

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday September 10, 2015,

5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center

Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Brendyn Shiflea, Keith Baxter, Clayton Holland, Dwight Kramer, Ted Wellman, Branden Bornemann, Andrew Carmichael, Rick Koch, Andy Loranger, Matt Connor, Bobbie Jo Skibbo, Robert Begich, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.
- B. **Minutes Approval:** Approved as written.
- C. **Agenda:** Approved as written.

II. Public Comments/Presentations

III. REPORTS

1. Agency and Government Reports:

A. State Parks-Jack Blackwell provided the board members with the following report:

- Jack welcomed the two new board members Brendyn Shiflea and Branden Bornemann, new DEC representative Jeanne Swartz, Cindy Gilder (also with DEC), and returning board member Joe Connors.
- This summer the Kenai River District was fully staffed with four rangers and one seasonal technician.
- The 2015 season started off with the Card Street Fire which kept all agencies busy for the first start of the season. Parks provided support with rangers and transportation on the river.
- The River Ranch project has three draft concepts for the property. Comments are currently being solicited from the public and are due by September 25, 2015
- This summer Parks completed improvements to the boat launch, dock, and well at Izaak Walton SRS.
- Eagle Rock was extremely busy during the dip net set season. Parks was unable to find a volunteer to help operate Eagle Rock and had to hire a temporary seasonal worker for July
- Stormy Lake in Nikiski is still closed to watercraft and aircraft while the lake is treated to kill the invasive aquatic plant Elodea.
- In June, Parks purchased the Trujillo property in Kasilof. This capital funding was allocated to purchase property and develop a public boat retrieval site on the lower Kasilof River
- This summer there were a number of conflicts between park users on the Kenai River during the sockeye and king fisheries.
- Parks helped transport US Coast Guard personnel on one weekend during the Personal Use Fishery on the lower river.
- During the recent high water event that occurred on the Kenai River when the Snow River glacier dam released, there was good communications between all the local, state, and federal agencies involved.
- Parks is working with the Kenai Peninsula Borough on a Memorandum of Understanding that would provide park rangers with dispatch services through the Soldotna Dispatch Center.
- Two recently hired park rangers completed a portion of their field training on the Kenai River this summer with rangers Ali Eskelin and Jacques Kosto.

Ted Wellman asked Jack Blackwell about the status of the mandatory life jacket proposal and the mandatory boating safety program. Jack said that the mandatory life jacket requirement for the Kenai River will be included in the next proposed state park regulations packet. The KRSMA board passed a resolution supporting mandatory personal flotation devices for people on the Kenai River. The board also discussed mandatory education for boaters on the Kenai River. Jack said that Parks recommended developing an on-line voluntary education program before mandating such requirement. The board recommended the River Use Committee find ways to fund a voluntary boating education program that would be available on-line. Bobbie Jo Skibbo recommended that an organization could write a grant to fund the boating safety program. Matt Connors suggested that this may be a Caring for the Kenai project.

B. DEC-Jeanne Swartz provided the board members with the following report:

- DEC is currently working on gathering data and evaluating material for revising the policy on turbidity. Once the policy is complete it will be out for public comment in December or January.



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Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Kenai Peninsula Borough



C. ADF&G-Robert Begich provided the board members with the following report:

- The early King run was three days early with a total of 6100 king salmon.
- The late King run was five days early with a preliminary escapement estimate of 22,641 king salmon.
- The Russian River early run sockeye count was 50,226 which were over/above escapement goal range. The fishery was liberalized twice which resulted in doubling the bag limit.
- The Russian River late sockeye run limped along to another low escapement of 46,223 but within goal range. The total Kenai late sockeye run ended up at 1.7 million. The late run of sockeye was eight days late.
- Soldotna Creek restoration is moving forward. The Rotenone application has appeared to have eradicated the Pike that were in the drainage. Approximately 19,740 native fish have been captured and relocated to lakes rotenoned in October of 2014.

D. USF&WS- Matt Conner provided the board members with the following report:

- With the opening of the new Kenai National Wildlife Refuge visitor center experience 300 to 400 visitors a day in the month of July.
- In the month of April the Refuge held a joint agency meet and greet with both Upper and Middle River commercial operators.
- The Saturday showcase had programs such as "How to flip for Reds" to "How to handle a dog team".
- The Card Street fire was the largest fire in the Refuge and in the US in the month of May. No structures were lost in the Refuge.
- The Kenai National Wildlife refuge had a Chinese and Russian delegation, the purpose of the visit was to learn how the Refuge is managed for hunting and fishing.
- The high water event that was caused by the Skilak Glacier dam release damaged the small dock at the Russian River ferry crossing. The dock was removed from the river for the rest of the season.
- Andy Loranger reported that the public use regulation received several public comments that are current being assimilated. The final regulation will not be finalized for two to three months.
- Fish and Wildlife received 600 to 700 formal requests for reconsideration for set net to be placed in the Kenai River. The requests are currently being evaluating. Jeff Anderson of Fish and Wildlife service, Federal Subsistence coordinator closed the use of nets in the Kenai River based on the King Salmon restrictions.

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

- Bobbi Jo Skibbo announced she is moving to Juneau to take a new job with the Forest Service. This is the last meeting she will be attending. John Eavis will be following the meetings until a replacement is hired.
- The weapon discharge restriction helped reduce the number of firearms discharged in Russian River area.
- There were two brown bears in the Russian River area, one was injured and the other adopted the injured one. The healthy bear cared for the injured one, until the injured one became aggressive and was shot by a fisherman.
- Several hypodermic needles were found on the trails of the campground.
- There was great coordination amongst the agencies during the recent high water event caused by the Skilak Glacier dam release.
- The Forest Service is currently developing plans to redesign the entrance to the Russian River campground. Work is planned to start in 2016.
- The last Kenai River cleanup is scheduled for September 12, 2015 at 8:00 am. The cleanup starts at the Cooper Landing Bridge and ends at Jims Landing.
- Stream watch logged 1300 hours and pick up 1700 pounds of trash and 110 feet of fishing line.

F. City of Kenai-Rick Koch provided the board members with the following report:

- The Personnel Use Fishery was a great success this year.
- Communication with Fish and Game, Robert Begich with the City was very beneficial this year on fish runs and how they have changed.
- The buoys help with boat traffic and boats reducing their speed.
- The City of Kenai purchased property on the South side of the Kenai River to create a new access point to the dip net fishery. A new road should be ready for use by spring 2016.
- Comments have been sent to the Governor in regard to the 2017 Board of Fish meeting to be moved to the Kenai Soldotna Area

G. City of Soldotna- Andrew Carmichael provided the board members with the following report:

- The connection with the walkways between Centennial and the City of Soldotna visitor's center is currently moving forward and schedule for completion by spring 2016.
- Revenue for the City of Soldotna Parks and Recreation was up 8%. Most of the increased occur during the king fishery at the local boat launches.

H. Kenai Peninsula Borough-No report.

2. Committee Reports

- a. President's Report-Ted Wellman reported to the board that all members are welcome to participate in any of the sub-committee that met throughout the day of the Kenai River Special Management meeting. Currently meeting is the Guide Advisory, Habitat and River Use committees.
- b. Guide Advisory –No Report
- c. Habitat –No Report
- d. River Use –Dwight Kramer reported that the River Use committee had a short meeting. The committee would like to look at guide limits, boating restriction and to also like to tackle "What do we want the Kenai to look like in ten years and then work backwards".

There was also a meeting of the Guide and River Use committee to look at the proposed improvements to the Eagle Rock Facility. Some of the improvements include:

1. Improve double boat launch with webcam.
2. Parking to accommodate 26 trucks and trailers and 10 passenger vehicles, total of 36 vehicles.
3. Directional highway signs and entrance sign,
4. Water well.
5. Boat mooring and River Access connecting both parking areas.

The complete list is available at the State Park office

3. OLD BUSINESS

4. NEW BUSINESS

5. **CORRESPONDENCE** –A letter was sent to Mark Lutrell requesting a written explanation for KRSMA's support for Grant Lake Hydro Project. Ted Wellman responded to Mark. A copy of the letter will be provided to the board at the October meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT- None

ADJOURNMENT



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