

## Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

### \*\*\* Meeting Minutes\*\*\*

Thursday, January 14, 2016  
5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center  
Soldotna, AK

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Ricky Gease, Brendyn Shiflea, Keith Baxter, Clayton Holland, Dwight Kramer, Ted Wellman, Branden Bornemann, Andrew Carmichael, Rick Koch, Brent Johnson, Matt Conner, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.
- B. **Minutes:** Both November and December minutes were approved as written.
- C. **Agenda:** The agenda was approved as written

#### II. Public Comments/Presentations

#### III. REPORTS

##### 1. Agency and Government Reports:

###### 1. State Parks-Jack Blackwell provided the board with the following report:

- The pilings at the Pillars boat launch have been replaced. One of the pilings had failed in 2015, so the department thought it was a good time to replace all of the pilings. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Access program provided the funding for this project.
- The appointment for the current vacant position on the KRSMA board has not been selected by the commissioner at this time. There are three positions on the KRSMA board that will expire in June of 2016; the recruiting process is currently underway.
- Parks has scheduled an open house meeting for all commercial operators on the Kenai River on February 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gilman River Center from 6pm to 8pm. This is an opportunity for the operators to meet state park staff and discuss park management
- ADOT has selected the preferred alternative for the Sterling Highway Milepost 45-60 project. The G South Alternative has been selected. This alternative will build approximately five new miles of road that would skirt around the town of Cooper Landing and add an additional bridge across the Kenai River and replace the existing bridge across the river.
- The board requested an update on the proposed north beach parking lot area at the mouth of the Kasilof River and the Division of Mining Land and Water will be scheduling an open comment period in the next few months.

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

- DEC has responded to the comments that were received by EPA regarding the revised Turbidity listing methodology. The current methodology can be found in the Draft 2012 Integrated Report. DEC is working to address the concerns raised prior to soliciting public comment on a revised Turbidity Listing Methodology.
- Review of the comprehensive monitoring report shows the Kenai River is consistently meeting some water quality criteria (specifically some metals, pH). DEC plans on reviewing our analysis with EPA and may include the findings as to what additional water quality standards are being met in the next Integrated Report (currently the Kenai is only listed as meeting the water quality standard for petroleum; formal findings on other parameters have not been reached).

###### 3. ADF&G - No Report



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4. USF&WS- Matt Conner provided the board members with the following report:
  - The Refuge is working on obtaining permits for the proposed project that would add 600 feet of Elevated Light Penetrating (ELP) walkway downstream of the Russian River ferry landing on the south side of the river and downstream from the confluence of the Russian River and Kenai River. This will help improve access to the Kenai River and limit resource damage.
  - The Russian River ferry contract is up for renewal in 2016. This includes operating the ferry service across the Kenai River and the Sportsman landing area. The bid process will be opening in February.
5. USFS/Chugach National Forest-John Eavis provided the board members with the following report:
  - The Forest Service is currently in the process of replacing Bobbie Jo Skibo's vacant position. The hope is to have the position filled before the summer season.
  - There is a new District Ranger for the Seward District. Francisco Sanchez started work in November.
  - John is working hard with the Water Shed Forum and the transition of leadership with Jack Sinclair. Lisa Baranek the stream-watch program coordinator has taken a different position out of state so the Stream Watch will be looking for new leadership for the 2017 season.
  - The Russian River Campground entrance area is slated for improvements and reconfiguration during the 2016 season.
  - The Cooper Creek dam project has been completed. This is part of Stenson Creek water diversion project that supports the Chugach Electric hydro plant with additional water.
6. City of Kenai- Rick Koch provided the board members with the following report:
  - Rick reminded State Parks that any proposed work for the Eagle Rock boat launch needs a conditional use permit from the City of Kenai.
  - Rick Koch asked for clarification if the sub-committee meetings are subject to the open meeting act. The committee meetings are open to the public and other board members. So as long as we give ample notice prior to the meeting they can be held at any time or location.
  - The new beach access road on the south side for the dip net fishery is currently going out to bid. The first phase of this project should be completed prior to the 2016 personal use fishery. The second phase will not occur until the house on the property is sold.
7. City of Soldotna- Andrew Carmichael provided the board members with the following report:
  - The city is currently working on the elevated light penetrating walkway connection from the visitor center to the sport center. It currently at a standstill due to snow conditions.
  - An MOU agreement for signage for user of the Kenai River has been signed with the City of Soldotna and the Department of Education. There are some signs explaining the rules of the road that will be posted several of the boat launches along the river.
8. Kenai Peninsula Borough- Brent Johnson provided the board with the following report:
  - The Department of Natural Resources is not going to fund the dumpster or porta bathrooms at the Kasilof Dip net fishery in 2016.

## 2. Committee Reports

- a. President's Report-Ted Wellman reported that he was disappointed that DNR and the Department of Law have not prepared the white paper for the KRSMA proposed legal questions. Ted encouraged that the committees to move forward in pursuing such matters as guide limitation and limitation on public access on the upper river. Ted recommends that the committees and board work through a proposal and then it will be

sent up to the Director for consideration. Ted will be sending a memorandum to Director Ellis encouraging a response.

b. Guide Advisory –Joe Connors provided the board members with the following report:

The guide committee discussed the following items:

- Two items on the agenda were postponed until February pending further information from State Parks.
- Currently there are two scheduled Kenai River Guide Academy classes that will be offered in March and April. Both classes are currently full. Each course has a waiting list. The board is currently recruiting instructors for some of the courses. This is the 11<sup>th</sup> year for the course.
- The guides gave their perspective of issues that have been occurring over the last 5 to 7 years. One of the main issues is social bad behavior along the river. Often times these issues are solved by created regulations that may have consequences that the guide did not expect. The committee was trying to determine how some of these issues can be resolved without creating regulations. The committee is going to continue to work on this issue.
- The proposed guide limitation was forwarded to the Guide Committee from the River Use committee. At this time the guide committee has not taken a vote. Whatever guide limitation packet that goes forward need to also consider a limitation on public use also.

c. Habitat –Keith Baxter provided the board members with the following report:

- The Habitat Committee drafted a letter in regards to the Planning Commission to support existing ordinances that help support the protection of habitat along the Kenai River. The Board discourages the Planning Commission from issuing variances that do not support the 50-foot habitat protection ordinance. Specifically, the KRSMA Board strenuously objects to any actions by the Planning Commission that allows the sale or lease of land which requires a variance to the habitat protection ordinance for the purchaser or lessee to obtain beneficial use of the land. The board would like to work with the commission on this issue and invites a representative from the commission or the borough to join us at the next KRSMA Habitat Committee meeting, 11:00 am, February 11<sup>th</sup>, at the Gilman River Center.

Brent made a motion to send the letter to the Planning Commission.

Joe seconds the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

d. River Use –Dwight Kramer provided the board members with the following report:

- Dwight has provided the board with minutes from the meeting. See attached.

e. Legislative/Government Activities-Ricky Gease provided the board members with the following report:

- Last year the board supported the concept of a Sockeye salmon stamp. The funds from this would definitely come in handy for facilities on the Kenai and Kasilof River. Currently, HB 137 is sponsored by Representative Talerico. The bill is currently on the Senate side but has run into opposition by the hunting community; however, there is still support from the Commissioner of Fish and Game. It still unsure how far it will move forward. Sending in your support would be helpful.

#### IV. OLD BUSINESS

a. River Use Limitation-Postponed, pending additional information from DNR and the Department of Law.



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- b. Review the three concept site plans for the River Ranch parcel-Jack Blackwell provided the board members with the following report.

Jack said that Director Ben Ellis has asked for input from the board on the three concepts for the Kenai River Ranch Property. Following input from the public process, the DNR and ADFG planning team has prepared the following three concepts.

- Concept one: no new facilities, the Hansen House to remain for the caretaker, fishing regulations remain in place and request funding for active restoration of riparian habitat and to clean up site.
- Concept two: Boat launch and /or ELP Bank fishing with access stairs to river, small/medium sized parking area to accommodate truck/trailer, toilet, Hansen house to remain for a caretaker, active restoration of riparian habitat, no camping.
- Concept three: Multi-purpose interpretive nature trails; hiker/skier, interpretive message could focus on homesteading, history of site, EVOS conservation. Fishing regulations amended to allow bank fishing, Hansen house to remain for a caretaker or visiting research/artist in residence program, two public use cabins, (walk in/ski only), Active restoration of riparian habitat, ELP bank fishing with access stairs to river and no camping.

Joe Connors made a motion to postpone the vote until the February meeting, Ricky Gease seconds the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- c. Election of Officers- Joe Connors made the motion to have the current members continue their positions officers' position for the 2015-2016 board sessions. Andrew Carmichael seconds the motion.

The motion passed.

- d. Sterling Highway Reroute-ADOT has selected the preferred alternative G for the Sterling Highway Milepost 45-60 project. This alternative will build approximately five new miles of road that would skirt around the town of Cooper Landing and add an additional bridge across the Kenai River and replace the existing bridge across the river.

## V. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Coordinated CAB letter to the legislature-A joint letter that was coordinated by the Northern and Matsu Citizen Advisory boards (CABs) to propose to the legislature regarding the Department of Natural Resource Parks 2017 budget. The request was received to join other advisory board in support of the budget crises. KRSMA board was asking to approve and be a signature of the letter.

Jack stated that the letter requests that the budget be keep status quo as the 2016 budget, for as of right now the 2017 budget is requested a 3% cut across the board.

Rick Koch stated that he felt it would be inappropriate of the board to support this letter. The board should just address issues that directly affect the KRSMA area. Rick determined that this is a broad political statement for the advisory board.

Keith Baxter has hesitation supporting this letter and also agrees that the KRSMA board should draft its own letter highlighting funding needs for the Kenai Area.

Ricky Gease was in favor of drafted a separate letter that would support the division to generate new revenue such as allowing state park merchandise to be sold by the division for profit.

Brent is also agrees that the current letter should not be supported and a separate letter should be drafted.

The board decided to not sign the letter of support.

Ted Wellman recommended that the legislative committee should work on a letter highlighting funding needs for the Kenai Area.

**VI. CORRESPONDENCE**

**VII. PUBLIC COMMENT-**Joel Isaac asked DEC board member Jeanne Swartz if individual acids were considered within the testing controls of the Kenai River water testing sampling criteria. Jeanne responded that only pH is included in the testing criteria.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**



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