



# MEMORANDUM

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CC-26-084

## HB321 Fish & Game Wildlife Refuges

**Item Type:** Informational Memorandum  
**Prepared For:** Mayor Lord and Homer City Council  
**Date:** April 7, 2026  
**From:** Karyn DeCino, Special Projects & Communications Assistant  
**Through:** Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

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City staff with a well-rounded background and breadth of experience met to review House Bill 321 which addresses, in part, changes to State Critical Habitat Areas (CHAs), including the Homer Airport CHA, Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats CHAs, and the Anchor River/Fritz Creek CHA.

HB 321 would change the designation of state CHAs to wildlife refuges. Homer Airport CHA would be redesignated Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge, and its boundaries would be extended. Expansion of the Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge primarily targets land currently owned by Kachemak Moose Habitat Inc. (KMHI) but also includes land under other ownership.

The City needs to consider long-term implications of this bill regarding critical transportation infrastructure within and adjacent to the proposed wildlife refuges; in particular, the airport, port, and Kachemak Drive.

Staff support the addition of Kachemak Moose Habitat Inc. lands to the Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge, as those parcels are already deed-restricted for conservation. The City of Homer has supported conservation of the wetlands near the Homer Airport, especially as an important strategy to help manage stormwater.

The City owns one 1.6-acre lot (17936020) within the proposed expanded wildlife refuge boundary. The lot is adjacent to Kachemak Drive and has water and sewer. The bill's sponsor has stated that the City's parcel would not fall under refuge jurisdiction and refuge-related restrictions unless the City and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) entered into an agreement to do so. Title to the parcel would remain with the City and there is no obligation on the City. The City could request the bill's sponsor exclude the City's parcel from the Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge.

We support clear language in HB321 that ensures work within utility or right-of-way easements will not require additional layers of management. There are utilities in a city easement within the state right-of-way that took a long time to acquire. We are actively planning a road and pathway project with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) along Kachemak Drive. Adding another management layer to the lands next to Kachemak Drive is not attractive.

City staff does not support airport lands being included in the wildlife refuge – especially given that we don't have an adopted Airport Master Plan (5 years overdue). Staff recommends a hold on the overall bill as it pertains to Homer Airport CHA until after the Master Plan is completed, and to not include ADOT&PF Aviation Division lands. A new state designation adds another layer of administration before conducting work to maintain infrastructure, e.g., trim trees for safe aircraft landings/takeoffs. As of 3/10/2026, Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) and ADOT&PF had not weighed in on the proposal. Staff for State Representative Josephson, the bill sponsor, stated that airport and aviation needs on those parcels would take priority over wildlife refuge needs.

The bill states that an advisory committee for the Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge would be established, including a City of Homer representative, which adds an administrative burden on City personnel. Staff are not supportive of an obligation to serve on an advisory committee for the Wildlife Refuge at this time.

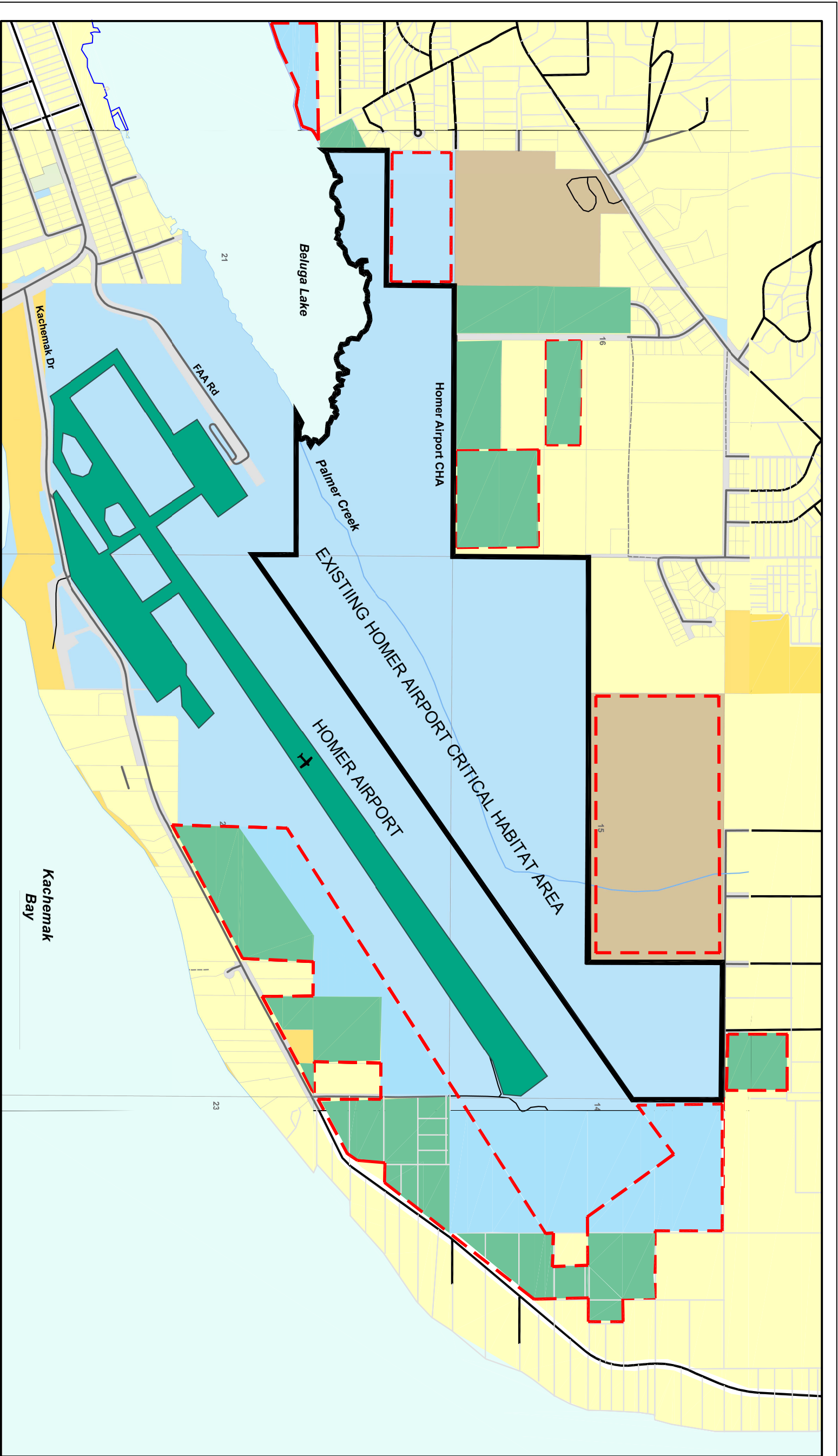
Also within HB 321, Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats CHAs would be redesignated as wildlife refuges, and personal watercraft would be prohibited within their boundaries. Staff recommend not taking a position on this issue and focusing on the Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge within City boundaries and impacts the proposed expansion and may have on the development and maintenance of our critical infrastructure.

**RECOMMENDATION:**











Council may choose to write a letter to the state delegation stating their position(s) on this bill.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- MAP Homer Airport CHA Additions
- Beluga Wetlands Map additions ADOT&PF, ADNR, etc.
- MAP HB321 Kachemak Bay Addition
- MAP HB 321 Fox River Flats Addition
- Map HB321 Anchor River Fritz Creek Additions



## Homer Airport Critical Habitat Area

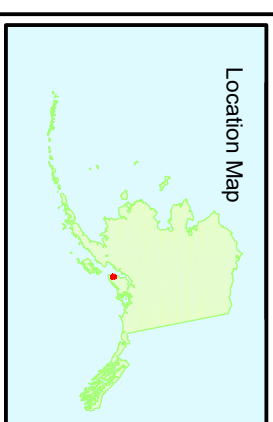
-  CHA Boundary
-  State Lands
-  BLM
-  State of Alaska
-  Other Lands
-  Private
-  Municipal
-  Borough
-  Private Conservation Land
-  Proposed Additions to Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge

Conceptual Presentation By  
Canyon Arch Design  
March, 2026



0 0.1 0.2  
Miles

Location Map



Turn OFF imagery

Bookmarks

KPB

DNR

DNR

DOT

DOT

DOT

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DNR

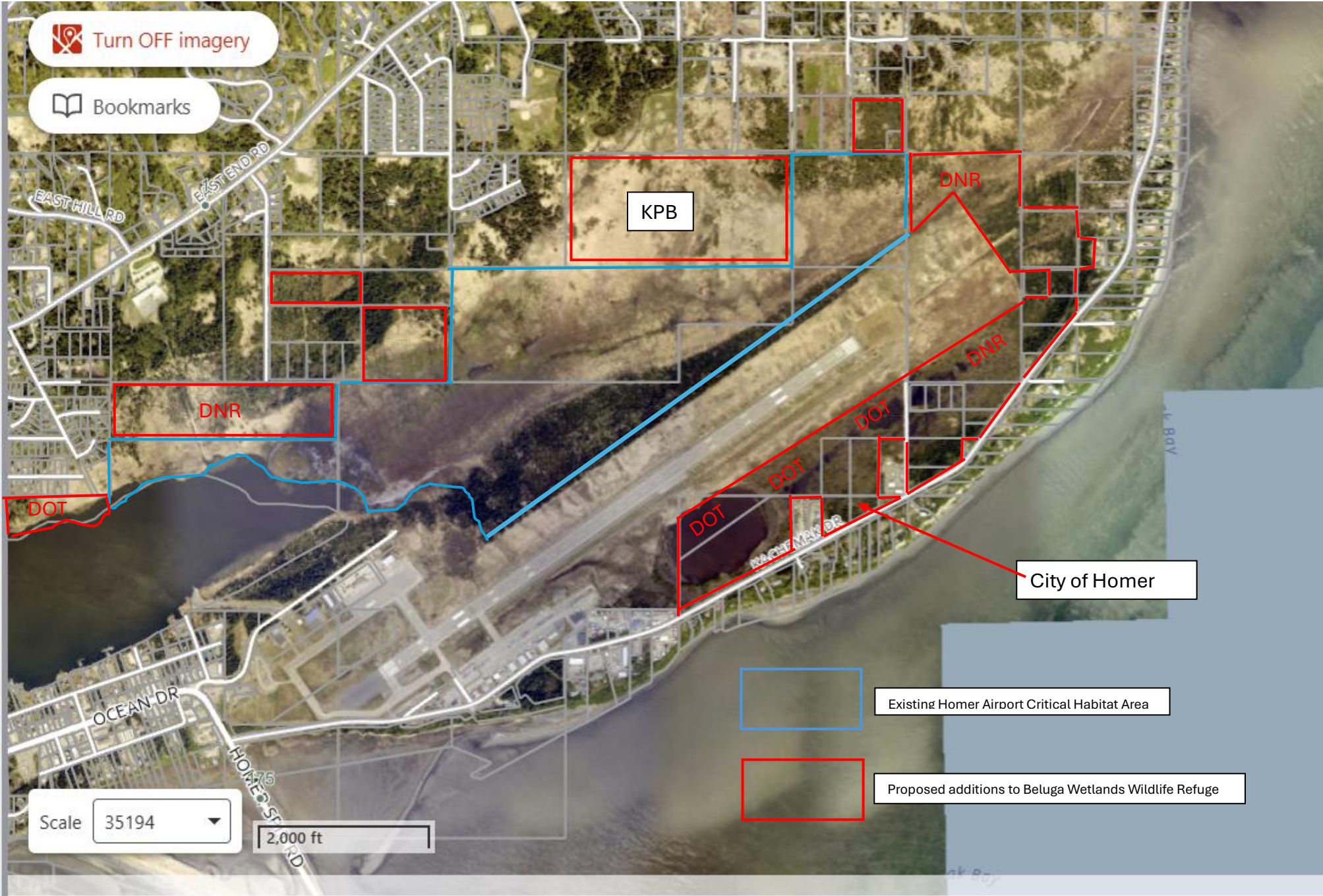
City of Homer

Existing Homer Airport Critical Habitat Area

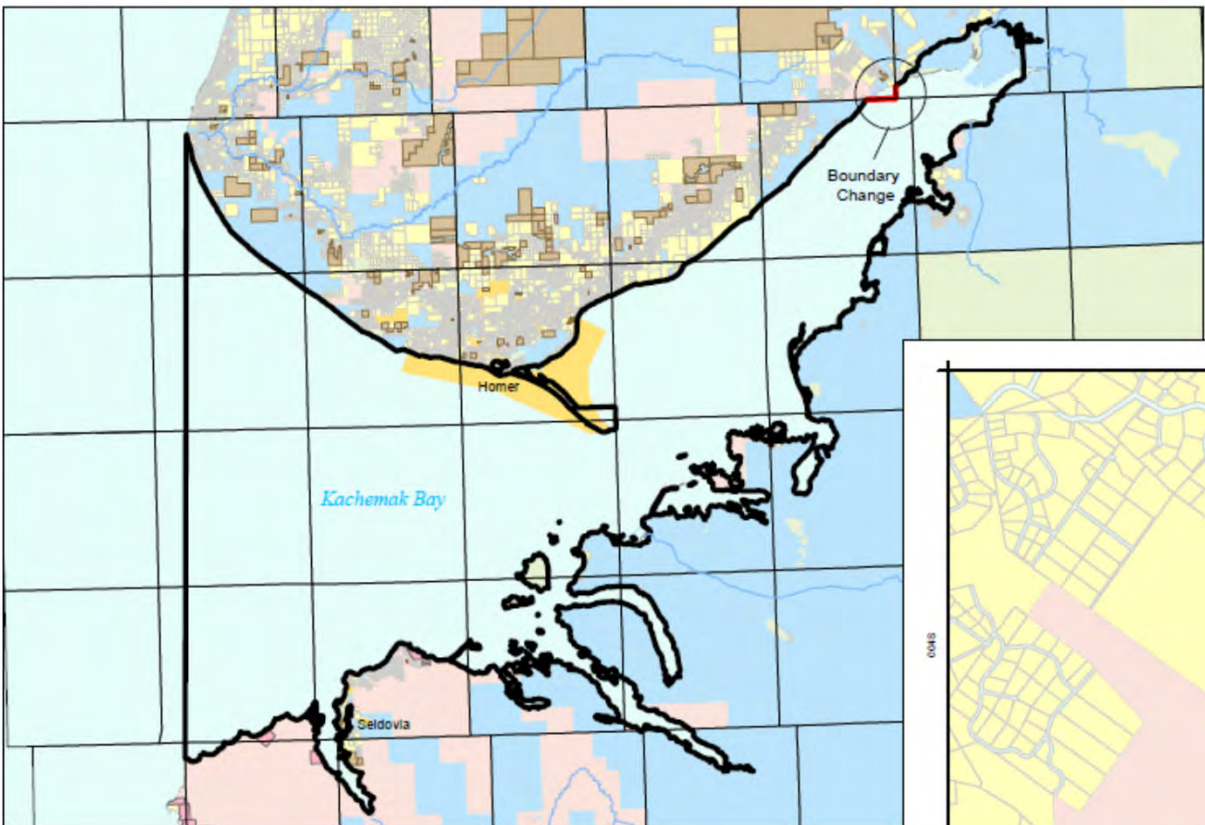
Proposed additions to Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge

Scale 35194

2,000 ft

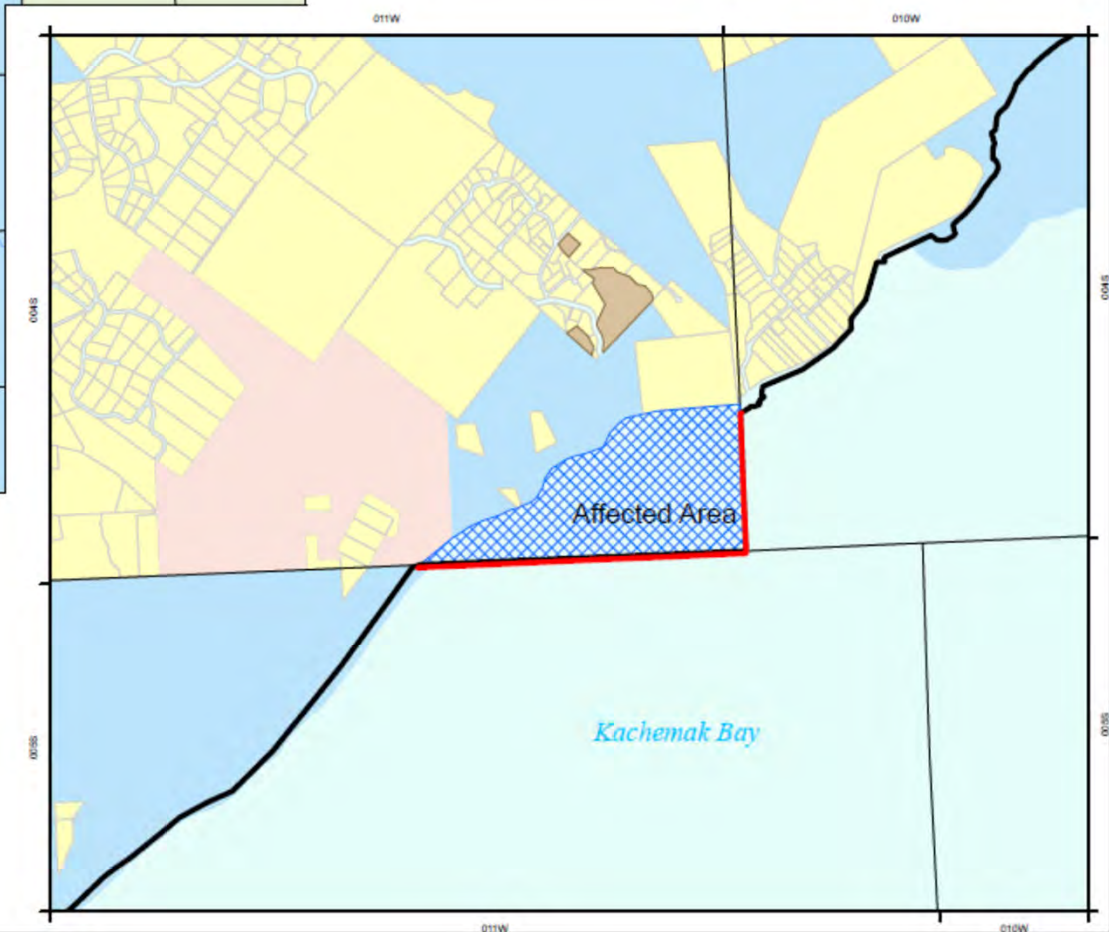


# Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area



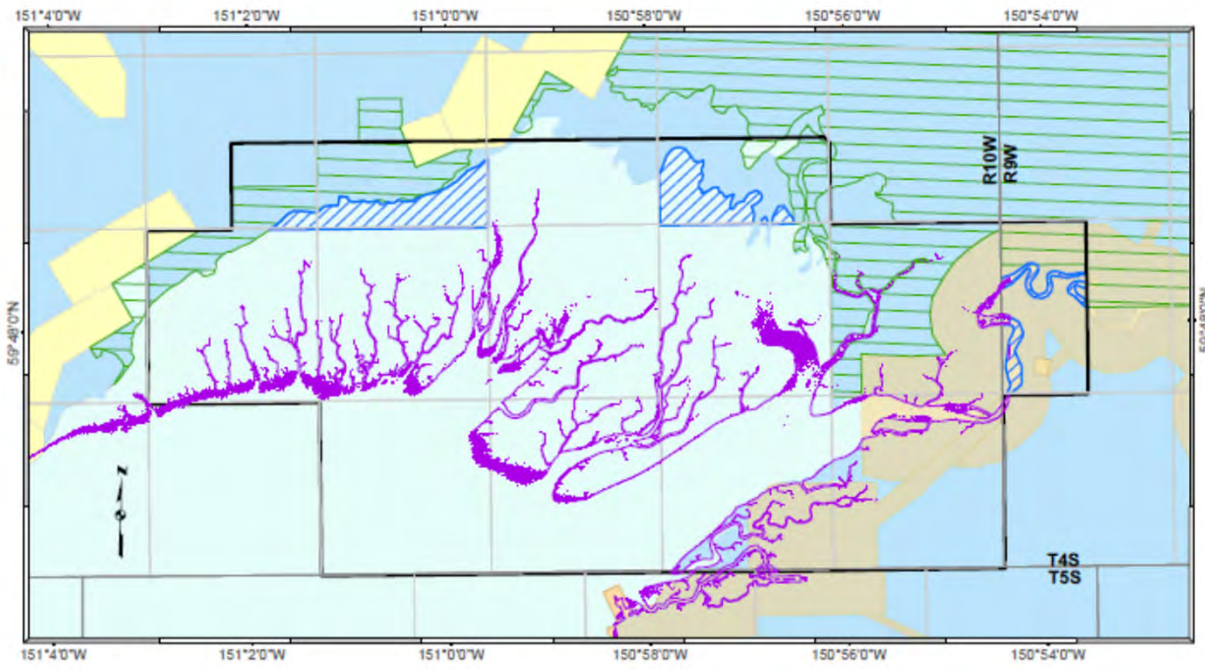
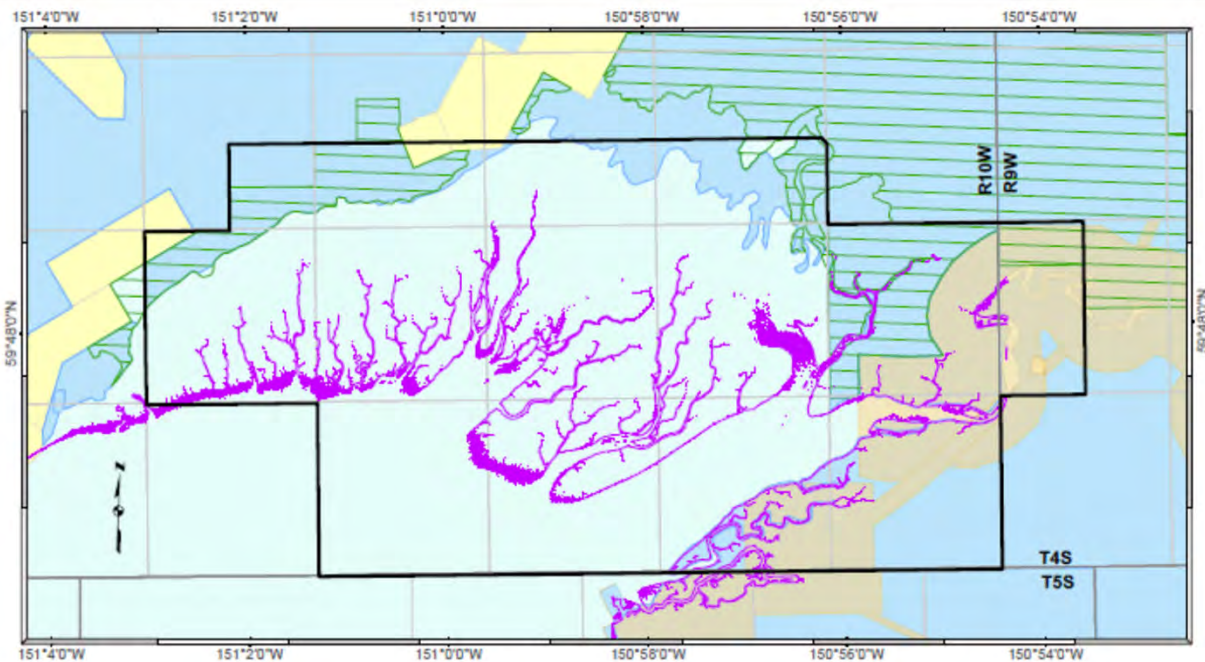
- Existing CHA Boundary
- Incorrect CHA Boundary
- Corrected Area

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>State Lands</b> | <b>Other Lands</b> |
| BLM                | Private            |
| State              | Municipal          |
|                    | Borough            |
|                    | Native             |



Map Produced by Alaska Department  
of Fish & Game Sport Fish Division  
Date: 2/18/2017





# Fox River Flats Critical Habitat Area

## Legend

- Statutory CHA Boundary
  - Potential areas of tide and submerged lands for inclusion in the CHA
- Land Estate**
- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>State Lands</b> | <b>Private Lands</b> |
| State              | Private              |
| Grazing Lease      |                      |
| P & C Lease        |                      |
- Federal Lands**
- BLM
- 17.6 ft Tidal Contour at 1 meter intervals (mean high tide)

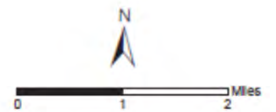
## Location Maps



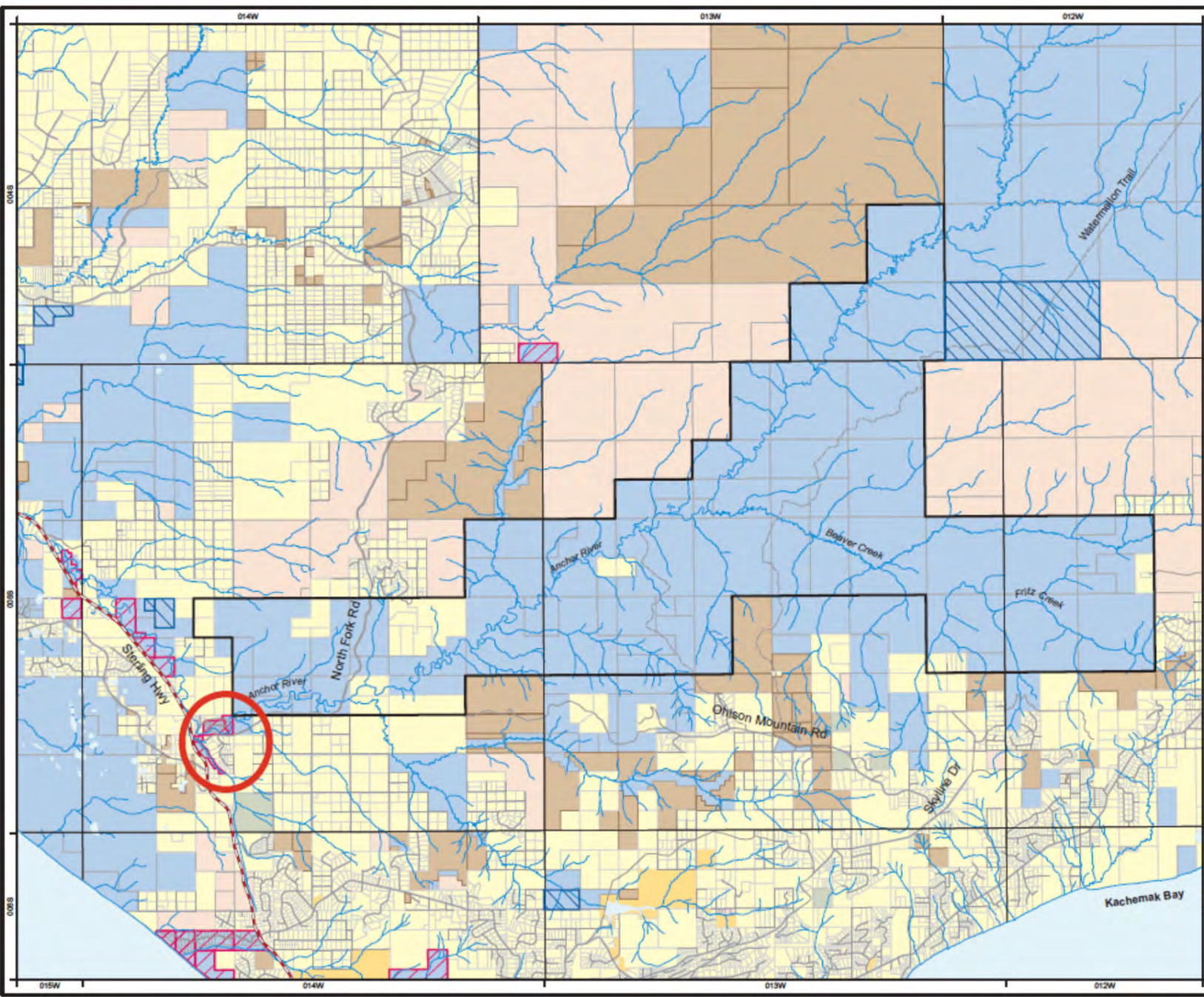
State of Alaska  
Department of Fish and Game  
2/18/2017

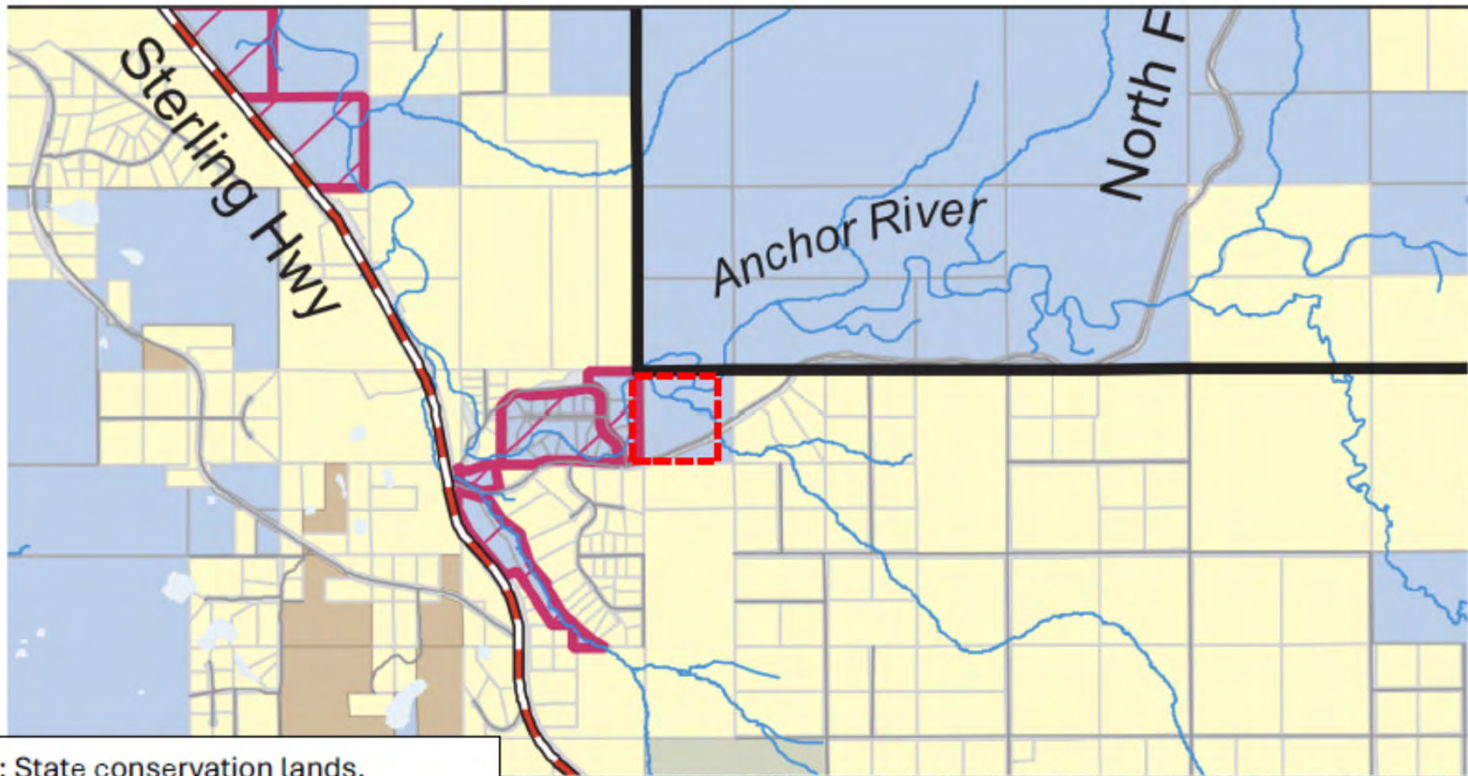
# Anchor River / Fritz Creek Critical Habitat Area

- CHA Boundary
- State
- Native
- Municipal
- Borough
- Private
- Municipal Entitlement
- Management Agreement



Map Produced by Alaska Department of Fish & Game Division of Sport Fish  
Date: 10/4/2021





Solid red: State conservation lands.

Dashed red: State DNR parcel

