

**Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board**  
**\*\*\* Meeting Minutes\*\*\***

Thursday October 9, 2014

5:30 p.m.

Gilman River Center  
Soldotna, AK

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

1. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Ricky Gease, Clayton Holland, Monte Roberts, Andrew Szczesny, Ted Wellman, Teri Carter, Andrew Carmichael, Rick Koch, Brent Johnson, Bobbie Jo Skibo, Jack Blackwell, and Tim Stevens.

Teleconference in was Brenda Trefon for approximately an hour and half.

2. **Minutes Approval:** Approved as written.
3. **Agenda Changes and Approval:** Approved as written.

- II. Public Comments/Presentations:** Bobbie Jo Skibo gave a short 5 minute presentation on the Stream Watch Legacy. This is the 20<sup>th</sup> year that the stream watch program and there was several celebrations. These events included a volunteer celebration that was sponsored in Anchorage by Holland America, A partnership celebration that was at the Russian River Ferry during the Kenai River cleanup event and the Wild and Scenic film feature that was sponsored by the Kenai River Watershed Forum in Anchorage. The documentary was created by the Teen Media institute in which students shadow stream watch volunteers throughout the season.

**III. REPORTS**

1. Agency and Government Reports:

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

- Bing's landing is still receiving a lot of use this fall season and has been at full capacity several times throughout the month.
- Pillars dock will be removed on Monday October 13, 2014.
- State Parks was able to extend the Resource Technician position for 1 month to help complete some of the fall time task.

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

- DEC has received the results of the microbial source tracking on the Kenai River beach samples collected this summer. Seven samples that exceeded state water quality criteria were sent to a Miami lab (Source Molecular Inc.) and were tested for specific markers within the cell mitochondria to identify the source of the bacteria. Samples were analyzed for gull, dog, human, waterfowl and generic bird markers. Results indicated the majority of the bacteria were from gulls but markers from all species tested were found.

**C. ADF&G** –No Report

**D. USFS/Chugach**–No report

**E. US F&WS-** Bobbie Jo Skibo provided board members with the following report:

- Stream watch log 1200 volunteer hours, 3200 volunteers that pick up approximately 1500 pounds of trash.
- New monofilament tubes that were placed along the Russian river. These were for waste fishing lines to be placed in. The fishing line is sent to a company to be recycled.
- Eleven Stewardship work days. This is working with different groups such as local business, Kenaitz tribe and even a group from Australia participating in the stream watch program.
- There will be a Stream Watch steering committee meeting. Date, time and place yet to be determined.



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



- Russian River end of season, with low water and a large amount of fish. This produces a large amount of fish waste. Several Brown bears were shot early in the year, but later in the year there were some small problems.
- Visitor guide is being produce at large amounts and are still available.
- Fish waste management plan, recommendation basically is like the City of Soldotna's Centennial Park processing station. This would include having a dock on the Russian that would be for flaying and collecting fish waste. This process would include staff taking the fish waste to another facility that has a grinder that would be placed on the Kenai River and would put the fish waste back into the river. The next recommendation is to have the fish taken out whole.

**F. City of Kenai** –Rick Koch provided board members with the following report.

- Rick thanks the board for their support of the resolution moving the 2017 UCI meeting to the Kenai Peninsula. This would provide the resident of the peninsula to participate in these meetings.
- The d2014 dip net report is not complete at this time. Some of the highlights of the report are that there was an overall higher volume of users this year. The first week was very busy and then it was just a steady flow of participants.
- This year there was a no wake zone at the VIP subdivision. This was in place for protection of personal property and habitat of the private land owners along the stretch of the river.
- Rick reported that he felt that the behavior in the dip net fishery was one of the worst he had seen. Boat handling was poor; there were three accidents, one that took the life of a dog, three people were in the water.
- The city of Kenai will be working with the State Troopers and Coast Guard how developing new rules and regulation for the 2015 season.
- One of the highest cost for this fishery is the sanitation was \$90,000. This was for only 21 days of service.
- The city of Kenai is currently working on obtaining permits for a new access road on the South Beach.
- The average user per day is approximately 10,000.

Andrew Szczesny asked if the City of Kenai has considered conducting and impact study and limited the amount of user the personal dip net fishery.

Rick stated that the City of Kenai owns the bottom of the River and a portion of the Uplands that are used during this fishery. Rick does not believe the city does have authority to limit the user. It is also the responsibility of the State of Alaska to conduct such a study and to include all of the Kenai River. The limiting of access to this fishery should be look at the State of Alaska board of fish meetings.

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

- The City of Soldotna had it first successful season using solar powered trash compactors. It will take up to three years to recoup the cost of the compactors.
- The Centennial Sport Center loop was finished.
- The city has started a hydrological study for Swift water campground for future improvements, such as access and bank improvements.
- The City is currently working on winterizing the parks.

**H. Kenai Peninsula Borough-** No Report.

**C. Committee Reports**

- President's Report**-Joe Connors reported that there is committee process the board follows. Today there were four committee meetings, the habitat, river use, guide and housekeeping. The process of the committees is to receive a recommendation and work the recommendation through the committee, which is then moved to the board for a vote. Then action is moved up the ladder to the director's office. It is recommended that all board members participate in these committee meetings.
- Guide Advisory**-Joe Connors reported that there was a guide committee with a full agenda. The committee reviewed and discussed the violation for the years and the commercial operators' trends and numbers. The violation has been consistent for the past several years with approximately 20 violations. The commercial operator numbers have been steadily declining and are the lowest in 19 years. There was also discussion about the red and white versus the green and white signs along the river. There are concerns about t the riparian habitat violation. There has also been discussion about the middle river campgrounds, where there was commercial operators holding spots and waiting for someone to bring more people in to switch out spots. There was also discussion about the dip net fishery and how it is impacting the State Park units. Also, that a

boating safety course for all user of the Kenai River. The strategy is to have it voluntary at first and then to make it mandatory. Money is needed to start the process. It was recommended that the River Use committee should develop a proposal to obtain money for this process.

- c. **Habitat** – Brent Johnson reported that the habitat committee met and there were approximately 10 people present. The discussion started with the king salmon juvenile in the Kenai River. Adam Reimer from Alaska Department of Fish and Game was unable to attend, but commented that the department will start conducting study on juvenile king salmon in 2015. These will be multiyear study. It was also recommended that the committee review Terry Bendock study on juvenile king salmon.

Ranger Jason Okuly gave a presentation on habitat violation along the Kenai River. The rangers try to educate many of the land owners. Each of the rangers selects five of the most outrageous violation each year. They work with the land owners to reach compliance without issuing a citation. Joe Connors was shock at the number of violations, but also understand that people do what they think is best to protect their property. Joe asked how many properties are along the river. There is an estimated 2100 property along the river.

Monte Roberts commented that over the past 15 years there has been vast improvement of bank restoration. New land owners are sent an information packet with the On the River book.

Andy Szczesny commented that many land owners do the work and then ask for forgiveness after the fact. Joe commented that there has been a lot of time and effort towards elevated light penetrating walkways and bank restoration.

Andrew commented on the process of obtaining permits, it is very information and easy process.

Brent commented that he would like to have more participation on enforcements on violation the Kenai Peninsula Borough compliance office.

- d. **River Use** – No Report
- e. **Legislative/Government Activities** – No Report
- f. **Board Development/ Nomination** – No Report
- g. **Agenda/Board Structure/Housekeeping** – This will be discussed under new business.

#### IV. OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. **Eagle Rock operations and planning-** Jack Blackwell reported that there was a joint meeting of the River Use and Guide Advisory committees to review the Eagle Rock site plan. Lucy from design and construction participated by teleconference for this discussion. One of the main concerns is to add additional parking. State Parks is currently looking at adjacent property for the additional parking. There is a BIA property owned by Jim Bookey and his wife that the state may be interested in obtaining for the additional parking. The state is also currently looking at additional property by the Pillars boat launch to expand additional parking in the area.

Rick Koch asked about the existing water well at the Eagle Rock site. It was currently test at 28 parts per billion for arsenic, it was rated un-drinkable.

#### V. NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. **Board Recruitment** – Joe Connors reported that there are seven applicants for four open positions on the board. Three of the position term out and one was an unexpected vacancy. The bylaws state that there should be three applicants per open positions.
- 2. Joe Connors recommended that we have seven candidates, put all seven candidates in for all four positions. The board would instruct the superintendent and the Director or the designee to conduct the interviews to make the choices.
- 3. The board continued to discuss the bylaws on page 3, B, C and D of the nomination and appointments section.
- 4. Andy Szczesny recommended keeping the process as it has been in the past.
- 5. Rick Koch recommends we follow the bylaws as written.
- 6. Bobbie Jo Skibo remembers how the process has changed over the years.
- 7. Joe asked when the positions expire. 10/31/14.
- 8. Ted Wellman believes that the board should discuss the applicants and then let the superintendent and director conduct the interview and send the recommendation forward to the commissioner.



9. Brent believes one of the reasons the board to discuss the applicants is because the board is a public forum.

### **Motions**

- I. Brent Johnson made a motion that we postpone the selection for a month. Teri Carter seconds the motions.

The board discussed of the motion.

Approve-3  
Oppose-6

- II. Rick Koch amended the motion to postpone to time certain to call a special meeting for the week of October 20<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> for consideration of the applicants.

Brent Johnson seconds the motions

The boards discuss the amendment to the motion.

Ted called the question to take a vote on the amendment to the motions.

Approve-4  
Opposed-5

- III. Andy Szczesny made the motion to follow the process of the application period and interview process by the superintendent and director or designee. Ted Wellman seconds the motion.

Approve-6  
Oppose-4

- IV. Clayton Holland amended the motions to have two members of the board with the superintendent and the director or the designee conducts the interviews. Andrew Carmichael seconds the motion.

Approve-7  
Oppose-3

- V. Ricky Gease made a motion that the board put all seven applications in each of the four open seats. Monte Roberts Seconds the motion. The board will review all the applications and make any comments at the meeting or can be submitted by email by October 31, 2014 that will be forwarded to the commissioner.

Approve-9  
Oppose-1

The Board has selected board members-Clayton Holland and Ted Wellman to help with the interviews.

### **Comments on the application by the board:**

Brent Johnson commented that Dwight Kramer is a knowledgeable person. He does not represent guides or sport fisherman, he belongs to the fisherman's coalition group and has knowledge of science and biology that he would bring to the table.

Ted Wellman commented that all applications should be moved forward.

Rick Koch agrees that Dwight Kramer would work on fishery issues, has exceptional knowledge, is nonpolitical and represents the river and not any user group.

Monte Roberts agree Ricky Gease should move forward. Ricky participates and is knowledgeable. Andy Szczesny should be reappointed he also participate and is knowledgeable. Keith Baxter has good organizational talent and would bring a new perspective to the board. Dwight Kramer is against guides and should not be on the board.

- VI. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Joe reported that the resolution moving the 2017 UCI meeting to the Kenai Peninsula. This would provide the resident of the peninsula to participate in these meetings. A response from the UCI board sent a response that the recommendation was received.

### **VII. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

a. **Board Comments-**

Monte comment that he is also a stickler for detail and that he appreciated Rick Koch and Brent Johnson attention to detail.

Brent Johnson commented that he was not interviewed when placed on the board. He was appointed by the borough assembly. When first asked if he would like to be appointed to the board.

Ricky Gease commented that the agenda for November have bylaw changes added for review by the board. He also reported on the Rotenone for pike eradication in Mackey Lake and Soldotna Creek drainages.

Clayton Holland would like to see the board get something done.

Teri Carter agrees the impression of the board is negative and that makes changes to the bylaws will help change the public's impression.

Ted Wellman was appointed by Governor Knowles. Even back than the board was thought to be dominated by guides and this was not true. Since 1995 the carry capacity has been an issue and the State needs to do something about the users groups on the river.

Joe Connors agrees, there are too many users and there is no mechanism to fix it. Boating safety is needed and the board and state need to work together to fix the problem.

Jack Blackwell thanks everyone for their hard work. The bylaws need to be changed. Such as the expiration of the seat, should be change to April or May to give the board more opportunity to appoint new members.

