

SUNSET AUDIT REPORT

2026-S2

Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory
Commission

Planning Department

July 17, 2026

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Mayor Suzanne LaFrance
Municipality of Anchorage
-Office of Internal Audit-

July 17, 2026

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Assembly:

I am pleased to present for your review **Sunset Audit Report 2026-S2, Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission, Planning Department**. A summary of the report is presented below.

In accordance with Assembly Ordinance Number 2011-64(S-1), Section 14, we have performed a sunset audit of the Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission. The objective of this audit was to provide information to the Mayor and Assembly to assist them in determining if the Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission should be reauthorized. Our audit included a review of documents pertaining to matters such as meeting agendas, meeting minutes, resolutions, member authorization, and member participation.

Based on our review of documents pertaining to matters such as meeting agendas, meeting minutes, resolutions, member authorization, and member participation, we recommend that the Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission be reauthorized.

The Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission will sunset on October 14, 2026, unless reauthorized by the Assembly.

Alden P. Thern

Director, Internal Audit



Mayor Suzanne LaFrance
Municipality of Anchorage
-Office of Internal Audit-

July 17, 2026

Sunset Audit Report 2026-S2
Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission
Planning Department

Introduction. We have performed a sunset audit of the Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission (Commission) as required by Assembly Ordinance Number 2011-64(S-1), Section 14 which states:

“The Municipal Clerk shall notify the Assembly and the Mayor by assembly memorandum at least 120 days prior to the sunset of any board or commission, and an ordinance for reauthorization shall be introduced through the Assembly Chair with the assembly memorandum. The assembly memorandum shall include direction to the Office of Internal Audit to audit the board or commission under Anchorage Municipal Code section 3.20.110 D.3. and 4. The Office of Internal Audit shall report its findings to the Mayor and Assembly at least 60 days, prior to sunset, prior to vote by the Assembly on reauthorization.”

Objective and Scope. The objective of this audit was to provide information to the Mayor and Assembly to assist them in determining if the Commission should be reauthorized. Our audit included a review of documents pertaining to matters such as meeting agendas, meeting minutes, resolutions, member authorization, and member participation.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards, except for the requirement of an external quality control review due to budget constraints. We also developed and implemented a required quality management system. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Overall Evaluation. Based on our review of documents pertaining to matters such as meeting agendas, meeting minutes, resolutions, member authorization, and member participation, we recommend that the Commission be reauthorized.

SUNSET FACTORS

The following factors were used in our evaluation and are presented for information to the Mayor and Assembly:

1. Commission Name.

Watershed and Natural Resources Advisory Commission

2. Sunset Date.

October 14, 2026

3. The purpose and goal of the Commission.

Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) section 4.90.010, Purpose and goal, states:

- “B. The commission serves as a technical liaison between municipal departments, the community and state and federal agencies having water quality, watershed and natural resources management responsibilities, programs to restore and improve fish and wildlife habitat and other activities to increase community stewardship of aquatic and other natural resources within the Municipality of Anchorage.*
- C. The goal of the commission is to sustain the economic and community benefits of healthy creeks, watersheds and natural resource lands within the Municipality of Anchorage by providing technical advice and guidance to help facilitate coordinated and collaborative local, state, federal and private sector watershed and natural resources stewardship, restoration and protection actions.”*

4. Is the Commission fully staffed?

AMC section 4.90.020, Composition of commission, states:

“A. The watershed and natural resources advisory commission shall be composed of nine members.

B. When making commission appointments, due consideration shall be given to technical qualifications in the fields of aquatic resources, creek restoration, fish passage, hydrology, land management, engineering, project management and permitting, watershed management, education/outreach and fish and wildlife.”

Audit Finding. Currently, the Commission is staffed with six of the required nine members.

<u>Commission Member</u>	<u>Most Recent Assembly Confirmation</u>	<u>Term Expiration Date</u>
Lee Cruise	12-19-23	10-14-26
Nic Kinsman	2-27-24	10-14-26
Samantha Simpson	4-23-24	10-14-26
Matt Nemeth	10-18-24	10-14-27
Rick Sinnott	3-18-25	10-14-27
Emily Creely	10-7-25	10-14-28
Vacant		
Vacant		
Vacant		

Source: Assembly Memorandums

5. Are the terms of the Commission members current?

AMC section 4.05.040, Terms, states “Except as otherwise specified in this Code, the

regular term of each member of a board or commission is three years commencing on October 15 of the year in which appointed and ending three years thereafter on October 14, provided however, to avoid a vacancy until new appointments can be made and confirmed, an appointed member's term is extended until a new appointment is confirmed or a maximum of 120 days which ever occurs first. The terms of initial or subsequent appointments to a board or commission shall be staggered so that, as nearly as possible, a pro rata number of its members shall be appointed each year of the established regular term of office."

Audit Finding. The terms for all Commission members are current.

6. Were positions deemed vacant after the maximum number of absences?

AMC subsection 4.05.060A., Attendance requirements; vacancies, states "The office of a member of a board or commission member shall become vacant if the member:

- 1. Ceases to meet the qualifications prescribed for the office;*
- 2. Resigns;*
- 3. Dies;*
- 4. Is judicially determined to be incompetent;*
- 5. Is convicted of a felony;*
- 6. Is removed from office for breach of the public trust; or*
- 7. During any 12-month period while in office:*
 - a. Is absent from three regular meetings without excuse;*
 - b. Is absent from:*
 - i. Six regular meetings; or*
 - ii. Eight regular meetings for members of the planning and zoning commission, urban design commission, platting board, or zoning board of examiners and appeals; or*
 - c. Fails to attend a two-thirds majority of the regular meetings."*

Audit Finding. No members were absent from three regular meetings without an excuse during any 12-month period from January 2025 through July 2026.

No members were absent from eight regular meetings during any 12-month period from January 2025 through July 2026.

No members failed to attend two-thirds of the regular meetings during any 12-month period from January 2025 through July 2026.

7. **Did the Commission meet regularly?**

AMC section 4.05.090, Meetings, states “A board or commission shall hold regular monthly meetings at such time and place as may from time to time be designated by the board or commission, but meetings need not be held if no business is pending.”

In addition, AMC subsection 1.25.015B., Agendas; duties of staff; rules for public notice of meetings, states “The public official tasked with staffing a meeting shall...Post the written public notice information on both the municipal public notice webpage and the events calendar on the municipal website as provided in subsection C...”

Audit Finding. From January 2025 through July 2026 the Commission held 5 regular meetings and 1 work session. Meetings were sometimes publicly announced on the Municipality of Anchorage’s Public Notices website, and the Mayor’s Boards and Commissions events website. In addition, the Commission’s website had the Commission’s meeting information as follows, the Commission “...will be meeting quarterly until further notice, 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m., usually on the fourth Wednesday of the month.”

8. **Were minutes taken and published?**

AMC subsection 1.25.015B., states “The public official tasked with staffing a meeting shall...Either electronically record or produce written action minutes, unless both are required by this chapter or Code.

a. The recording of the meeting shall include the entire meeting from the call to order to adjournment, although recesses, provided no business takes place, are not required to be

recorded. If the public meeting is recorded and the recording is available to the public on a publicly accessible website, (currently the municipal meetings page), written action minutes are not required for committees or task forces but are required for boards and commissions.

- b. Written action minutes shall include the call to order; roll call; motions, seconds, the vote of each member in attendance on motions, but do not include discussion and debate on motions; disclosures by members of potential conflicts of interest and the ruling on the potential conflict, but do not include discussion and debate on the potential conflict or ruling; the subject of public hearings and a statement, if applicable, that public testimony or comment was provided on that subject; and adjournment of the meeting.*
- c. Minutes, either by recording or written action minutes are public records and should be retained by the municipal agency that staffs the municipal body in accordance with the applicable records retention schedule.”*

Audit Finding. Meeting minutes were taken at each Commission meeting. Planning Department staff keeps a copy available for the public. In addition, the meeting minutes are available on the Commission’s website.

9. Did meetings have action items or other business?

AMC subsection 4.90.030A., Powers and duties, states “The commission has the following powers and duties:

- 1. Make recommendations, provide advice, and submit reports to the Assembly, the mayor, and municipal departments on watershed, creek and natural resource stewardship, restoration, and protection matters.*
- 2. Serve as a technical liaison and a point of contact between the Municipality and state and federal natural resource, fish and wildlife management agencies, and other interests involved in the stewardship, restoration, management and protection of aquatic habitat, watersheds and natural resource.*
- 3. Review and make recommendations for such special studies on watershed, creek and natural resource matters as may be requested or designated by municipal departments or*

- boards, commissions, or the assembly.*
- 4. Act in a technical advisory capacity to the parks and recreation commission, Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission, community councils and other municipal boards and commissions on matters related to creeks, watersheds, and natural resource lands.*
 - 5. Provide recommendations to the mayor and the assembly on annual capital improvement plans and budgets for natural resource, creek restoration and watershed related activities and projects.*
 - 6. Function as the permanent advisory entity for the Municipality's Sustainable Salmon Program and National Fish Habitat Partnership activities.*
 - 7. Assist with public outreach and education on topics and issues of interest to the commission.*
 - 8. Provide technical advice, as requested, to the Anchorage School District on curricula and other school programs addressing watersheds, stream ecology, wildlife management and creek restoration.*
 - 9. Perform other duties, as requested by the mayor and the assembly.*
 - 10. Prepare an annual report of commission activities."*

Audit Finding. From January 2025 through July 2026, the Commission issued two resolutions. These resolutions included supporting the updated Municipal wetland permit policy to be implemented by the Planning Department and supporting the proposed phase 1 update to the 2014 Anchorage wetlands management plan. In addition, the Commission is preparing a third resolution regarding a wetland permit application. No annual report of commission activities was released for 2025.