

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

***** Meeting Minutes*****

Thursday March 12, 2015

5:30 p.m.

Gilman River Center

Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- 1. Roll Call:** Joe Conners, Ricky Gease, Brenda Trefon, Clayton Holland, Keith Baxter, Dwight Kramer, Andrew Szczesny, Ted Wellman, Sean Wedenmeyer, Brent Johnson, Matt Conner, Bobbie Jo Skibbo, and Jacques Kosto.
- 2. Minutes Approval:** Approved as written.
- 3. Agenda Changes:** Brent Johnson added a resolution under new business. Agenda was approved as amended

II. Public Comments/Presentations:

- Robert Ruffner reported that he has submitted an application to the Governor Walker for consideration for appointment to the State's Board of Fish. He also gave a brief explanation of his background and experience for the board.
- Paul Ostrander reported that the Kenai Peninsula Borough has drafted a resolution that will be presented to Borough Assembly also requesting that the Subsistence Board to open the public comment period for the proposed subsistence nets in the Kenai and Kasilof River. Paul also supports Robert Ruffner consideration for the Board of Fish.
- Steve Vanek reported that he would support Robert Ruffner appointment to the Board of Fish. Steve would also like to have the Kenai River Guides limited.
- Pete Sprague, Catherine Cassidy and John McCombs also stated that they all support Robert Ruffner appointment to the Board of Fish.

1. Agency and Government Reports:

A. State Parks Jacques Kosto provided the board members with the following report:

- **Budget** – The budget Governor Walker presented to the legislature did not include any cuts for Parks, however, the division was asked by the Commissioner's office at the request of the DNR House Finance Subcommittee to submit proposed cuts totaling approximately \$500,000. Parks leadership has evaluated possible funding cuts and proposed three actions to address the cuts and they include:

- Eliminating Park Ranger II position at Wood-Tikchik State Park
- Eliminating Park Ranger position in Valdez
- Eliminating Park Specialist position in Sitka

The Sitka and Valdez units would be placed in passive management.

The budget has moved to the House Finance Committee.

- Currently working with maintenance staff to repair the drop off at the Eagle Rock boat launch. Work should be completed later this spring.
- Izaak Walton site will be closed through the end of May to allow for improvements at the boat launch and drilling a new well. The boat launch will be extended and the mooring platform replaced.



- We are revising the KRSMA website and are looking for new photos. If you are willing to spare any of your favorite pictures, please send them in and we'll make sure to give you credit.

B. DEC –No Report

C. ADF&G –No Report

D. USFS/Chugach-Bobbie Jo Skibbo provided board members with the following report:

- Bobbie Jo is currently being reassigned to Juneau for a Media Relation job and will not be available for the next three board meetings. Bobbie Jo is seeking other Forest Service staff to be available for the KRSMA meetings.
- The hydro power fish waste project is current on track. There is a meeting scheduled to look at next steps, such as looking at avenues for funding.
- Chugach National Forest has put in place a new weapon regulation. The current regulation reads that a weapon may not be discharged on the Russian River within 150 feet of a developed structure. The new regulation reads that there will be no discharge of a weapon on the Russian River. This was imposed to help close what was referred to as the donut hole and campground area. A weapon can be discharged only if it is in defense of life or property. This should be in effect by June

E. US F&WS- Matt Conner provided board members with the following report:

- The Refuge has received funding through their deferred maintenance fund to repair the contact station that is across Jim's Landing. The Refuge is also looking to have a cooperative agreement with other agencies and/or groups in manning the station through the summer season.
- The grand opening for the Refuge visitor center is May 30th, 2015. At that time the new bronze moose will be revealed and they are also soliciting the name the moose contest.
- April 30th there will be a commercial operator meeting for the middle river guides and on May 7th there will be a meeting for all the upper river guides that hold a permit. This is to meet and greet the Refuge staff and answer any questions.

F. City of Kenai-No Report

G. City of Soldotna –No Report

H. Kenai Peninsula Borough-No report.

C. Committee Reports

- President's Report**-Ted Wellman reported that a letter was sent for request for reconsideration regarding FP 15-10 to the Office of Subsistence Management. Copies of the letter were available in the member's packets. There has been no correspondence as to the acceptance of the letter by the board.
- Guide Advisory**-Joe Connors reported that the committee met and there was a full agenda.

The first topic of discussion was the guide numbers and process for restrictions/limitations. The committee discussed what options they need to move forward with this proposal. The committee would like to have a representative from DNR and a lawyer to discuss how to proceed. Ricky considered a long term working group to look at guide limitation.

Next the committee discussed the subsistence net in the Kenai River below Skilak Lake. Letters have been submitted for reconsideration. At this time the committee is waiting for further instructions.

Ted requested that Ricky and Joe come back to the board with a resolution forming a guide numbers and process for restriction /limitation committee for consideration by the board.

- c. **Habitat** – Brent Johnson reported that the committee had a presentation by Lisa Beranek on the Lower Kenai River Stream Watch Program. The program started in 1984 and currently 300,000 visitors come to the Kenai Peninsula area per year. The staff talks to visitors about fishing technics, wildlife and habitat to name a few. The groups also helps agencies fence off areas to prohibit visitors for walking on the habitat. Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership and the Conservation Action Plan. A visitor guide is available for the Russian River and Lower Kenai and Kasilof area. Brent also reported that he is seeking funding for the juvenile chinook studies on the Kenai River through the Fishery disaster funds.

Adam Riemer from Fish and Game said the department would need \$340, 000 to fund the project and Brent is currently pursuing this funding for these projects.

Brent has drafted the notes from the Mary King studies presentation for the committee.

The committee also discussed the high tide/no wake zone located at the mouth of the Kenai River dip net area. The committee was concerned if there was any conversation with Coast Guard and the methods currently being used for boat traffic?

Camping / habitat issues on middle river fish and wildlife service have a handle on this problem. Has the proposed regulation by the Kenai National Refuge been completed?

Brent reported that State Parks and staff are working always working on habitat violations along the Kenai River.

River Use –Dwight Kramer reported the river use committee met. Dwight felt that the committees for KRSMA have been revived and feels encourage working on future issues. The committee first discussed the River Ranch property concerning the three conceptual plans for the property and the committee will have a chance to comment on the plans on April 9th, 2015.

Kenai River Boaters education program was first discussed at the river committee in 2010 . The board passed a resolution 2011 revised resolution was put for to Park staff and currently has not moved forward. The committee will work on the resolution in April and moved forward to DNR in the future.

Discuss mandatory PFD requirements on the Kenai River and it was unanimously agreed that the committee should bringa resolution to the board for mandatory PFD on the Kenai River.

Start an open discussion on sport fishing guide limitations- Dwight drafted a proposal for guide limitation to the committee, the increase fishery and also the personal use fishery and directive by the Dough Whitaker study is to limit guides when numbers are down and not to when we are at capacity.

A resolution will be brought to the board next month to form a committee to work on the guide limitation proposal.



Dwight will be presenting a resolution to the board for mandatory PFD.

- 1) **Legislative/Government Activities** – Ricky Gease reported that the idea of the sockeye stamp was discussed with the chairs of the house and senate. It was their recommendation that this board get something in place by December 2015, for the 2016 legislative session. The current session is focused on cost cutting so a recommendation of a sockeye stamp would not go very far through the process. There is a current Bill in the legislature HB 137 that addresses the issuing of increasing fees for hunting and fishing licenses. Brookover is currently working on this issue.
- d. **Board Development/ Nomination** – No Report
- e. **Agenda/Board Structure/Housekeeping** – No Report

III. **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. River Ranch Planning Update- Jacques Kosto reported that the planning team has reviewed comments submitted during scoping process and have prepared three concepts. These three concepts will be posted on the Parks website on March 17, 2015. An open house meeting will be held to review concepts in Soldotna on March 24, 2015 (7:00 – 8:30 pm River Center) and in Anchorage on March 25 (7:00 – 8:30 pm Atwood Building). The KRSMA River Use Committee will review concepts at April 9th, 2015 meeting and the planning team will be accepting comments pertaining to the concepts through April 14, 2015
2. Recruitment Jacques Kosto reported that the KRSMA board received 7 applications. Jack Blackwell would like to put together an interview team that include voting board members that are not applying for a position and Parks staff and interview applicants before next month board meeting. Possible dates include: March 20, 27, 31 April 1. Applications will be sent to interview team one week before interviews.

The board selected Tuesday March 31, 2015 at the Gilman River Center. The interview committee will include: Rick Koch, Ted Wellman, Andy Szczesny, Dwight Kramer, Brent Johnson and Ricky Gease.

IV. **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Brent Johnson made a resolution that KRSMA endorse one of the existing South Central Alaska Area applications for the Alaska Board of Fish. The board would then send a letter to the Governor.
Sean Wedemeyer seconds the motion.

This time would allow the board to research information on all the applicants for the board.

Andy Szczesny called to the question.

The vote was taken: 6 voted in favor of a special meeting
4 voted against.

Brent recommended that a special meeting be held for board members, to be able to gather information on the five applicants. The board determined that Friday, March 20th, 2015 at 5:30pm at the Gilman River Center.

The board would like to have an announcement in the Peninsula Clarion advertising the special meeting and the resolution that will be discussed.

- V. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Ted Wellman sent a letter for reconsideration regarding FP 15-10.
- VI. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Steve Vanek believes that the letter written to the Federal Subsistence board was based on allocation. He also stated that the board should move forward with its resolution to support a South Central applicant for the Board of Fish.
John McCombs also agreed that the letter was clearly allocation based.
- VII. **ADJOURNMENT:**
- A. Board Comments-Pam Russell announces that Dean Hughes will be attending the April meeting to give a presentation on the Cost Share program for bank restoration.
Also Robert Ruffner will give a presentation on the Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership program.

