

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday, October 13, 2016
5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center
Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Ted Wellman, Andy Loranger, Dwight Kramer, Jeanne Swartz, Keith Baxter, Joe Connors, Ricky Gease, Brendan Shiflea, Bill Tappan, Brandon Bornemann, Joel Todd, Jack Blackwell, Marion Glaser and Matt Kelly
- B. **Minutes:** Approved as written
- C. **Agenda:** Ted Wellman added under old business the consideration of the sockeye stamp. The agenda was approved as amended.

II. **Public Comments Public Presentation:** Jeff Anderson from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave a brief overview about the organization and also a presentation about the Ninilchik Traditional Council test subsistence gill net in the Kenai River.

III. REPORTS

1. Agency and Government Reports:

a. State Parks

Jack Blackwell provided the board with the following report:

- All of the Parks docks have been removed for the 2016 season.
- Anne Nelson from the Department of Law visited the middle river with Ranger Jacques Kosto. They visited several sites on the middle river and were also able to make a brief visit to the Kasilof river boat retrieval site.
- On September 15, 2016 a meeting was held at the Funny River Community center by the group that is supporting developing a boat launch at the Hanson property. The meeting was attended by Representative Mike Chenault, Senator Peter Micciche, State Park superintendent Jack Blackwell and State Park ranger Jacques Kosto. Jack and Jacques attended the meeting to watch and listen to everyone's concerns. State Parks has completed the public process and it was determined that the property would not have a boat launch and would only receive bank restoration. There is a group of local land owners that are still interested in developing a boat launch in the area.
- Jack Blackwell met with the Department of Fish and Game access regarding proposed improvements at the Eagle Rock boat launch and parking area.

b. DEC-No Report

c. ADF&G –No report:

d. USF&WS- Andy Loranger provided the board members with the following report:

- The bank restoration and angler access project at the confluence of the Russian and Kenai River has all of the stairway accesses in place and most of the spruce tree revetment and vegetation work along the river is almost completed.
- There has been a considerable amount of heaving and shifting of the walkway at the Moose Meadows site on Keystone Drive. The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge currently has a contract out



Kenai Area Office, PO Box 1247, Soldotna, AK 99669, 907-262-5581
Kenai Peninsula Borough, 144 N. Binkley, Soldotna, AK 99669 907-262-4441
Gilman River Center 514 Funny River Road, Soldotna, AK 99669, 907-260-4882
Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Kenai Peninsula Borough



to develop a plan to repair those walkways. Work is anticipated to be completed by the 2017 season.

e. USFS/Chugach National Forest-Marion Glaser provided the board members with the following report:

- Marion is the new Russian River interagency coordinator.
- Jesse Lebinski is the new recreation staff officer for the Chugach National Forest. He will start on November 1, 2017.
- A draft of the 2016 Russian River Kenai River, Stream Watch end of season report summary is available for anyone to review. Also available for the operation plan for the 2017 interagency report for the Russian River. Electronic copies are also available.
- Water levels on the Russian River were approximately 3 to 4 inches higher than in the past several years. This was possible due to a really warm spring and summer with snow pack and glacier ice melting.
- Fish and Game did make the escapement goals for the 2016 season but the run was down approximately 10,000 fish than in the past. Less visitor counts were also reported, possibly due to fish being harder to catch.
- Bear reports were down from 200 in past years to 20 in 2016. This may be due to fewer visitors and less fish in the river.
- On the Chugach National Forest side there a few large projects. The first phase of the Russian River Campground is the switching of the entrance with the exit. This will eliminate traffic from crossing each other. They will also redesign the contact station and the second phase is to stabilize the area where the road is eroding down into the Kenai River near the entrance of the campground.
- The Chugach National Forest worked with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge with youth education and the Soul project that paired veterans with youth in the area.
- Emergency response drills were conducted at the Russian River Campground.
- Total Stream Watch volunteer hours for the 2016 season was 1200, with 2800 public contacts along the river and they collected 2400 pounds of trash and 75 pounds of fishing line that has been sent Berkley to be recycled.

f. City of Kenai – Matt Kelley provided the board with the following report:

- The City of Kenai is finishing the 2016 dip net report. The report will be presented to the Kenai Council in the next month or so. After that it will be brought the KRSMA board.

g. City of Soldotna- Joel Todd provided the board members with the following report.

- The City of Soldotna is waiting to pull out all of its stairway accesses along the river due to the latest raise in the water level from the Skilak Glacier Lake release. Many of the City park units will be closing down in the coming weeks.
- The new trail that connects the visitor center with Centennial Park keep visitor use on the trail and no new off trails have been established. Signage and fencing help to direct visitor to the new trail.

h. Kenai Peninsula Borough- No Report

2. Committee Reports

- a. President's Report-Ted Wellman asked that the response from the Department of Law to the five questions that were submitted by the board be sent prior to meeting with Ben Ellis and Anne Nelson . Ben Ellis has forwarded that request to the Department of Law.. Ted is hopeful that the board will received the response prior to the November's meeting.

- b. Guide Advisory –Monte Roberts provided the board with the following report: The guide advisory committee did meet and started a review of the Kenai River guide stipulations. The committee was able to get through 12 of the 28 stipulations with plenty of work ahead. Another meeting is planned to finish the review before the next KRSMA committee meeting.
- c. Habitat –Keith Baxter provided the board with the following report: The committee met on site at the Corr property on Poppy Lane adjacent to the college. This parcel includes approximately 150 acres with over 4,000 feet along the Kenai River. . The owner is interested in having this property being placed in conservation so the committee thought it would be a great property that may be eligible for EVOS Trustee Council funding. Another property that committee chair Keith Baxter look into this summer is the Mott property that is located upstream on Slikok Creek. The owner does not wish to have the area heavily develop for future use.
- d. River Use –Dwight Kramer provided the board members with the following report: The committee met today and discussed that without the information from the Department of Law they could not proceed with discussing any sort of limitations on the river. The committee decided to identify items they would like to focus on this winter. This is a very long list that will be narrowed down after the information from the Department of Law has been provided.
Some of the items included:
- Limitations on the upper river to reduce crowding, which may include limited days that non-guided user can fish.
 - Limiting the number of commercial operators on the lower river.
 - Developing regulations for small flotation devices on the Kenai River such as kayaks float tubes and stand up boards.
 - Provide more education about human waste on the river.
 - Illegal guiding concerns on the river.
 - Safety concern on certain areas of the river such as Pillars, where it narrows down.
 - Addressing the turbidity concerns from mile 5 to 17 on the Kenai River.
 - How to handle expansion of the personal use fishery. Developing regulations to keep users in the personal use fishery.
 - Looking at things differently considering the Kenai River Special Management Area plan and the Whitaker study. What do we want the Kenai River to look like in ten years?
 - Reviewing where we are at with the sockeye salmon stamp.
 - Inviting legislators to attend the KRSMA meeting or river use committee meetings?
- e. Legislative/Government Activities-No Report

IV. OLD BUSSINESS

- a. Sockeye Salmon Stamp-The KRSMA board has endorsed establishing a sockeye salmon stamp on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers to help increase revenue for the state. There were several surprises last winter when this bill was considered. One was that this stamp did not include the personnel use dip net fishery users. At that time the KRSMA board withdrew its support of the sockeye stamp and the bill was ultimately pulled from the legislature for consideration. Senator Peter Micciche said he was willing to work with the KRSMA board to address their concerns.

Ricky Gease stated that the revenue that was projected to be raised, including the dip net fishery, would have been \$2.7 million on the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers. But when the bill reached the legislature the personal use fishery was not included in the bill. Another aspect of the bill that was not well received was that the revenue was assigned to go back to the Department of Fish and Game and not any other state or local agencies. It was also asked that specific items be identified that the money would be used for from



the local agencies such as deferred maintenance for state parks. There has also been discussion about using the money to buy back set net site permits.

Joe Connors stated that the board has been in support of this for several years and that there is still opportunity to work with Senator Peter Micciche and the board leadership and get this in front of the legislature this session. It should be written the way the board originally had it written.

Dwight would like to have some people from the commercial fisheries representative at the table when the KRSMA board discussions continue.

Monte stated that maybe we should have two stamps such, an in river stamp and dips net permit. Ted Wellman recommends that we keep the stamp as one.

Ricky stated that there is no more capital budget without a matching budget from the federal agency. Bonding of some sort would help pay a bond that could be used for infrastructure needs. Combine Kenai and Kasilof for both resident and nonresidents. Maybe we should charge differential rates for the residents and nonresidents?

Jack Blackwell stated that there is a greater emphasis on making the Parks more self-sufficient as general funding decreases

Keith asked if we passed a resolution supporting this bill. Ted Wellman stated we did pass a resolution to support this bill. Keith asked is the board still in full support.

Ted Wellman asked the board if more information needed to move this bill forward. Dwight would like more information about the buyback program especially by in river users.

Ted Wellman asked the board if anyone objected to the board moving for with support of the Sockeye Salmon Stamp. No one objected.

Monte Roberts made a motion that we send this back to the legislative committee to work with the legislature to see if there is any way we can form this bill so the money does come back to State Parks and other local agencies.

Joe Connors seconds the motion.

Dwight recommends that the board have a work session with Senator Micciche to work out the details of this proposal. Ricky recommends that we wait until December after the election.

Jack recommended that each agency develop a list of infrastructure and operation needs that could be funded by a sockeye stamp and have this available in time for the November meeting.

Monte withdrew his motion

V. NEW BUSINESS:

- a.** Cooper Landing Bypass-Ted explained that the board voted that the Juneau Creek alternative was the route chosen by KRSMA board. The borough has proposed a resolution to ADOT that they reopen the options up for public comment and have asked the KRSMA board to support this resolution. Monte made a motion that Ted Wellman signs the letter as the president of the KRSMA board. Joe seconds the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
- b.** Election of Officers-Dwight Kramer made the motion to election Ted Wellman as president of the KRSMA Board.

Monte seconds the motion and Ricky proposed to close nominations. Monte seconds the motion. This motion passed unanimously. Ted Wellman nominated Joe Connors as the vice president. Bill Tappan seconds the motion. This motion passed unanimously.

- c. Limiting Public Use on the Kenai River-Dept. of Law's Response to KRSMA Board- This was postponed until the November meeting.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE: None

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT:

VIII. Board Comments

Keith Baxter floated the upper river with his family this summer and said it was a great experience

Joe Connors said that we should address use numbers on the river before they increase and not miss the opportunity before use increases if King salmon numbers go up.

Marion mentioned that visitor use numbers in the Chugach National Forest increased 7%.

Dwight agreed that we are missing an opportunity to limit guides and public on the Kenai. We need to make some long term planning.

Ricky commented that the Kenai Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Committee meeting is in Anchorage October 25th and on the 25th EPSCOR will be giving a presentation to the Board of Fish next week.

Monte disagrees with the River Use Committee's desire to limit guides on the lower Kenai River. Monte stated that limiting one section of the Kenai River is not the answer.

Brandon is in support of limiting guides.

Ted encouraged all board members to participate on committees.

