

# FRIENDS OF MAT-SU



## INSIDE

### Can it be User Friendly? The MSB Title 17 Zoning Code

By Kathy Wells, Executive Director



Zoning! Yes, there is a zoning code, despite the perception in the Mat-Su that there is no zoning and despite the folks who don't want zoning. That being said, the reality is that although zoning regulations exist, the code is in disarray with a mish mash of stacked amendments repealed ordinances and other unwieldy items. Most likely the cause is the reactionary method in which the Borough deals with land use conflicts and

incompatible development so there is not much time available to craft understandable yet comprehensive regulations. An issue crops up, the borough reacts to get something on the books to protect residents and then moves on to the next planning emergency. The code in its current form is difficult for borough staff and residents to use effectively. It is poorly organized, lacks consistent definitions, has little flexibility and predictability, is redundant and is behind the times.

Wouldn't it be great if you didn't have to read through a lot of rambling verbiage that set your brain into a state of mental bewilderment and off to a lawyer for interpretation? How about a zoning code that used some graphics, tables or charts instead of just words? Well, in winter 2008 the borough hired LSL Planning, Inc., a consulting firm based out of the Midwest for their experience and expertise in planning and code writing to assist in the borough zoning code update. FoMS recently attended a borough planning dept. meeting with other community organizations to get up to speed on how the update was proceeding. The consultants have a wide variety of planning skills and tools to offer and appear to be more than willing to listen and consider each community's needs and input. They focus on the "keep it simple" motto when reworking code or helping with community planning. Their track record is impressive with over 90% of the firm's clients engaged in multiple projects or continuing assistance.

Keys to user-friendly ordinances rely on format and will target the user. There will be a table of contents, a functional index, graphics, use of tables and charts, logical organization and clear understandable language. Some regulatory changes will be considered and could include natural features protection, accessory buildings and uses, commercial site development, parking, loading and access signs. The borough may want to consider consolidating the special land use districts or grouping districts by type in the code rewrite.

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TAKE SPECIAL NOTE:



**DON'T MISS THE FoMS ANNUAL MEETING**

**March 28, 2009**

**Agate Inn - 6pm to 9pm  
Refreshments and Appetizers**

**Featured Speakers:**

**VERNE RUPRIGHT,  
Mayor of Wasilla**

**FRANKIE BARKER,  
MSB Environmental Planner**

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## CONTACT US

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## OUR BOARD

**Mike Chmielewski**  
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*Vice President*

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*Treasurer*

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**Bill Mohrwinkel**  
**Murph O'Brien**

## Seasonal change and changing with the seasons

*By Mike Chmielewski, President of Friends of Mat-Su*

March in south central Alaska is an in your face time of year.

We've got bright white snow. Brilliant, blue skies. Biting winds. And taking the edge off of the memories of winter we experience the soothing warmth of the sun's lengthening effect. With that reflection of the present I turn to the main theme of this article: planning in the shadow – and light- of a changing economic climate.

Have you as a reader had a "ah ha" moment of changing personal finances? How do you plan when costs and incomes become less and less predictable?

We tend to budget based upon past experience. We individually or as organizations deal well with comfortable changes. Think about a part of your economic life suddenly gone a different way than what you had been lulled into believing could be counted upon. The extreme might be unforeseen loss of employment. The more subtle change could be a slow yet persistent increase in a daily expenditure, perhaps a few pennies more per gallon of fuel. Not a problem unless the increase continues every day and suddenly the cost has doubled.

For an organization with planning central to our purpose and mission, this year has begun within an environment playing the edge of comfort zone changes. Many funding agencies ranging from governments to foundations and individuals have announced changed funding availability.

As we look over projects that FoMS has been following and encouraging we see many examples of recognition that taking care of our community requires attention involving a spectrum of interests. It is safe to say, "It takes a community to plan for a community". This is as true of funding as it is of a contribution of time attention and ideas.

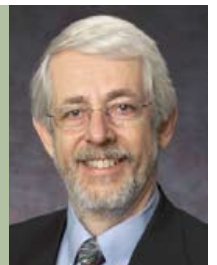
We would not be a planning group if we didn't have a positive view of the future. As we all move from March into April we do believe that starting a garden from seeds is a work to be rewarded with a harvest in the Fall. As a non-profit organization we have a similar positive view. The difference being we cannot expect funding to happen the way seasons change.

I hope those who read this will reflect upon your connection to our community. I further encourage acting in support of community planning. Many of you have been long time activists. Some have rested over the winter. Spring is back.

I hope to see you at our annual meeting on March 28th. I also look forward to seeing you enjoying the sun this summer along a trail or on a bench in Downtown Palmer. 🌿

### **Friends of Mat-Su thanks the following foundations, corporations, and companies for their generous support:**

United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
The Alaska Conservation Foundation  
The Pumpkin Hill Foundation  
The Fred Meyer Foundation  
Walmart  
Carr-Gottstein Properties



Mike Chmielewski



MSB Title 17 continued from Page 1

Phase 1 of this project is on schedule and the streamlined code should be available for public review and comment in spring 2009, which is right around the corner. In summer 2009, the planning commission public process will consist of review, a public hearing and comment and then they will forward their recommendation to the Assembly. The Assembly will also hold a public hearing, review public and Planning Commission comments and consider the streamlined zoning code for adoption. If the revised code is adopted, Phase 2, draft revisions to the zoning code will begin. This phase will bring the borough into the 21st Century of planning growth and development and will be a welcome tool in the toolbox for the community and for resident's quality of life. Stay tuned and get involved. As always FoMS will keep you posted. For more info on this: <http://www.zoningupdate.info/> 🌱

## The Future is Still Scheduled to Arrive So Please Keep FoMS in Your Financial Plans



By Sid McCausland, Treasurer

As our global economy shrinks, we are all looking for ways to tighten our belts. Most Alaska non-profit organizations are already in trouble. Numerous groups may close their doors this year and most will scale back their community services.

Every issue FoMS embraces is important to the future of our quality of life in the Mat-Su. FoMS' survival is important to each of us. Look around. No other group is standing in the wings willing to speak up for open government and land use planning.

FoMS has always operated on a shoestring. Our decade of successful advocacy has been paid for with the hard work of our underpaid and overworked staff; member dues and donations; and a combination of government, corporate, and foundation grants. Contributions trickle in until a hot button issue hits our Borough and then the flood of new members passes by all too quickly. Foundations often do not fund organizations without community support, so consistent member donations are essential to FoMS' success.

Your support is critical to our survival. Please keep us in your financial plans. May I suggest a monthly donation to FoMS through your financial institution's bill-pay service? It is relatively painless and adds up to a great tax-free donation. I do it and it feels great.

With your support, careful cash management and favorable decisions on a couple of pending grants, FoMS will survive this financial drought. It really is up to you. 🌱



### April Major Donor Campaign Time • Membership Renewal Form

Friends of Mat-Su (FoMS) provides land use information, advocates for borough wide planning, promotes citizen involvement and offers tools and support to develop a healthy and vibrant community.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/Organization/Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership:**  New  Renewal

Annual Individual \$30.00

Lifetime Membership \$500.00

Annual Family \$50.00

Business/Corporation \$100.00

Annual Student \$20.00

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Community Council \$35.00

#### Payment Options:

Payment: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL

Cash

Check

RETURN TO FOMS: P.O. BOX 116 • PALMER, AK • 99645 • PH: 746-0130 • FAX: 746-0142

**We look forward to  
your ongoing support!**

# MEET YOUR BOARD



## Phil Munger

I have lived in Alaska since 1973. My wife, Judy Youngquist and I moved to the Mat-Su Valley in 1983. I live on beautiful Neklason Lake in the Wasilla area in a small home with a large garden. Since arriving in the Mat-Su I have worked in public safety, college education and the arts. Judy and I raised our two kids, Julia and Alex, in an area the whole family grew to cherish. The entire family has been involved in environmental activism and community service. For this reason, I decided to join the Friends of Mat-Su board in 2004. Currently I am serving as secretary and I bring a candid voice to the organization where I enjoy sharing my opinions and ideas about how we can improve the Mat-Su Borough with better planning and public education.

In addition to the work that I do with FoMs I am proud to be one of Alaska's distinguished artists, through my role as a performing musician, and through my own music, which is performed worldwide. I am currently a Rasmuson Foundation Artist Fellow, and I was a 2008 recipient of New Scientist Magazine's Science Hero Award for non-scientists, along with President Barack Obama. 🌿



## Bill Mohrwinkel

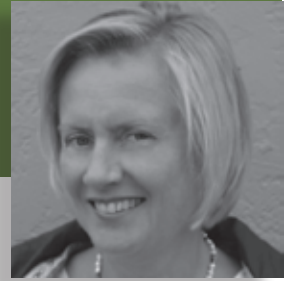
I moved to the Valley 13 years ago after working several summers as an instructor for The National Outdoor Leadership School. I had been living back East and realized that Alaska was where I needed to live. Big open wilderness, clean air and water, incredible access to all the things I love to do; camp, ski, kayak, hunt, fish, and snow machine.

Shortly after moving to the Valley, I soon realized we were facing the same problems that I left back East. I feel that because Alaska is such a young state we have an opportunity to learn from the mistakes that the lower 48 has made. We have such amazing natural resources, clean water and skies, healthy ecosystems that with some planning we can do it right. I feel our communities can be as beautiful as the natural world around us.

I became a member of FoMS in 2001 and been a Board Member since 2003. I joined the board in hopes that I could give a hand to an organization that is trying to improve our quality of life. I own a small guiding business, Arctic Wild, that takes people on 5-12 day raft, backpacking, canoeing and base camp trips in the Brooks Range. In the winter I work with Whistling Swan Productions bringing folk music to Anchorage, Palmer and Wasilla. I also work as a carpenter.

I bring a well-rounded perspective to FoMS. I know what it means to try to make a living off a small business. I like to hunt and fish and ride my snow machine, but I also enjoy the quite of skiing in the backcountry of canoeing on a quite lake. I know that we all have different ideas of how to live and play in a place, and I try to see it from all perspectives. We have an amazing opportunity in this Valley to create a healthy, beautiful, vibrant, sustainable community and as a FoMS board member I enjoy working toward helping to making this a better place to live. 🌿





## The GI Tract of the Core Area in the Mat-Su

By Kathy Wells, Executive Director

Last spring, in our newsletter, we posted a brief note about educating the core area community about green infrastructure planning through a borough contract awarded to FoMS. I am pleased to report the project was quite successful, not to mention fun!

For those that are unfamiliar, green infrastructure contains interconnected green space networks planned and managed for their natural resource values and their benefits to our communities. It is a series of hubs, links and sites that connects ecosystems and landscapes. These green interconnections not only provide open space for people and wildlife but they serve as filters and flood and storm water controls.

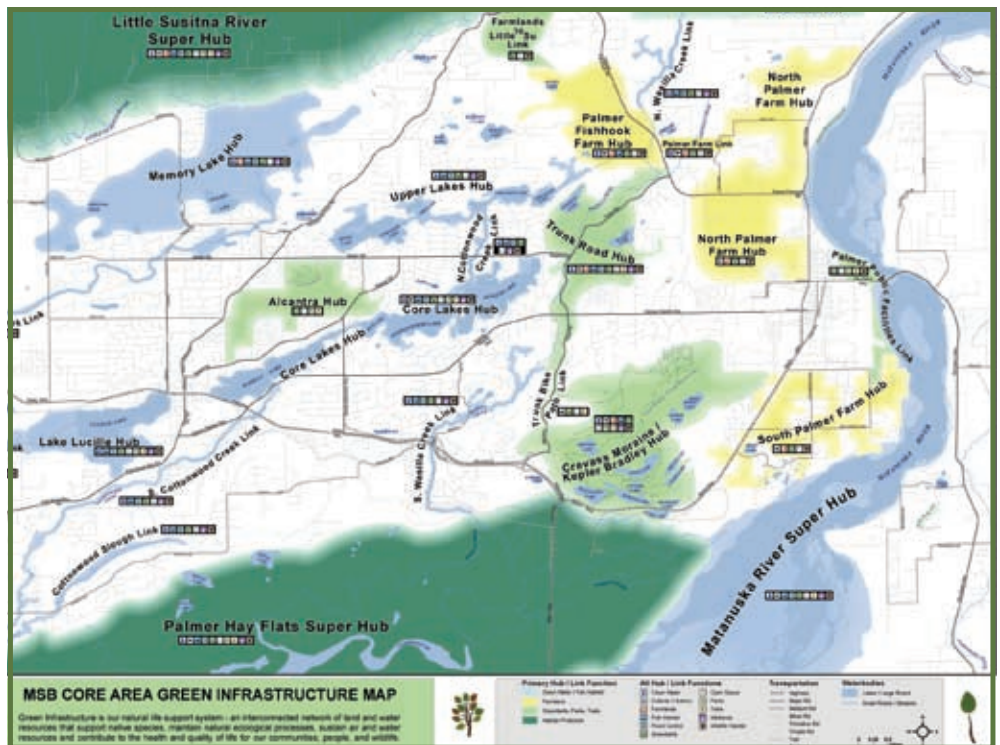
The first phase of the project entailed creating a brochure and power point presentation to get the word out about the benefits of green infrastructure. We took our show on the road to a variety of community organizations such as the Palmer Chamber of Commerce and Mat-Su Homebuilders as well as the cities of Palmer and Wasilla. During those presentations we sought volunteers to be planning team members in drafting a green infrastructure planning map for the core area that lies between Palmer and Wasilla.

There were two teams that met for three evenings to work on their plan. The team members were comprised of residents, business, developers and local groups. They chose to name their teams, Team one- The Mucky Peats and Team two- The Dream Team. The teams were given a series of GIS overlays to use that provided information on soils, wetlands, water bodies, parks and trails and land ownership along with the core area comprehensive plan to assist in drafting maps depicting what areas could be considered green infrastructure. The teams also created some ideas for implementing their plans. The results were amazing! Both teams identified many of the same areas for a variety of hubs that contained farms, parks and trails, water bodies such as streams and lakes and links to the different systems in the hubs. Cultural sites, wetlands and wildlife habitat were also included.

The borough GIS dept. then took the two maps and created one draft core area green infrastructure map utilizing their input. It was a great planning opportunity for everyone involved and now these team members are informed and are community ambassadors for green infrastructure.

FoMS is in the final phase of the contract and is on the road again to give a final report to the cities of Palmer and Wasilla and the Palmer Chamber. We are presenting the draft map and speaking about the next and most important, albeit difficult, phase of green infrastructure planning for the core area: implementation. Although it may be the hard part, it will be the best in the end if we as a community can make it happen.

Please feel free to stop by the office or contact us if you would like to see the map. We need to continue spreading the word and get more of the community involved in this planning process. Its hands on and fun! 🌱





# PROJECTS UPDATE

## What's Hatching at Hatchers?

By: Mimi Peabody, Projects Coordinator

### Hatcher Pass Management Plan Update:

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Mining Land and Water (DMLW) has begun the long awaited process of revising the Hatcher Pass Management Plan, which has not been updated since 1989. This will be a very important issue to follow because the management plan covers both the East and West sides of Hatcher Pass, including Independence Mine State Historical Park, Summit Lake State Recreation Site, Bald Mountain Ridge, Government Peak, Mile 16 Ski Run, Archangel Creek, Reed Lakes, Little Susitna River, Craigie Creek, Lucky Shot and Willow Mountain areas. The plan establishes guidelines and recommendations for the management of state land typically for the next 15 to 20 years.

Public scoping workshops will be held to provide information about the plan, document current uses, and identify issues of concern. FoMS will be an active participant in this process and we urge our members to weigh in as well because decisions made in this planning document will have a large impact on this special area for many years and will most likely result in additional regulations. We will keep you informed about the schedule for the public workshops. DMLW will be accepting written comments until 5:00 pm June 19, 2009.

Contact for further information:

- EMAIL** philana.jarvis@alaska.gov
- MAIL** Hatcher Pass Management Plan  
550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1050  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3579
- PHONE** (907) 269-8529
- FAX** (907) 269-8915



### Hatcher Pass "New Beginning" Ski Area Update:

The proposed Hatcher Pass ski area comprises 11,000 acres of undeveloped, but well used, terrain in the Talkeetna Mountains. The Mat-Su Borough manages the entire acreage and hopes this will facilitate its development potential for both Alpine and Nordic skiing. Furthermore, the borough believes that control of the property by a single governmental entity will significantly simplify and expedite development of the project. The Borough has already brought in an electrical power line to the ski area parking lot that is mostly underground to protect the scenic quality of the area. They have also conducted geotechnical studies and identified potable and snowmaking water supplies.



#### ► Alpine Area

The borough hopes to construct a moderate sized day lodge. They also plan to provide a combination of lifts for access to beginning, intermediate, and advanced terrain. Snowmaking facilities will be installed to enhance conditions in low snow years.

#### ► Nordic Area

The Nordic ski area on the south side incorporates a design boasting 16 kilometers of Olympic class trails with provisions for a Biathlon Course, 24 kilometers of recreational trails, and a sledding hill with a pony lift. It will also include a chalet and an amphitheater that can be used for winter and summer activities. The borough plans provisions for hiking, mountain biking and horse back riding in this area as well.

#### ► Project Status

The Borough has contracted with DOWL Engineers to begin an environmental analysis of the area and the suitability of the proposed project. DOWL is in the process of writing a Reconnaissance Report to discuss the concerns and to evaluate alternatives based on a recent public scoping process. More information on the work that DOWL will be doing can be found at [www.hatcherpass.com](http://www.hatcherpass.com).

The looming question about this project is how to pay for it. Stay tuned! 🌱



## There's Gold in Dem Dare Hills!

**By: Mimi Peabody, Projects Coordinator**

Full Metal Minerals is a Vancouver, BC based generative exploration company focused on exploration and development in Alaska and is a corporate member of Friends of Mat-Su. The company believes that Alaska holds vast and under explored world class ore bodies and is avidly pursuing development in this frontier region. The company has made one significant discovery in the Mat-Su Valley since going public in 2004: a high grade extension to the historically rich Lucky Shot gold mine.

The Lucky Shot property is located about 90 miles north of Anchorage in the Talkeetna Mountains in the historic Willow Creek Mining District. Past-producing mines in the District are known to be some of the highest grade in the Northern Cordillera. Prior to Full Metal's 2005 exploration program, limited modern exploration has been performed in the District since the mine closures. The mine site has an excellent infrastructure, road access from Anchorage, and it is in close proximity to both rail and power. Camp and maintenance facilities are operated year-round. Full Metal Minerals holds a 100% interest in the Lucky Shot Property.

In 2006 exploration results have shown continuity of high grade gold within the Lucky Shot Shear. Future drilling will include exploring for the faulted extension of the War Baby block of the Lucky Shot shear. Over the course of 2007, Full Metal completed over 50 diamond drill holes, to determine the extent of the Lucky Shot Shear zone. See 2007 FMM News Release #33 at [www.fullmetalminerals.com](http://www.fullmetalminerals.com) for 2007 drilling results.

During the summer of 2008 the company applied to the state for a hardrock exploration and temporary water rights permit. Friends of Mat-Su provided several comments about

the project and toured the facility in September of 2008. FoMS expressed concern about the potential damage to fresh water supplies during mining and water removal activities. However, we were encouraged by Full Metal's plans to process the 7,500-tonne bulk sample of the Coleman Vein Ore using gravity rather than chemicals. This method appears to have the least environmental impact on the surrounding area. We do not support any toxic chemicals and/or petroleum products used in areas that are fragile and in close proximity to fresh water supplies.

Furthermore, FoMS has advocated for close water quality monitoring of nearby fresh water sources and we support installing an HDPE liner to contain tailings and water to protect the surrounding environment from potential discharge, and that water discharged from the facility should meet or exceed current DEC standards. Clean, toxic free water is an asset worth its weight in gold and maintaining high quality water should be a priority. We also encouraged the company to implement a comprehensive reclamation process to minimize surface degradation from mining activities such as tailing storage.

In 2009 Full Metal Minerals plans to evaluate the economic viability of the Lucky Shot Gold project. The company envisions three scenarios: 1) additional surface exploration; 2) combined underground and surface exploration; 3) positive construction decision. Hatcher Pass is a unique and important place that many Alaskans value for its scenic and recreational opportunities. We support Full Metal Mineral's interest in responsibly developing this historic gold mine and this special area and we look forward to watching the progress of the mining operation at the Lucky Shot. 🌱



## Knik River Public Use Area (KRPUA) Update

Alaska Department of Natural Resources adopted the Final Management Plan for The Knik River Public Use Area (HB 307) in September of 2008. KRPUA was established to perpetuate and enhance general public recreation; public enjoyment of fish and wildlife; protect and maintain migratory waterfowl nesting areas; habitats for moose, Dall sheep, and brown bear; and other fish and wildlife habitat so that traditional public use of fish and wildlife populations may continue; and to provide an area for the public to enjoy the full spectrum of public uses, including maintenance and enhancement of off-road motorized vehicle and non-motorized recreational opportunities; ...

Members of Butte Area Residents Civic Organization (BARCO) and their supporters actively participated in the shaping of the legislation and during the management plan process. They believe that DNR not only missed many opportunities in their plan that would have lessened the negative impact of this popular recreation area on the community, but that the Plan did not reflect the purpose and intent of the legislation. BARCO has filed an appeal to Superior Court, requesting that the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources revise the Knik River Public Use Area Management Plan and remedy the issues brought forth in the stated Points of Appeal.

Support for this effort and questions are welcomed.  
Email: [resource@buttealaska.org](mailto:resource@buttealaska.org)



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