

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 23, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We are writing in support of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' (AKDOT) four applications to the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration grant program (Culvert Aquatic Organism Passage [AOP] Program). AKDOT is working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) to rehabilitate and replace culverts around the state.

The first project, the Parks Highway Drainage and Culvert Improvements project, would replace 10 culverts between milepost 99 – 163, two of which must be removed and replaced with bridges. This portion of the highway runs from Talkeetna through the Denali State Park alongside the Susitna River. The river feeds into the Susitna River Basin, which supports all five species of salmon in Alaska – king, sockeye, coho, keta, and pink salmon.

The second project is located in King Salmon, Alaska and would to replace the Eskimo Creek Culvert. Replacing this culvert will allow for coho and king salmon to pass through where debris tend to build-up, making passage impossible. Once cleared, the AOP structure will allow salmon to regain access to five miles of spawning and rearing habitat, strengthening fisheries stocks, and Steller sea lion species that prey on the salmon.

The third application is to replace six culverts along the Mineral Creek Road and the Richardson Highway near Valdez, Alaska. The existing culverts are far too small and present safety risks associated with flooding. Furthermore, coho, sockeye, king, and keta salmon are known to utilize critical habitat these culverts provide access to. These culverts are listed in the top 25 culverts needing replacement in the Prince William Sound area by ADFG.

The final application is to fund the Threemile Creek Culvert replacement in Klawock, Alaska. One of the more dilapidated culverts in the state, the Threemile Creek culvert would be replaced by a bridge. Located a half mile upstream from Klawock Lake, this creek is historically the largest spawning system within the Klawock Lake Watershed, with approximately 3,400 sockeye salmon journeying upriver last year. If restored, the culvert would open 1.5 miles of habitat for sockeye, pink, and coho salmon.

Consistent with all applicable law, policy, and guidance, we respectfully ask that due consideration be given to AKDOT's application as well as all Alaska application. Please keep our offices apprised of the outcome. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



Mary Sattler Peltola  
Representative for All Alaska



February 3, 2023

Federal Highway Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE.  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Letter of Support for State of Alaska's DOT&PF Parks Highway MP 99-163 Drainage & Culvert Improvements Project

To the Honorable Pete Buttigieg,

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

In 2008 the partnership completed a Strategic Action Plan that outlined goals for protecting and restoring salmon habitat in the Mat-Su Basin. Implementation of the plan and achievement of its goals will happen through efforts of partner organizations, like the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities. This project to replace and upgrade a bundle of ten culverts along the Parks Highway addresses goals of the partnership that are identified in the plan. Specifically, this project will address the plan’s goal to restore fish passage in priority culverts and ensure that no new barriers are constructed in the Mat-Su Basin. In addition, this project increases both the conservation of and knowledge of fish and fish habitat in the Mat-Su Basin and is consistent with the goals of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

We feel this project is a good fit for achieving the goals of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act as the work proposed will increase resilience to climate change by replacing aging infrastructure with new culverts and bridges designed for a changing climate and will impact underserved communities by improving the habitat of subsistence species.

Please consider this letter an endorsement from the Mat-Su Salmon Partnership of Parks Highway MP 99-163 Drainage & Culvert Improvements. We look forward to working with you on this project and wish Alaska DOT&PF success in finding funding.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessica Speed', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Speed  
Mat-Su Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership Coordinator



# Chickaloon Village Traditional Council (Nay'dini'aa Na' Kayax)

February 28, 2023

Chief Gary Harrison,  
*Chairman/Elder*

Philip Ling,  
*Vice-Chair*

Cheryl Sherman,  
*Secretary*

Doug Wade,  
*Treasurer/Elder*

Emily Ling  
*Member*

Lisa Wade,  
*Executive Director*

Serena Martino,  
*Executive Assistant*

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Support for State of Alaska DOT&PF Parks Highway MP 99-163 Culvert Replacements for Aquatic Organism Passage

Ugheli Dzaen (Good Day) Secretary Buttigieg,

Chickaloon Native Village (CNV) is a federally recognized Ahtna Dene Tribe in southcentral Alaska, governed by the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council (CVTC). Our ancestral territory encompasses much of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) and our traditional area of influence overlaps with ancestral lands of neighboring Dena'ina and Ahtna Dene Tribes. Actions that occur within our traditional ancestral territory and customary area of use may impact our environment, our cultural resources, and the health of our Tribal citizens and community members.

Culverts that block fish passage are an identified problem within Southcentral Alaska because they dramatically reduce the miles of stream habitat for salmon spawning and rearing. CNV works to protect and restore salmon populations and their habitats including culvert replacements and other fish passage barrier removals.

This is a letter of support for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' Parks Highway Milepost 99-163 Drainage and Culvert Improvements Project. This series of culvert replacements will improve fish passage at 11 sites that currently have deficient culverts. This project will replace 11 deficient culverts identified by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as needing critical attention to address obstacles to fish passage for spawning and rearing activities. This effort will replace three culvert sites with bridges and will replace the remaining eight culvert sites with fish passage culverts. The completed project will open 51.5 miles of barrier-free, upstream, anadromous habitat and access to nearly 420 acres of lake habitat for fish.

Lastly, anadromous streambanks have a high potential of being ancestral cultural sites with surface or subsurface artifacts. CNV appreciates the opportunity to discuss project sites and potential archaeological resources with DOT&PF project staff in the project planning and design phases, so that cultural site data collection may occur before ground disturbance, if necessary.

May Nek'eltaeni (Creator) Guide Our Footsteps,

  
Chief Gary Harrison (Feb 28, 2023 17:11 AKST)

Chief Gary Harrison  
Chairman

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