

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday, May 12, 2016

5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center
Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Keith Baxter, Clayton Holland, Dwight Kramer, Monte Roberts, Ted Wellman, Branden Bornemann, Andrew Carmichael, Matt Kelly, Brent Johnson, Matt Connor, Robert Begich, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.

Special Guest: Deputy Commissioner Ed Fogels and Director Ben Ellis

- B. **Minutes:** The minutes were approved as written.

- C. **Agenda:** Approved as written.

II. Public Comments-No Comments

III. REPORTS

1. Agency and Government Reports:

1. State Parks

Ed Fogels provided the board with the following report:

- Ed Fogels attended several of the subcommittee meetings that were held throughout the day. The first committee meeting was the Habitat committee meeting that had a great discussion of the habitat issues found on the river. The second one was the guide committee meeting that discussed how the guides and DNR could work together to make things better when working with the guide industry. The last committee meeting is the river use which discussed public access, how much use is the Kenai River seeing and also limitations on both public and guides. All these issues are not going to be easy issues to deal with.
- Commissioner Mark Myers retired a couple months ago retired, so the deputy commissioner Marty Rutherford has step up to be acting. At this time there is no word of who the replacement will be. The last several months have been working on legislative issue and the budget is the main focus. Last year 90 positions were cut, which is 10 percent of the work force. We are being asked to do more with less. Currently in the legislature is a merchandising bill that would allow DNR to sell parks logo gear for a profit. The proceeds from these sales would go right back into the operation fund. The hope is to get State Parks 100% off general funds. To get parks 50% off general funds may also include a fee increase and the rest would be from the logo gear.

Ben Ellis provided the board with the following report:

- State Park had a 3% reduction in the Governor's budget. To meet the reduction State Parks eliminated an Admin position in the Kodiak area and second a permitting position that was located in Anchorage was also eliminated.
- Parks is working toward being a cashless department. This would entail putting credit/debit card swipe units for payment for such things as parking, camping and boat launching. A few of these units are currently in place at Glen Alps and Parks has seen an increase compliance for payment. People carry some sort of payment card versus cash. We believe revenue will increase and will make it easier for park users.



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- State Parks is planning on starting very small with merchandise, for when the legislature pass this there was no fiscal note attached. In other words there was no money given to Parks for the startup of this program. So a business plan will be developed and the program will be first kicked off in Anchorage within Chugach State Park and then will expand from there.

Jack Blackwell provided the board with the following report:

- All of the State Parks campgrounds and day use site were open by the first of May. Staff is currently working on putting in stairways, walkways and floating docks provided the water level comes up.
- Bings Landing capital project is currently under way to provide additional access to the backline. This includes parking and fishing opportunity along the river.
- A new water well was installed at Izaak Walton campground and boat launch area.
- The second guide academy course was offered the last week of April all 24 participants pass. This is a big time commitment for all the volunteers that teach the course.
- The Kenai River cleanup was conducted the first week of May. It was a great success; there were approximately 650 school children that participated.
- 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. If a guide drops of clients but retains the client's fish in the boat, the chain of custody form to transfer the fish to the guide must be filled out before the clients leave the drop off area.
- The Kasilof Boat Launch Area is receiving bank re-vegetation work. This includes some rocks have been removed, root wads and a set of new stairs going down to the water.
- Johnson Lake State Recreation Area has a group camp site that is available by reservation only
- Kenai River Flats will be monitored this season during the dip netting season and then assess impacts from the fishery. Fish and Game has submitted a proposal to prohibited dip netting form shore in the area downstream from the Warren Ames Bridge.

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 provided the board member's with the following report:

- DEC is still waiting for a decision on the turbidity determination for the Kenai River.
- A new permit fee regulation for discharge elimination permits is open for comment until June 6th, 2016.

3. ADF&G – Robert Begich provided the board member's with the following report:

- Robert gave a brief summary of the projects for the 2016 season. Some of the projects are the Kenai River Assessment Sonar Site, Netting for King Salmon, Crooked Creek Weir egg take on the Kasilof and Russian River Weir.
- The department is also working on the Northern Pike project. This includes putting up fish barrier and also removing any native fish from Soldotna Creek and placing them in other creeks that are pike free. Rotenone treatment will be applied Sevena Lake and Soldotna Creek this season.
- Kenai King Fishery is closed May and June by emergency order.
- Robert concerns for board is the legal barriers of limiting use on the Kenai River.

4. USF&WS- Matt Connors provided the board members with the following report:

- There are some new regulations that have been adopted for the 2016 season. Camping on the upper Kenai River is limited to 10 sites had the site are to be located more than 100 feet from the river.
- All lakes located within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge are no Wake.
- Skilak Lake is now four stroke motors only.
- Mushroom and Berry picking for general use is allowed and for commercial use requires a permit.
- The Environmental Assessment report for the Russian River elevated walkway and bank restoration completed. There were approximately a half of dozen comments that were submitted. The agency is currently addressing these comments in the final EIS.
- 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.
- After the Card Street Fire the refuge decided to replace the fire break line with a three to four mile trail to Marsh Lake. This is a great day trail to a great overlook.
- Soul River organization out of Portland Oregon will be visiting the 1st week August. This is a pairing up of a veterans with youth of the area.
- The Refuge will be conducting some emergency scenarios on June 24, 2016 on the Russian River. This is when an emergency is presented to agencies that would respond and how the situation would be resolved.
- Matt also stated that the National Forest Service has made a selection for the position once held by Bobbie Jo Skibo. They are just waiting for the approval. John Eaves has retired

5. USFS/Chugach National Forest-No Report

6. City of Kenai- No Report

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

- The City of Soldotna has opened all the park units as of May 2nd.

8. Kenai Peninsula Borough- No Report

2. Committee Reports

a. President's Report-Ted Wellman provided the board members with the following report:

- Ted stated he testified at the legislative meeting supporting the merchandise bill for Alaska State Park.

b. Guide Advisory –Monte Roberts provided the board members with the following report:

- The committee had a two hour and five minute meeting. Monte thanks both Ed Fogels and Ben Ellis for coming down to participate in the month KRSMA meetings.
- Actions that are taken against guides have their day in court and a consequence assign by other parties involved. The committee would like to have all parties involved to work together before any final resolution is determined.
- Joe stated that today's discussion showed that all parties are willing to work on the problems. Ben Ellis stated that the acting Commissioner Marty Rutherford is committed to working on better relationships with DNR and Kenai River guides and on making things work better.

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

- Kenai River cleanup collected over 400 pounds of trash. There appears to be a reduction in trash. Seven locations were cleaned along the Kenai River with approximately 650 children participating from six different schools. Many agencies and individuals contributed time, money and staff to make this event a success.
- Recap of the action items such as land owner outreach, public easements and land acquisition for possible purchase to the Exxon Valdez Trustees.
- One thought is to have a list of land owners with violations along the Kenai River. Another one was educating Real Estate Agencies about the rules and regulations that agencies have regarding properties along the Kenai River.
- Consideration of public easements along the Kenai River. This will be tabled until the River Use Committee has had time to review the easements.
- Exxon Valdez purchases recommendation are that the land is currently adjacent to State Park land or Kenai River. Property that has a habitat value. The process is ongoing.

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

- The committee discussed its concerns about getting information from the department of law on what direction the committee can take action on such as changing boating on the Kenai, guide limitation and public use limitation on the upper river.
- Discuss the changes on the river such as the fishery, the amount of use and impacts.
- On the upper river getting some of the boat count information updated. This should include the type of uses, such as boat sizes.

e. Legislative/Government Activities- No Report

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.

After discussion with Ben Ellis it was determined to extend the recruitment period for thirty days to get a larger pool of applicants. Current applications are due by May 31, 2016. Once the application period closes, interviews will be scheduled.

Once the recruitment closes the board will have the interviews and send the recommendations to the commissioner.

- 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.

- V. NEW BUSINESS**
- VI. CORRESPONDENCE**
- VII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

VIII. AJOURNMENT

- Matt Connors would like to see additional discussion about middle Kenai River issues and define what is crowding. How can these things are accomplished.
- Joe Connors-Variety of issues and thought and ideas need to change. People cannot just do what they want, when they want. We need to address these issues.
- Keith Baxter-Merchandising is very exciting news for Parks. Cashless and how it effect compliance is something new and great for the park. Legal obstacles of issue on the river and how progress can be made. Hope that the action items of the Habitat committee are seen through.
- Jeanne Swartz-Looking ahead moving on very difficult issue that we care enough about this resource to protect it in a way that is unprecedented in the state. It a tough thing to do and it is not the Alaska way.
- Dwight Kramer concerns of more use on the river, especially with the proposed pipeline and the increase in population in the area. This is going to put more pressure on the river. This is a big impact on the resource. Be flexible and caution of issue on the river. Quality of the experience on the Kenai favorable.
- Andrew Carmichael would like to protect the resources by using revenue to match the users. Education, maintenance and enforcement is the key.
- Monte Robert long overdue of the comprehensive management plan. Encourage compliance of all users. Two way communications is the key. Board development is well served to look at the fish and game advisory makeup and there is a wide range of users. This guide advisory committee is a large role in state parks operation. There are a lot of user groups impacted with change that may not have representative on the board.
- Brent Johnson believes the borough interest is in the fishery. Fishery promotes visitor which in turn bring in money to the area. More research is needed.
- Matt Kelley interested in learning. Definitely and impact the personnel fishery has and how we can reduce the impact. Protect the Kenai River and it is here in the future.
- Robert Begich probably scenarios are going to be the Kenai River. The most angler use on the Kenai in 2014, we are higher than in the 1990's. More use.
- Brandon Bornemann comprehensive plan need to be updated. There is a lot of data out there that is not getting to this board. How do we get this information? More progressive and more in tune to what science is doing.
- Ted Wellman Revision to the comprehensive plan is important.
- ED Fogels thank everyone for participating in the board and the plan does need to be updated.
- Ben Ellis thanked everyone for their work on the board. The comprehensive plan does need to be updated.



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