



January 6, 2017

TO: Representative George Rauscher/ Distinguished Members of the 30th Alaska Legislature

FROM: Eric Phillips, Community Development Director, Matanuska-Susitna Borough

RE: **Letter of Support for Legislation Establishing the Jonesville Public Use Area**

It is my understanding that legislation is to be introduced this session to establish the Jonesville Public Use Area. As manager for Borough lands within the 25,000 square miles that comprise the Mat-Su Borough, I want to go on-record as being very supportive of this effort. I believe that this is the right direction for the Citizens, the Borough, and the State.

The Jonesville area currently suffers from many of the problems/issues that once afflicted what is now the Knik River Public Use Area (KRP UA). Rampant and uncontrolled shooting, under-age partying, vehicle burning, and many other associated destructive activities have unfortunately become the norm in the Jonesville area. Further, the greater Sutton community has essentially been left on its own to grapple with the lawlessness, damage and related community impacts.

No too many years ago, we saw a very similar situation in the KRP UA and the Butte area. However, once the KRP UA was formally established by the legislature and the plan was completed for the area, considerable progress has been made by the State, the Borough, the community, as well as various user groups to dispel much of the area's "Wild West" reputation. In fact, the Borough has invested substantially in improving recreation infrastructure on its lands adjoining the KRP UA. As a result, the area is becoming increasingly 'family-friendly' while maintaining a vast majority of the recreation values that make it so popular. We hope to continue to work with the State until we have fully turned the corner.

This is all because the State made the conscience decision to establish the KRP UA. I believe that the Jonesville area can have a similar positive outcome, and the first step is to establish the Jonesville Public Use Area. I am ready to assist the State in this effort in any way I can, and sincerely hope the legislature will take this vital first step.