

## Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

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

Thursday, April 10, 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, Monte Roberts, Ted Wellman, Branden Bornemann, Andrew Carmichael, Matt Kelly, Brent Johnson, Steve Miller, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.
- B. **Minutes:** The minutes were approved for February and March.
- C. **Agenda:** Approved as written.

#### II. Public Comments-No Comments

#### III. REPORTS

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

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

- The Bing's Landing capital improvement project will begin approximately around April 15, 2016. This project will provide additional access to the river and additional parking.
- All Kenai River rangers are currently in training as part of the annual law enforcement training requirements.
- The 2017 Alaska State Park budget has not been finalized yet.
- The new lower Kasilof River boat retrieval (Trujillo's) will not be available for retrieving boats this season. This is in part due to the safety concerns of the operations of how boats are retrieved and also construction and cleanup activity on site. State Parks is offering that commercial operators will be allowed to park a vehicle on site to drop off clients at the site, so they do not have to travel the extra time down to the Cabins pullout. A portable bathroom will also be available for the summer.
- The planning/design process for the Trujillo boat retrieval process will begin in the fall of 2016. At that time public will be invited to participate in the process.

Monte asked if a fish cleaning will be available at the Trujillo site. Jack responded that State Parks will look into providing a fish cleaning table at the site.

###### 2. DEC-Jeanne Swartz had no updates at this time.

- DEC is currently waiting for input from the agency regarding the attainment determination for the Kenai River.

###### 3. ADF&G – No Report

###### 4. USF&WS- Steve Miller provided the board members with the following report:

- The Environmental Assessment report for the Russian River elevated walkway and bank restoration is out for public comment until March 26, 2016. There were approximately a half of dozen comments that were submitted. The agency is currently addressing these comments in the final EIS.



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- The Refuge is currently gathering funding to complete some repair work on the walkways in the Moose Range Meadow area off of Keystone Drive. This work is slated to be completed in the fall of 2016.
- The boat launch at the end of Keystone Drive is in need of some major. The work is currently not slated until 2018.

5. USFS/Chugach National Forest-No Report

6. City of Kenai- Matt Kelly provided the board members with the following report.

- The City of Kenai submitted a proposal to the Board of Fish to eliminate the Commissioner's authority to extend by emergency order, the Kenai River personal use fishery on July 10 through July 31 to 24 hours per day. The city proposes to close the fishery from 11 pm to 6 am allow heavy equipment to rake fish-waste from tidelands and to service beach-located solid waste dumpsters.

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

- The City is currently working on the final touches on the walkway that connects the Centennial Campground with the Soldotna Visitor Center.
- The City is also ordered approximately 79 laminate river front signage. These panels will provide education to the public on such topics as boat launch use and riparian habitat protection.
- There is currently some work being completed on the downstream edge of Swiftwater Park. The installation of some fencing is being installed and bank restoration work is being planned for the future.
- Centennial Campground is expected to be open on May 1. All public stairways at Centennial, Swiftwater and the visitor center that provide access down to the river are also being put in place.

8. Kenai Peninsula Borough- No Report

2. Committee Reports

- President's Report-No Report
- Guide Advisory –Monte Roberts provided the board members with the following report:

The guide committee discussed the following items:

- The committee discussed how to take minutes at the committee meeting. It was determined that the items discussed at the committee meetings will be reported at the board meeting. These minutes will then be entered into the minutes that are written.
- The committee also discussed stipulations that are developed as a result of violations. This is in regards to the outcome of the decision of the working group approximately 10 years ago. Jack provided the committee with the copy of the currently regulation regarding the suspension process currently in place. The committee believes that the current suspensions are excessive. The committee decided to have members of the guide committee, Ricky Gease, Ty VanLier and Jack Blackwell to review the current process and develop some recommendation for State Parks to consider.
- Habitat –Keith Baxter provided the board members with the following report:
  - Christy Bullock and John Morton from the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge gave a presentation on the 2015 Funny River Road fire... The fire burned through 196,000 acres and only 65% the area burned. Approximately 5% of the total area was really scorched by the fire. It was also noted that the moose browse generated by the fire is between 7 to 20 thousand acres. It is believe that there is no concern

for enhance sedimentation into the Kenai River due to the fire. The presentation also discussed a new process called photogrammetry which provides better data at a lower cost point. The committee also discussed fire danger on the Kenai.

Currently the fire wise program is currently helping in reducing fuels in several areas and as land owners to be aware of your surroundings and to follow the currently recommendations for having fires.

- Keith also gave an update on the Kenai River cleanup. This year's focus will be on the children which currently have 700 that will be participating. The problem that comes with this many children is being able to get them all to the river to participate. So if anyone is willing to help please contact Keith Baxter.
- River Use –Dwight Kramer provided the board members with the following report:
  - Kristine Route gave a presentation on Human Waste and the AmeriCorps program. Kristine is working on her master thesis which included a study at a popular spot on the shore of Kenai Lake. The site was divided into two parts for the summer. The first part of the study was to observe the area for levels of human waste as it was unattended. The second part of the study included installing signs, talking to people and conducting a survey on the effects of human waste in the area. It was noted that there was a decrease of sign of human waste in the second part of the study. Educating the public proved to very effective in reduces the human waste in the area.
  - The Sockeye Salmon Stamp- HB137 has been change and is now not representing the intent of the original bill. The bill was to include all users on the Kenai, sport fisherman and dip net participants. The fees were also headed for the general fund not to be distributed to agencies in the Kenai area.
  - Bank damage below the Warren Aims Bridge on the South side of the bridge. This occurs during the dip net fishery. Jack Blackwell has currently submitted a project proposal to EVOS for money to put in elevated walkways and stairways down to the river. The cost for the project is currently \$2.4 million . Parks and ADFG will continue to monitor the site and assess impacts from this fishery.
  - Boat Counts method on the upper Kenai River. A proposal by a commercial operator and resident of Cooper Landing has been submitted to the committee. It was determined that if any limitations are to be put in place, first a study needs to be conducted just to determine the use that is currently occurring on the upper river. At this time the committee would like to get the agencies involved in the discussion because some of the data may already exist and to also help with developing solution to the overcrowding on the Upper River. The Committee decided to send a letter to US Fish and Wildlife asking support for the study and a concept developed in the River Use Study by Doug Whitaker.
- Legislative/Government Activities- Ricky Gease provided the board members with the following report:
  - Ricky passed out the working document for HB 101 relating to merchandise sold and certain fees charged by the Department of Natural Resources. This would help to raise additional funds. A letter was written in support to the legislature by the KRSMA board. Public testimony will heard be on Friday April 15<sup>th</sup> at 8 am.
  - HB 137 will be heard by the House Finance at 8 am on Friday April 15 at 8 am.
  - Cooper Landing bypass. CIRI and the Keniatze tribe met with Chugach National Forest and Fish and Wildlife Service about the alternative G route that was selected by ADOT as the preferred route. It was determined that this would go through several culturally selected area and that the Juneau Creek route alternative would be a better route and less impact on cultural resources. The intention was to bypass industrial travel along the Kenai River. Ricky has had discussion with the DOT commissioner and it sounds as if the comment period for the alternatives will be reopened.
  - HB 137 is a revenue bill that seeks adjustments to hunting, trapping and fishing license fees. It passed the House last year. ADFG submitted a survey by Southwick and Associates on the willingness to pay by anglers regarding the proposed increased fee structure in HB 137. Anglers are willing to pay for modest increases on the lower end of the fee scale, but may already be priced out of purchasing licenses and



stamps on the high end of the fee structure (such as the existing price of annual non-resident fishing license and annual NR king salmon stamp - \$100). Senate Resources inserted the Sockeye Salmon stamp and mirrored the fee structure for a King Salmon stamp (proposed \$15 for resident sockeye stamp, \$15 per one day NR sockeye stamp up to \$150 for annual NR sockeye stamp). The stamp would be required for the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers, for sport fishing but did not include language for dip netting. There were no sidebars on the how the collected revenues could be spent, but all would be deposited into the ADFG Fish and Game Fund. The KRSMA board supported the concept of a Sockeye Stamp that would charge both anglers and dip netters, and with side bars that the revenue collected would go to restoration, enforcement and infrastructure projects on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers.

Further Update: Senate Finance removed the language of the Sockeye Stamp, and kept the resident King Stamp at \$10 instead of increase to \$15, and kept the \$100 annual NR King stamp at \$100. Subsequently, HB 137 passed Senate Finance and then was amended on the Senate Floor prior to moving to the House for concurrence. After initially concurring with several amendments (related to hunting) that the Senate passed, the House withdrew its concurrence. HB 137 now is in the Senate to see if the amendments added on the Senate Floor will be withdrawn. If not, HB 137 most likely will not pass this session.

#### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Board Recruitment update. Jack Blackwell reported that there are three seats that will be vacant in June 2016. These are positions currently filled by Ted Wellman, Keith Baxter and Clayton Holland. Recruitment was open from January 15 until March 31 2016. State Parks has received three applications and the bylaws recommend that interviews be scheduled and recommendation be sent to the commissioner by May 31, 2016. If the board wished Jack would like to move forward to get a date scheduled for the interviews.

Brent Johnson commented that if we have three positions open and we have received three applications. Does that mean the board will still go through a selection process for the three positions? Jack said that is how we typically go through the process, but the bylaw does not address this situation we are currently in with three position and three applications. It would be great for the board to go through the process of the interviews. Two board members have resubmitted their application and one is a new person.

Jack commented that when Andy Szczesny position was open we received eight applications and this time we only received three.

Jack asks the board if they would like to move forward that we select a date for the interviews in early May.

Ricky ask if Jack notified the applicants that were not selected from the last opening of the currently openings? Jack stated that they were not notified but the letters they received that they were not selected for the last board opens were encouraged to reapply.

Ted Wellman stated that the board can agree to extend the advertising to receive more applications. Dwight said he never saw and of the announcements for the board openings. Jack said we relied on public service announcements, flyers, radio stations and DNR website with a media release. It was recommended that we try and improve on getting the word out when there are vacant seats on the KRSMA board.

Brent made a motion that we move forward and set up the interviews for the three application received for a date in early May. Joe seconds the motion.

Jack recommended May 2, 2016 at the River Center. Interview team is open to any voting members on the KRSMA board and the superintendent of Parks and Deputy Director.

- b. Water Wise Course. The KRSMA board has requested an Alaska Water Wise (Kenai River Specific) for May 21. Please contact Pam if you are interested in attending so we can confirm there is enough interest in offering the class.
- c. Sockeye stamp update and review-Dwight Kramer put forth a motion to send an email to the Legislature opposing the Sockeye Stamp in its present form.  
Joe Connors seconds the motion. Joe recommended that we include some of the reason why, such as the dip net fishery needs to be included in the stamp.  
Ted Wellman put an email together stating that the KRSMA board withdrawals its support of HB 137. This is due to the fact that the dip net fishery participants should be included in the stamp and revenue should be shared between agencies on the Kenai Peninsula for projects on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers.  
The board recommended that the email be sent Thursday night in order to reach the legislature in time for the morning committee meetings.  
Ted Wellman will send the email.  
A vote was taken and no one opposed the email will be sent.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**VI. CORRESPONDENCE**

**VII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**VIII. AJOURNMENT**

- A. Board Comments. Keith Baxter commented that there is a report that was sent to him concerning the waste water treatment plant from City of Soldotna. If anyone would like the report Keith would be happy to send it to them. Jeanne attended the public meeting concerning the Kasilof Area public use area parking down by the mouth of the river. She complimented the Division of Mining, Land, and Water and the contractor on the meeting and left with all of her questions answered.



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