

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday May 8, 2014

5:30 p.m.

Gilman River Center

Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Roll Call: Joe Connors, Brenda Trefon, Clayton Holland, Monte Roberts, Andrew Szczesny, Ted Wellman, Andrew Carmichael, Keith Baxter, Andy Loranger, Bobbie Jo Skibo, Jack Blackwell, Ben Ellis and Tim Stevens.

B. Minutes Approval: Approved as written.

C. Agenda Changes and Approval: Approved as written.

- II. Public Comments/Presentations:** Branden Bornemann gave a presentation on the Kenai Watershed Baseline project. This program was based of the recommendation in the Kenai River Special Management area plan 4.5.10.2.2: Water quality information should be collected on a systematic, long-term basis. Ambient monitoring is intended to identify trends over a long period of time and/or to establish baseline conditions. Sampling should include information on physical properties and chemical constituents of water and the health and integrity of resident biological communities at specific representative monitoring sites.
- The project was started in 1999 and samples were taken from mile 82 to the mouth of the Kenai River center at approximately 22 sites. Samples are taken twice a year in the spring and late fall. An existing MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between agencies will expire this fall. Kenai Watershed Forum will be coordinating a meeting between the agencies to develop a new MOU.

III. REPORTS

A. Agency and Government Reports:

- a. State Parks** –Director Ben Ellis gave an update on this past legislative session. State Parks went into the session with a strong governor's budget for parks. We typically have a vacancy factor of 8 to 10 position that is spread out throughout the state park system to help pay salaries. This legislature initially gave Parks \$417,000 to fill the positions. After further decision it was reduced to take out some personnel for the Denali southside campground that will open in 2015. This left \$382,000 increase with \$114,500 from the general fund and an increase in receipt authority of \$267, 500. It was a very definite sign from the legislature that there was going to be less money coming from the general fund and more from revenue. We currently have or looked at the following user fee increases:
1. The public use cabins are going up \$5 or \$10 a night depending on the location and popularity as of May 15, 2014.
 2. We also eliminated the non peak time, where cabin could be rented for \$5 to \$10 dollars lower than regular price.
 3. All other fees with the exception of day use parking are not going to increase by 2015.
 4. The division is going to have to raise \$500,000 to meet its goal.
 5. A number of new facilities coming online which will help with our revenue bottom line.

Ben said that the legislature is sending the message is to find other option to fund your division shortfalls. Ben still encourages the board to ask for funding for projects for the state parks system. Ben said the capital budget for state park deferred maintenance was reduced by half, but also includes \$1 million for the Kenai River including improvements at the Eagle Rock boat launch (new vaulted toilet and stating a planning process for the site) installing a new toilet on the lower river below Eagle Rock, and installing a new toilet on the middle river above Bings Landing.

The capital budget also includes \$35,000 for a planning process at eh Kenai River Ranch property on Funny River Road. This was requested by the Funny River community.



b. DEC –Tim Stevens provided board members with the following report:

1. Tim Stevens recently met with the Kenai Watershed Forum to go over two projects that DEC recently awarded. One project is beach sampling at the mouth of the Kenai and Kasilof River. The second project is the water quality testing on the Kenai River which includes a five or six year report on the baseline water sampling. They did complete an initial report for the first six years and now they want to include the next six years and a trend analysis will be included. This report should help in understanding how well the water quality is doing on the river.
2. The 2014 Integrated report on whether to list the Kenai River as impaired for exceeding turbidity standards is still in deliberation and there is no decision at this time.

c. ADF&G –ADF&G agency report from Robert Begich, via e-mail, reported that the Russian River early-run sockeye salmon run outlook is for a below average run.

Begich said that they have successfully forecasted the early-run to Russian River in 2012 and 2013. If we are correct again the number of fish in the 2014 early-run will be about half as many or quite a bit smaller than the 2014 run. It will be more similar to the 2012 run for which no in season management actions were taken and a year with relatively slow sockeye fishing throughout June and July at Russian River.

d. USFS/Chugach–Bobbi Jo Skibo updated the board on the fish waste management plan. The final plan is scheduled to be issued in the fall. They are looking at the Centennial dock concept for possible modifying this to have at the Russian River fishing area possible between Sportsman and the ferry. Part of the expanded Stream Watch program involves many of the agencies around the table. This year is the 20th anniversary for Stream Watch and several events are slated through-out the summer including the Cooper Landing Kenai River clean up.

Fish line recycling station. Pipes instead of boxes will be located in many places along the river.

e. US F&WS- Andy Loranger provided board members with the following report:

1. We are currently advertising to fill the Supervisory Park Ranger position that was vacated when Janet Schmitt retired in December. The USA Jobs announcement # is R7-14-1084726-JE and the announcement closes April 22. Interviews should begin soon and someone should be in place by September 2014
2. The visitor center is currently 30 to 60 days behind schedule. It was scheduled to open October and we may have a soft opening in December and then a public opening in early spring.

f. City of Kenai –No Report

g. City of Soldotna –Keith Baxter provided board members with the following report:

1. 190 feet of connection between Centennial Park and the Sports Center is completed. This will also make a great winter trail for skiers.
2. Soldotna Creek Park was paved this spring. There will be now major events in the park this year. The new sod needs another year to grow.
3. Kenai River spring cleanup is scheduled May 11th -17th. Dumpsters will be out for the cleanup and the Saturday the 17th is a community barbecue. Many vendors have signed up to participate.
4. This winter the Board of Fish enacted no fishing in the lagoon at the Centennial Park.

h. Kenai Peninsula Borough- No Report.

C. Committee Reports

a. President's Report-Joe Connors reported that the final of two guide academy classes was held the first week of May. It was full with 25 students. The college has now graduated 34 classes since the mandatory regulation was put in place.

b. Guide Advisory-Joe reported that the Guide Advisory board met with Director Ben Ellis. The discussion included how to raise money for the State Park and how the Guiding industry and the public can work together on solution for limiting use on the Kenai River.

c. Habitat – No Report

- d. **River Use-** Andy said this committee would like to move forward on securing funding for baseline boats counts and web cameras at key boat launch locations along the river. The purpose of this is to provide real time data for river users.
- e. **Legislative/Government Activities** –No Report
- f. **Board Development/ Nomination** – No Report
- g. **Agenda/Board Structure/Housekeeping** - No Report

IV. **OLD BUSINESS:**

- 1. Moratorium on Guides proposal to State Parks- This was postponed until fall by Andrew Szczesny.
- 2. Draft letter recommending funding for cameras at key areas along the river and boat counts-This was taken care of under the River Use committee meeting.

V. **NEW BUSINESS:**

VI. **CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

VII. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

VIII. **ADJOURNMENT**

- A. **Board Comments**-Jack Blackwell gave thanks to all the board members and agencies for their hard work this year and for past years and wished everyone a great summer.
- B. **Date/Agenda of Next Meeting: September 11, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.**

