

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
WATERBODY SETBACK ADVISORY BOARD
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 24-01**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH WATERBODY SETBACK ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDING CHANGES TO MSB 17.55 - SETBACK AND SCREENING EASEMENTS, MSB 17.02 - MANDATORY LAND USE PERMIT, MSB 17.80 NONCONFORMING STRUCTURES, AND MSB 17.65 - VARIANCES.

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly established the Waterbody Setback Advisory Board through IM No. 23-175 and Ordinance No. 23-175 on 8/15/2023 to review and recommend any changes to the Borough code relating to waterbody setbacks and related issues. These related issues should include variances/non-conformities, how to deal with structures built in violation of the 1973 and 1987 ordinances, possible remedies for structures in violation, and any other issues the Board believes are pertinent. To the extent possible, the Advisory Board is required to identify possible solutions, identify ways to enforce and implement those solutions and identify resources needed to implement and enforce those solutions; and

WHEREAS, the preservation and protection of our natural water bodies are recognized as essential for the sustainability of ecological balance, ensuring public safety, enhancing the beauty of our community, the conservation of viewsheds, enriching the quality of life, safeguarding community characteristics, and

upholding property values. These water bodies serve as critical habitats for diverse flora and fauna, including salmon and other fish, contribute to local biodiversity, support recreational activities, and play a crucial role in the broader ecosystem services that benefit both residents and wildlife alike; and

WHEREAS, the activities conducted adjacent to waterbodies, such as construction, grading, clearing, filling, or contouring, are known to have a profound impact on water quality, the preservation of natural habitats, and the overall health and sustainability of aquatic ecosystems. These activities can lead to sedimentation, alteration of hydrological patterns, habitat fragmentation, and the introduction of pollutants, all of which threaten the quality of life and community for residents, the ecological balance, and biodiversity crucial to the well-being of these environments; and

WHEREAS, there has been a recognition of the necessity for increased regulation and oversight to prevent adverse effects on waterbodies resulting from unregulated or improperly managed land-use activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Waterbody Setback Advisory Board hereby makes the following recommendations to the Assembly:

1. Path to Compliance for Homeowners: The Assembly is advised

to establish a path to compliance for homes built within the 75-foot setback area of lakes in violation of MSB 17.55. This compliance pathway should require the design and construction of mitigation measures to be developed and overseen by a qualified professional registered in the State of Alaska, and should maintain a minimum setback of 45 feet.

2. Setback Maintenance and Expansion: The Waterbody Setback Advisory Board recommends retaining the current 75-foot setback requirement for buildings adjacent to flowing water.

3. Commercial and industrial development: Recommend waterbody setback be applied to include commercial and industrial projects.

4. Land Use Permit Requirement: It is recommended that MSB 17.02 be amended to mandate a land use permit for any grading, clearing, filling, contouring, or construction activities within 75 feet of waterbodies. This measure seeks to ensure thorough review and management of all such activities to minimize adverse impacts on waterbody ecosystems.

5. Shoreline standards: Adopt standards for clearing and grading within 75 feet of waterbodies to include provisions for managing runoff associated with the development, and maintaining a vegetative buffer along the shoreline.

6. Animal Waste Management: Adopt a setback requirement of 100 feet from the ordinary high-water mark of waterbodies for

outdoor kennels, stables, animal yards, and animal waste facilities to enhance environmental protection.

7. Prevention of Liquid Petroleum Fuel Contamination: Adopt measures to mitigate the risk of liquid fuel contamination near waterbodies by requiring secondary containment or drip collection for all fuel installations within 75 feet of waterbodies, including both existing and new installations.

8. Enhanced Enforcement: Recognizing the importance of enforcing setback regulations effectively, it is recommended that additional staff be hired to patrol water bodies. Their presence will deter violations, ensure adherence to established laws, and offer an immediate response to any observed infractions.


9. Structures within 45 feet: It is recommended that a minimum 45-foot water body setback be maintained with no path to compliance for structures illegally built within 45 feet of a water body.

10. Limitation of Variances: It is recommended that MSB 17.65 be amended to eliminate the ability to obtain a variance within 45 feet of a waterbody.

11. New habitat protection tax incentive: The Assembly is encouraged to consider the establishment of a habitat protection tax incentive, similar to the program in the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and advocate for state legislation that extends coverage to all types of waterbodies, not limited to rivers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Waterbody Setback Advisory Board has attached a draft ordinance reflecting its recommendations for the Assembly to consider.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Waterbody Setback Advisory Board this 5th day of March, 2025.



Bill Kendig, Board Chair

ATTEST:



Lacie Olivieri, Board Clerk