

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

Thursday October 11, 2013, 2013
5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Ricky Gease, Brenda Trefon, Carol Padgett, Andrew Szczesny, Bruce King, Terri Carter, Brent Johnson, Andy Loranger, Robert Begich, Rick Koch, Jack Blackwell.
Special Guest-Director Ben Ellis
Guest-Marian Dyke, Dennis Randa, Patti Berkahn, Hailey Trefon.
- B. Minutes Approval:** The minutes were amended to correct Dennis Randa comments at the May meetings. Minutes were approved as amended.
- C. Agenda Changes and Approval:** Andy Szczesny added under new business, discussion about the Federal closure.

II. Public Comments/Presentations –

Dennis Randa last May spoke to the KRSMA Board about how the Kenai River as a state park unit was not being managed as directed by the enabling legislation; the three purposes of the act (AS 41.21.500) are to:

- 1) designate the river and selected state-owned uplands as a unit of the state park system;
- 2) protect and perpetuate the fishery and wildlife resources and habitat in the unit and adjacent area; and
- 3) manage recreational uses and development activities in the unit and adjacent area.

My comment to the board was that the park as an experiment for resource management was an abject failure, that the river was being managed as a 'playground'. And that if we continued to manage it as a 'playground' then all we would have in the future would be a playground and not the fishery the legislature intended.

I challenged the members of the advisory board to 'step up' and direct parks management to do the job that the enabling legislation empowered them, no DIRECTED them to do.

The minutes of the meeting do a disservice to my message, substituting 'recreation' for fishery does not anywhere near convey my message and I am here tonight to restate that challenge to the advisory board. Please do not let the condition of the Kenai River be avoided by parks management allowing for the continued decline of this resource.

As the enabling legislation stated as a general statement of finding "the Kenai River is a resource of importance to the entire state".

Finally, my name is spelt with two Ns.

In his 62 years that in creating the park some 32 years ago was to try avoiding what has happen ever where else along the West Coast of the country. Robert Begich can testify to this, Dennis has told him with all do respect to everyone involved that they have not been able to maintain a wild fishery. Look down the coast there is no fishery. The Kenai River's king fishery is an abject failing. The data shows the Kenai has been in decline all this century.

REPORTS

A. Agency and Government Reports

- a. State Parks –**Jack Blackwell stated in May there was a personnel service shortfall and we had a reduction in staff. We were unable to hire some of our summer ACC staff, the Seward ranger position and permitting officer. For this season we were down 25% in staff then we had the previous year. Some of the impact was not keeping up with the cleaning of the restroom in the parks and also having time to work on maintenance projects. The other side is that we were able to fill some of the positions such as the new park ranger position on the Kenai River that was funded by the legislature has been hired. We had a transfer to that position who is Tom Anthony from Kodiak which puts us about a year ahead of the game because he already has law enforcement training. Few years ago we had an issue with dispatch for out park staff. After looking at a number of options and receiving funding we were able to hire a second dispatch and administration position which will allow us to have two shift of dispatch on the weekends in the summer and give us 7 days of dispatch through most of the year. Funding for that position was secured with the help of the board and Jack thanks the board for their effort. This summer we enter in a partnership with the Kenai River Sportsman association and they paid for the printing of the new updated Kenai River brochure. This updated information will also be available on the State park webpage. We were also able to purchase the new banner which will be used at trade shows and other events that state parks are involved in. Jacque Kosto and Jack Blackwell spent the day with senator Kiesel on the Kenai River. It was very helpful and educational for the senator



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



and some of the issue we have at area parks. We are continuing working with Eagle Rock and all the studies and permits are completed. Hopeful in the next month or so we should have possession of the area. Recruiting for vacancy on the KRSMA board, there are four positions open and applications need to be submitted by the end of the October.

Pam Russell went over the guide numbers and additional statistics. The number of fishing guides has declined by 17 but we did see a spike in the number of new businesses that registered for the 2013 season.

Ben Ellis reported that this week Monday he was in Juneau, Tuesday in Matsu-Su, and Wednesday in Fairbank and today in Kenai to attend all of the advisory board meetings. The main reason for attending all of these meetings is last year we had several tele-conferences that had advisory chairs, members and other interested parties that were interested in getting involved earlier in the governor's budget process. The governor's budget is announced by law on December 15. The DNR agencies start working on area budgets in late June early August, which is then sent to the commissioner who in turn combines the entire division budget that is then forwarded on to the governor. From now until December 15, is what will be decided as to what will be included in the governor's budget. Those that are interested in addressing the governor's budget, it is recommended to look at areas that are system wide issues throughout the state park system.

Some of the areas that may be looked at state wide is:

1. Personnel services,
2. Recreation Trails program,
3. Deferred Maintenance
4. A system to replace or repair equipment.

The Kasilof takeout has changed location. Jim Triollo has withdrawn his property for consideration and the 2nd option the Kimbrells is asking for a larger amount than the property is assessed for. The State is now pursuing property that was the third choice on the list and is approximately ½ half mile upstream of the Triollo pullout. It is located on the same side of the river and just downstream of the tip of the island.

- b. **DEC** – Were not present.
- c. **ADF&G** –Robert Begich reported that staff comments are being prepared for the board of fish. Next meeting Robert will bring a timeline for public comment for board of fish recommendation and also a season summary, including the final number for the sonar research project. Also the department will be sampling the East Side set net fishery for genetic information.
- d. **USF&WS** –Andy Loranger commented that the Refuge is closed due to the Federal government shutdown. All staff at the Refuge office has been furlough with the exception of the Manager Andy Loranger and all Law enforcement staff. The refuge officers are task with security of facilities and any emergencies situation. Gates for facilities are not currently closed or barricaded. Also, prior appropriation the new Refuge visitor center is still moving forward.
- e. **USFS/Chugach**- Were not present
- f. **City of Kenai** -Rick Koch reported that the Personal Use fishery wrap for the 2013 season. The department will be meeting to discuss what did or did not work. The City of Kenai will be approaching the legislature on the issue of establishing a permit fee for the PU fishery to help in deferring some of the work that the city has currently been providing. This year there was a day that had a 15% more use than any other day in the past. There was also a lot of traffic coming from areas upstream by four wheelers that were using the bike path and other areas to bypass fee stations. The area at the Warren Ames Bridge where there is access to the river for PU fishery participants is seeing a high rate of erosion. The city would like to work with DNR to come up with a solution in re-establishing the vegetation. The city continues to not recognize the 2 miles of river bottom at river 4.5, the city owes the tidelands in that area and is willing to have an MOU with DNR for law enforcement authority in that area.
- g. **City of Soldotna** – Andrew Carmichael were not present
- h. **Kenai Peninsula Borough** - Brent Johnson reported that once every year the borough reorganizes what the members are task to do. Brent is going to try and stay on the board. Brent was asking to attend the next habitat committee meeting.

B. Committee Reports

- a. **President's Report** – No Report
- b. **Guide Advisory** - No reported
- c. **Habitat** – No Report

d. River Use –Carol Padgett reported that the committee had a full agenda and worked on their priority list for the upcoming board 2013-2014. Some of the items included :

1. Boat counts and monitoring on the Kenai River. This is to define where boats are and how many are on the river.
2. Facilities-additional restroom and fish cleaning station for carcass management
3. Personal Fishery- the boat traffic and how it has change. Boat traffic above the bridge.
4. The Sockeye Salmon stamp proposal.
5. Educational program-continuing the program on a volunteering basis.

AmeriCorps gave and update on there education program for human waster. They had 20 days of education and 400 people that they talk with. They have sold 400 wag bags and as the board to write a letter in support of the AmeriCorps program. This program is funding by grants.

e. Legislative/Government Activities – Ricky Gease will be the chair for this committee.

f. Board Development - No report

g. Agenda/Board Structure/Housekeeping – No Report

III. OLD BUSINESS-Action Item:

IV. **NEW BUSINESS** –Federal Closure- Andy Szczesny asked who owns the water, or more specifically the river. A controversy on who runs the water way in the Refuge. Anything above Bing's landing is the water closed, who owns the water. Is this a land use permit and a water base permit? Two permits, refuge land base facilities or upland they you are required to have a special use permit. If you only use the water column recognize the KRSMA permit. But it has always been recognized that the Refuge land is water is within the boundaries of the Refuge. The jurisdictional conflict is something that will not be resolved at a KRSMA meeting, it deep, complex and complicated. Andy commented that if you have a permit to fish below Skilak Lake, the refuge is closed and ask that all permitted commercial operators honor that closure. Subsistence fishing or hunting is not closed. There is a lot of boat traffic in the upper river and there should be no boat traffic except for private land owners. The Refuge is closed.

V. **CORRESPONDENCE** – Dave Carey letter of resignation from the Kenai River Special Management Board and the Cooper Landing Senior Citizen organization supporting the AmeriCorps educational program.

VI. **PUBLIC COMMENT**-Dennis Randa everyone on this board can have their personnel agenda and all the stuff you want to do and the park is a park to make a home for the fish and Dennis does not believe that is being done.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

A. Board Comments

B. Date/Agenda of Next Meeting November 14, 2013 at 5:30 p.m.



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