

# Seward State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

## Minutes

Wednesday, January 19, 2022 5:30-7:30 pm

Teleconference

### I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order:
- B. Minutes taker: Nick
- C. Roll Call: Bob Barnwell, Carol Griswold, Nick Jordan, Mark Luttrell, Paul Paquette, Cliff Reid, Kat Sorensen, Mica Van Buskirk
- D. Board members absent (excused): Tess Tulley
- E. State Park Staff: Superintendent Jack Blackwell, District Ranger Jack Ransom
- F. Public Present: none
- G. Minutes Approval for December 15, 2021: Motion Kat, second Mica, unanimous.
- H. Agenda Changes and Approval: Motion Paul, second Kat, discussion: Mark had questions about the action items' placement, resolved; unanimous.

### II. Public Comments: none

### III. Board Contact and Correspondence:

Kat reported Chamber has already sold 12 annual parking passes. A user said the Tonsina Trail has been awesome lately and nice to have for winter recreation.  
Nick talked to local residents about concerns regarding trapping in the area.

### IV. Reports:

#### A1. Staff Report: Jack Blackwell

KPB Emergency Director Brenda Ahlberg FEMA \$ be used for shelter? On going Purchase of front-end loader to assist with evacuation and plowing? On going Revenue and expenses for Seward and final fiscal year 2023 budget report:

Supporting documents were provided by email from Jack B.

- (1) Expenses totaled \$282,000
- (2) Revenue \$113,000 for calendar year 2021
  - (a) Caines Head \$17,000
  - (b) Tonsina \$26,000 (260 nights at \$100/night)
  - (c) Parking \$24,000
  - (d) Thumb Cove \$14,000
  - (e) Decision Point Prince William Sound \$11,500
  - (f) Commercial permits \$20,000, mostly water taxis

Discussion about budget: 50% of expenses covered by park fees which is remarkable. Legislative caps and fees used in budget. Parks are capped at what we can collect and spend, but can preload next year's budget if collect more than the cap. No budget increase allowed unless Fee Authority cap is raised. Vehicle rental tax is split between DOT and DNR parks.

Bob asked about collecting a fee from out-of-state visitors like cruise ships' passenger head tax for infrastructure like Kodiak State Parks.

Carol requested a list of deferred maintenance items that the Board could place on our Priorities and Goals. Mica asked about other lists; there are none. Vessels and motors are not budgeted or funded for replacement, an appropriation is required.

Q. Mica asked about mooring buoys which are a need like parking lots and their maintenance. A. This would be a new capital project, parks would have to guarantee maintenance which is difficult and failed previously. Q. She asked how the money is distributed such that Seward parks have no money to plow? A. Unlike the Kenai area where a plow truck is sufficient, Seward needs frequent plowing, including the weekends, with heavy equipment. None of the parks have adequate funding to maintain park system and the deferred maintenance backlog is significant.

Now until the end of May is a good time to make recommendations to the Director and Commissions as departments start working on next year's budget, which is released in December by the Governor's office. Mica will set up a Legislative Committee meeting with Bob and Jack Blackwell to further this discussion.

#### A2. Staff Report: Jack Ransom

Reported dead harbor seal on Tonsina Beach that was scavenged by eagles; NOAA notified.

Jack was able to get out to Tonsina a lot this past month. Steady use of cabins, many overnight PUC-user vehicles in parking lot, especially on west side.

Carol volunteered to print, laminate and post approved signs at LPSRS kiosks notifying park users that the annual parking permits are available at the Chamber. Staff agreed, but delete reference about funding going directly to Seward area parks.

Carol requested that a directional sign be placed at the intersection of Pinnacle View Rd and the driveway to the upper parking lot that says, "Tonsina Trailhead" as visitors miss it and end up in the lower parking lot. Jack R offered to locate a spare trail marker sign and get it installed.

#### A. Committee Reports

1. Local issues (except parking) (Nick): nothing to report

2. Mining (Cliff, Bob): Jack R: Anadromous stream permit has not yet been submitted by new miner Fritz. Jack R will contact Luck in the spring about the Argo and tent at the beach. He emailed David Sharron in Fairbanks but no response yet about mining issues:

If Luck pays fees, are his claims still legitimate?

Who staked federal claim before Luck's claim? Is federal permit legitimate?

Concerns about activities and user conflicts between a few miners and the majority of recreational users (100s daily in the summer) who hike, use PUCs, day use of beach and trails; miners' access to claims through Tonsina ILMA, abandoned equipment, junk, trash, fuel near salmon stream, ATV storage on park property, not paying mining fees, use of staff time, etc.

Nick researched the DNR website and verified that Fritz has all SIX claims, including the second camp above the cliffs and all the way down the South Fork.

3. Legislative Committee (Bob, Mica): Jack R will get Mica current and historic usage information. How can the committee work with the Borough Mayor and Legislators to secure more funding?

4. Bylaws Committee (Carol and Mark): Kachemak Bay State Parks Citizen Advisory Board will vote on adoption at their meeting on Feb 9. Jack B thanked committee for

partnering with KBay CAB and found the revision helpful with no major red flags from the Director.

## **V. Old Business:**

1. ADFG Advisory Board “No Salmon Fishing signs” for Tonsina N and S Fork bridges (Cliff): Still no response. This item was removed from future agendas; Cliff will update if there is news.

2. Parking issue update: This is such an important issue, the Board agreed to create a new Parking Access Committee. Discussion:

- a) what is the best format to ensure a public process and public engagement
- b) include a long-range tourism plan for community
- c) engage LPSRS, Lowell Point Community Council, gather ideas and vet alternatives with the community. Reference Carol’s September 2021 options summary.
- d) present recommendations to CAB, State Parks staff, and then to public

Jack B noted that trails and access are similar issues in KBay state parks.

Paul asked about an RFP to partner with businesses to provide a shuttle to LPSRS with a 30-passenger van and tour guide to help reduce the impact on parking; this could happen right now if there was demand, but it would take staff time. Mica noted this has been tried but failed as nobody bought into a shuttle or off-site parking.

Jack R noted the wetlands are described but not catalogued by USFWS. Mark said a wetland is described as habitat where water saturates the soil and aquatic species are present. He wondered if an outdated map from 1977 was being used. Carol stated she believes the lower parking lot area fits the description of a wetlands.

Jack B stated the USACE has more authority than BLM which holds the easement. He noted Mica is correct that the protection of the conservation easement has latitude in regards to safety. He recommended minimally filling in the wetlands to provide more parking.

Mica will put this topic on the agenda for the LPCC meeting on January 20. LPCC has discussed parking and access for many years and has had a huge public process involving 50 community attendees. She noted that it was a LPCC action item to get her on the CAB Board to help connect LPCC with CAB. The Federal Lands Access Grant for Lowell Point Road improvements is due soon; parking must not be a detriment to the safety of the LP community.

Mica will ask for a formal commitment from LPCC to works towards getting permits and get the parking area plan moving forward; she will report at the next CAB meeting. Mark suggested deferring to the Council. Mica will also set up a date and time to meet with Jack B in the next few weeks. Jack B emphasized that an open public process is important.

## **VI. New Business:**

1. Latrine donation for South Beach (Cliff): last fall, a Seward area builder volunteered to build a latrine for time and materials. Cliff will meet with Jack R to discuss this opportunity and create a contract for clarity and transparency.

2. Discuss termination of Local Issues Committee as it has evolved into Parking Issues. Board decided to continue with this committee.
3. Discuss creation of new committee to research adding all lands between the existing CHSRA and the Kenai Fjords National Park to the state park area. Jack B affirmed that the Kenai Area Plan for how state land is managed recommends this land connection and addition to State Parks.\* KAP also recommends expanding state parks from Fourth of July Beach to Humpy Cove. He noted that this is a significant area that includes most of the viewshed south of Seward. The state supports adding Tonsina Creek watershed through an ILMA (Interagency Land Management Agreements). Carol moved to create a Park Expansion Committee, Mark second. Unanimous. Carol will research and present information.
4. Discuss creation of a new committee to pursue "Friends of Seward Area State Parks." Board wishes to help preserve this objective, either with a separate 501(c)3 or with another organization. Discussion of the amount of work to administer the organization and maintain records, and the limited number of already busy volunteers. Friends of KBay would be a good contact for more information, and RBCA a potential partner. Bob is interested but needs time to consider. Committee idea postponed to next meeting.
5. CAB Resolution opposing Kachemak Bay State Park land swap with Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, (Carol): discussion and possible letter of support to protect state park land. Jack B said Alaska State Parks are over 50 years old and the hatchery was developed after the park was established, back when the state had no experience with this activity. In the last 50 years, case law decisions by the Alaska Supreme Court have provided guidance for activities in state parks. A hatchery like this would never be authorized now. However, DNR is not opposed to hatcheries; the Prince William Sound hatchery is authorized by statute to be in the park. Representative Vance and DNR staff proposed HR52 to carve out the Lagoon from the park and reclassify it as general state land, then change the boundary on the north side of the park and add land to the park legislatively to resolve the hatchery issue in Kachemak Bay State Park. This issue surfaced 7 years ago during the revision of the Kachemak Bay State Park Management Plan. The Plan notes the hatchery permit expires in 11 years and says the hatchery will be phased out over time.  
KBay CAB has passed a resolution opposing the carve-out and land swap. Bob noted he is a new member of the CIAA Board but wondered why an inholding would be phased out. He said this is a hot-button issue, and has talked to KBay CAB Chair Robert Archibald. There is a great letter in AND today. He would need all the facts before supporting KBay CAB's stance. Jack B said a presentation was possible if the Board wanted to learn more. Carol noted HB52 sets a precedent, where state parks are not protected. Board declined to proceed at this time.
6. Trapping in Tonsina and adjacent state lands (Carol): A recent dog death by trapping near a local USFS trail has once again upset trail users and generated concern about trapping in our state park, especially along Tonsina Trail. She will seek clarification of the regulations and report back.

**VII. Public Comments:** none

**VIII. Adjournment**

A. Board Comments:

Mark liked Jack B's offer to provide a brief summary of the Tutka Bay Hatchery Issues from the state parks' perspective.

Mark noted vehicle tire tracks on Lowell Point SRS beach 10 days ago. Jack R said the barrier rocks are exposed then buried by the tides. He needs a skid steer to raise them up as part of parking lot maintenance. Soldotna crew could bring an F450 and skid steer. We should push for this piece of equipment and secure storage in town.

Carol really appreciates the Jordan family taking the time to decorate a little spruce tree at LPSRS every year with the tinkling bells and cheery ornaments.

Carol received her Annual Parking Pass and has suggestions for next year's Pass receipt. Receipt says, "Kenai Region" instead of "Kenai Peninsula." It's not all about Kenai; it's Seward, and Homer, and Soldotna, Cook Inlet, etc. This receipt, given to known park supporters, is a great place to say, "Thank you for supporting YOUR state parks", and encourage further support, etc. Instead it says, rather draconically, "You may be subject to a fine if your decal is not properly affixed per instructions..."

B. Date/Location of next meeting: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 5:30 pm. TBA

C. Adjournment: Motion Cliff, second Mica, unanimous at 7:42 pm.

*\*Note: The DPOR Caines Head State Recreation Area Management Plan (1996) recommends that all lands between the existing recreation area and the Kenai Fjords National Park be added to the state park area.*

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/areaplans/kenai/pdfs/chap\\_3\\_region\\_3.pdf](http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/areaplans/kenai/pdfs/chap_3_region_3.pdf)

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