</b>	6.5% (4)	3.53	62
Race Track for NON-Motorised Uses	9.4% (5)	11.3% (6)	15.1% (8)	<b>54.7%</b> <b>(29)</b>	9.4% (5)	3.27	53
Radio Tower/Broadcast	3.6% (2)	19.6% (11)	16.1% (9)	<b>53.6%</b> <b>(30)</b>	7.1% (4)	3.29	56
Gravel Pit-Commercial	5.5% (3)	10.9% (6)	18.2% (10)	<b>58.2%</b> <b>(32)</b>	7.3% (4)	3.39	55
Gravel Pit-Personal	5.5% (3)	12.7% (7)	29.1% (16)	<b>47.3%</b> <b>(26)</b>	5.5% (3)	3.25	55
Dog Kennel /Cattery (commercial)	11.3% (6)	18.9% (10)	17.0% (9)	<b>45.3%</b> <b>(24)</b>	7.5% (4)	3.04	53
Wind Turbine (commercial)	<b>44.1%</b> <b>(26)</b>	16.9% (10)	6.8% (4)	28.8% (17)	3.4% (2)	2.21	59
Wind Turbine (residential)	<b>60.7%</b> <b>(37)</b>	19.7% (12)	8.2% (5)	8.2% (5)	3.3% (2)	1.63	61
Wind Turbine (blade)	<b>50.0%</b> <b>(26)</b>	17.3% (9)	5.8% (3)	23.1% (12)	3.8% (2)	2.02	52
Wind Turbine (spiral)	<b>50.9%</b> <b>(27)</b>	17.0% (9)	3.8% (2)	24.5% (13)	3.8% (2)	2.02	53
Firing Range (club)	13.3% (8)	18.3% (11)	16.7% (10)	<b>46.7%</b> <b>(28)</b>	5.0% (3)	3.02	60

Firing Range (commercial)	10.2% (6)	13.6% (8)	11.9% (7)	<b>57.6% (34)</b>	6.8% (4)	3.25	59	
Recreational Boat Launch	<b>31.0% (18)</b>	25.9% (15)	6.9% (4)	<b>31.0% (18)</b>	5.2% (3)	2.40	58	
Fast Food Restaurant	15.1% (8)	11.3% (6)	15.1% (8)	<b>50.9% (27)</b>	7.5% (4)	3.10	53	
Outdoor Music/festival Facilities	28.8% (17)	13.6% (8)	10.2% (6)	<b>40.7% (24)</b>	6.8% (4)	2.67	59	
Large Factory/Production Plant	0.0% (0)	3.3% (2)	11.7% (7)	<b>73.3% (44)</b>	11.7% (7)	3.79	60	
Other (please specify)							9	
							<b>answered question</b>	<b>77</b>
							<b>skipped question</b>	<b>10</b>

16. If the community was to adopt additional or more stringent land use regulations, which of the following would you support? (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one at a minimum. The scale is from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most supportive and 4 being the least supportive.)

	1	2	3	4	Rating Average	Response Count
Signs	<b>52.8% (28)</b>	9.4% (5)	20.8% (11)	17.0% (9)	2.02	53
Lighting	<b>36.0% (18)</b>	30.0% (15)	14.0% (7)	20.0% (10)	2.18	50
Noise	<b>56.1% (37)</b>	13.6% (9)	10.6% (7)	19.7% (13)	1.94	66
Traffic	<b>48.2% (27)</b>	21.4% (12)	10.7% (6)	19.6% (11)	2.02	56
Odor	<b>53.8% (28)</b>	19.2% (10)	9.6% (5)	17.3% (9)	1.90	52
Landscaping	<b>31.3% (15)</b>	14.6% (7)	25.0% (12)	29.2% (14)	2.52	48
View Shed	<b>37.8% (17)</b>	15.6% (7)	17.8% (8)	28.9% (13)	2.38	45
Environmental	<b>50.9% (28)</b>	25.5% (14)	10.9% (6)	12.7% (7)	1.85	55
Junk and Trash	<b>65.3% (47)</b>	11.1% (8)	6.9% (5)	16.7% (12)	1.75	72
None	<b>58.3% (7)</b>	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	1.83	12
Other (please specify)						5
<b>answered question</b>						<b>76</b>
<b>skipped question</b>						<b>11</b>

17. As communities grow and change, so do their environments. Many communities are taking steps to plan with the environment in mind. In your opinion, what should be the environmental priorities for the South Knik River community? (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one as a minimum.)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Erosion Control		32.1%	25
<b>Water Quality</b>		<b>42.3%</b>	<b>33</b>
Air Quality		34.6%	27
View Shed		7.7%	6
Wetlands		33.3%	26
Open Space		26.9%	21
Green Space		19.2%	15
Wildlife habitat corridors		38.5%	30
Trees		41.0%	32
Fish		39.7%	31
None		7.7%	6
All		32.1%	25
Other (please specify)			7
		<b>answered question</b>	<b>78</b>
		<b>skipped question</b>	<b>9</b>

18. What lot size(s) do you find reasonable for the South Knik River area? **CURRENT BOROUGH STANDARDS: MSB 27.20.060 "Area" Minimum Lot Size- 40,000 square feet( 43,560 sqft) of area with at least; 10,000 square feet of useable building area 10,000 square feet of contiguous useable septic area EXCEPTIONS TO MINIMUM LOT SIZE- \* More than 20,000 square feet but less than 40,000 square feet must be serviced by: community water OR community septic system. \* Less than 20,000 square feet but at least 8,400 square feet must be serviced by: community or municipal water system AND community or municipal sewage disposal facilities All lots going below this minimum must meet strict standards regarding septic and water regulations. See section "exceptions" above. The borough's minimum lot size was calculated to get the smallest lot possible while maintaining public health and safety. (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one at a minimum. The scale is from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most supportive and 4 being the least supportive.)**

	1	2	3	4	Rating Average	Response Count
Less than 1 acre	10.2% (5)	10.2% (5)	12.2% (6)	<b>67.3% (33)</b>	3.37	49
1 acre	<b>48.1% (26)</b>	13.0% (7)	11.1% (6)	27.8% (15)	2.19	54
2-3 acres	<b>54.0% (27)</b>	26.0% (13)	12.0% (6)	8.0% (4)	1.74	50
4-6 acres	<b>54.5% (24)</b>	25.0% (11)	6.8% (3)	13.6% (6)	1.80	44
7-10 acres	<b>40.5% (15)</b>	24.3% (9)	10.8% (4)	24.3% (9)	2.19	37
More than 10 acres	<b>43.8% (14)</b>	18.8% (6)	12.5% (4)	25.0% (8)	2.19	32
				Other (please specify)		8
				<b>answered question</b>		<b>76</b>
				<b>skipped question</b>		<b>11</b>



**19. The South Knik River community; at this time, does not have a large amount of public lands. But, in the future there may be opportunities to acquire public lands for the community. What would you like to see these public lands used for? (You may choose multiple answers but, please choose at least one at a minimum. The scale is from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most supportive and 4 being the least supportive.)**

	1	2	3	4	Rating Average	Response Count
Community center/building	20.4% (10)	24.5% (12)	16.3% (8)	<b>38.8% (19)</b>	2.73	49
Motorized trails	30.5% (18)	6.8% (4)	10.2% (6)	<b>52.5% (31)</b>	2.85	59
Non-motorized trails	<b>63.9% (39)</b>	16.4% (10)	4.9% (3)	14.8% (9)	1.70	61
Schools	18.6% (8)	14.0% (6)	18.6% (8)	<b>48.8% (21)</b>	2.98	43
River access	<b>55.2% (32)</b>	17.2% (10)	5.2% (3)	22.4% (13)	1.95	58
Mushing trail	15.1% (8)	26.4% (14)	13.2% (7)	<b>45.3% (24)</b>	2.89	53
Fire/Emergency services building	<b>55.6% (30)</b>	25.9% (14)	1.9% (1)	16.7% (9)	1.80	54
Bike path	<b>59.7% (37)</b>	14.5% (9)	6.5% (4)	19.4% (12)	1.85	62
Athletic fields	12.0% (6)	20.0% (10)	14.0% (7)	<b>54.0% (27)</b>	3.10	50
Salmon and Wildlife Viewing	<b>57.1% (36)</b>	20.6% (13)	6.3% (4)	15.9% (10)	1.81	63
Museum	4.7% (2)	18.6% (8)	11.6% (5)	<b>65.1% (28)</b>	3.37	43
Historical recreation/sporting areas	<b>33.9% (19)</b>	25.0% (14)	17.9% (10)	23.2% (13)	2.30	56
Cemetery	2.3% (1)	4.5% (2)	36.4% (16)	<b>56.8% (25)</b>	3.48	44
	Other (please specify)					6
	<b>answered question</b>					<b>77</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>					<b>10</b>