

Scientific public opinion survey finds Mat-Su residents strongly support increasing public access to West Susitna

Contact: Cindi Herman, Friends of West Susitna, info@friendsofwestsusitna.org

Skwentna- AK, Md. – According to a recent public opinion survey, the majority of Alaskans living in the Matanuska Borough are supportive of a new road in the Mat-Su that would provide public access to new outdoor recreation areas as well as economic development opportunities.

The survey, conducted by Dittman Research, February 2-7, 2023, consisted of live mobile and landline phone interviews of 334 Borough residents. The margin of error is +/- 5.3 percent. Dittman Research is a well-respected independent data and research firm with decades of polling experience in Alaska. Their clients include industries, companies and candidates from across the state and political spectrum.

Friends of West Susitna commissioned the survey to gain an accurate idea of what Borough residents think about the proposed West Susitna Access Project, a development that would construct a two-lane, 100-mile unpaved road near Wasilla into the West Susitna area. The project would provide public access to fishing, hunting, recreation, agriculture, and resource development, most of which is currently accessible only by small, private aircraft or watercraft.

Highlights from the Dittman Research survey include:

- Asked to express support or opposition to the West Susitna Access Project, 60% either strongly or somewhat supported it, versus 29% in opposition.
- Eighty four percent support the State of Alaska investing in infrastructure and economic development projects across the state.

“When it comes to building a road in the West Susitna, Borough residents are clearly supportive,” said Cindi Herman, Friends of West Susitna board chair. “We know our opponents represent a small but vocal group who want to keep this area off-limits to everyone but themselves. Unlike other opinion surveys, responders to our poll represent a broad cross-section of residents who reflect area demographics. We suspected our neighbors supported the project, but now we have science-backed data to prove it.”

“Many of those in opposition are ‘slightly’ opposed,” continued Herman. “Much of this concern arises from the early nature of the project, where details regarding road use, safety and access for boat launching and other activities have yet to be released. We understand consultation and input on these issues will be included in the Army Corps of Engineers public comment process, which we believe will create even more local support for the road.”

A copy of the survey is available on the Friends of West Susitna Facebook page.

Friends of West Susitna is an independent grassroots organization whose mission is to advocate for year-round road access to lands and resources west of the Susitna River.

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