

Seward State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes

Wednesday, March 16, 2022 5:30-7:30 pm

Teleconference

I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order: 5:52 pm
- B. Minutes taker: Tess Tulley
- C. Roll Call: Carol Griswold, Nick Jordan, Mark Luttrell, Paul Paquette, Cliff Reid, Tess Tulley, Mica Van Buskirk
- D. Board members absent: Bob Barnwell, Kat Sorensen
- E. State Park Staff: Superintendent Jack Blackwell, District Ranger Jack Ransom
- F. Public Present: Karl Van Buskirk
- G. Minutes Approval for January 19, 2022: Mica moved, Nick second, unanimous
- H. Minutes Approval for February 17, 2022: Paul moved, Mica second, unanimous
- I. Agenda Approval: Mica moved, Paul second, unanimous

II. Public Comments: Karl noted a medical search and rescue response on Saturday in which a woman slipped out of her ice cleats on the icy Tonsina Trail switchback, fell 8', hit a tree and suffered a broken collarbone and contusions. There were issues with emergency response access through the gate which was buried in snow. Bear Creek Volunteer Fire Department responded with a pickup and enclosed trailer, but could not get past the gate. Fortunately, she was able to walk out herself though in a lot of pain. The worst part of the whole situation was the painful ride from the trailhead to the hospital along Lowell Point Road. The road was in terrible shape and took 30-40 minutes due to the lack of maintenance, rough road and numerous potholes. Karl stressed the need for continual maintenance of Lowell Point Road and is looking for more support for planned maintenance in the future. He has noticed an increase in visitor and traffic over the past few weeks. Cole Peterson, of the BCVFD and Borough road grader contractor, graded the road twice on Sunday/Monday, and today, but it just doesn't last. The trail gets a lot of use, even in winter, and access issues need to be cleaned up.

III. Board Contact and Correspondence: Nick called city public works twice about terrible road conditions and emergency access. Carol talked to a kayaker who had stayed at the Callisto Canyon PUC over the weekend; he noted the creek wasn't flowing, (yet). He wondered why the Tonsina PUC was built so close to the water; Carol told him it wasn't but oceanside erosion has accelerated and it needs to be moved.

IV. Reports:

A. Staff Reports

A1 Jack Blackwell:

Jack asked the Board to provide recommendations for special projects by the end of May for Fiscal Year 2024. This would give the Director time to prepare for the budget cycle in December. The Legislature is working on FY 2023 budget now; currently there is \$1 million in the parks budget. It includes snow removal at Lowell Point parking lot; he is working with Jack R for a cost estimate.

Lowell Point Parking meeting was clarified for Thursday, March 24. There is no money for Parks to create graphics as that is capital money; he appreciated Carol's

graphics of one-way traffic flow ideas and expanded parking lot design. Mica will share the engineer's draft of a one-way parking lot idea that was sent out in November for consideration at the meeting. Suggestions provided by the public at the meeting should be reviewed by CAB, then recommendations presented to State Parks. Kachemak Bay CAB is going through a similar parking issue resolution process.

A2 Jack Ransom:

As the proposed parking lot expansion is in a BLM Conservation Easement, the first step is a wetland delineation study/report to determine the viability of the ecosystem in the proposed area. This requires funding. BLM would evaluate the proposal if approved, and refer it to the US Army Corps of Engineers. If the fill is less than 1/10th of an acre, then the process is more streamlined. If the area filled is larger, it may be more complicated. The permitting process would need to be reviewed by agencies including ADFG, BLM, USACE, and the Borough.

Park Specialist Mike Burmeister is back, working on filling summer crew and camp host positions. He needed to ask for a trail grant extension and is moving forward with CHSRA work.

A volunteer has stepped up to open up and clean the trailhead latrines, at least until the campground host arrives.

More trees have fallen and more of the bank has eroded at the Tonsina PUC. An East Coast youth group of 12, interested in climate change impacts, is coming in April for a service project, hopefully to help build earth stairs up to the PUC from the latrine and an alternate path for use during high tides. Mica suggested riprap to protect the bank; Jack B said it was not recommended as it is not effective for bank stabilization and requires a lot of costly maintenance. It's cheaper to move the cabin; it would be helpful for the Board to support this in the FY 2024 budget list of priorities and recommendations for staff.

B. Committee Reports

1. Local issues (except parking) (Nick): Winter response and rescue is very difficult due to lack of access. Snowmachine access is not possible, only by foot to the top of the switchback or by boat or helicopter at the beach. The Park's Rokon/moto-tractor can access the victim, but not much else. A warning sign about the icy trail has been posted.

2. Parking Access (Mica, Paul, Nick): Carol's article about the issue and March 24 telephonic public meeting was published in Seward Journal 3-9-22 with two subsequent reminders. Cliff will post on Facebook Seward Daily Trail Report. Jack B noted the meeting will be held on the Teams State Platform. He encouraged the Board to download the application and join the video option so that screens and graphics can be shared.

3. Mining (Cliff, Bob): DMLW Division Mining Sections Chief Steve Buckley will attend April 20 telephonic meeting. Carol will compile a summary prior to the meeting for the Board and Steve to review.

4. Legislative Committee (Bob, Mica): Mica talked to Senate President Micciche and had a long conversation with Representative Carpenter about state parks budget issues, and the fact that regular road maintenance used to be funded.

5. Bylaws Committee (Carol and Mark): Bylaws still have to be approved by the

Kachemak Bay CAB at their April meeting, but no changes are expected. Mark moved for approval and Mica seconded, unanimous. Jack B noted that after the Bylaws are adopted, the Board terms will be restructured to conform.

6. Park Expansion Committee (Carol): The Kenai Area Plan supports expansion of State Park management to include Tonsina watershed and Fourth of July Beach south. ILMAs cannot be stacked, but Jack B noted that the Tonsina ILMA is not the full 640 acres. He will get the exact number of acres used to the Board. Legislative designation is preferred and requires an extensive public process.

V. Old Business:

1. Explore creation of Friends of Seward Area State Parks (Bob): move to April.

VI. New Business:

1. Trapping and Hunting in Seward Area State Parks and adjacent state land (Carol): Trapping and hunting are allowed year-round in some form. Trappers can shoot a lethal weapon with a trapping license within limitations. Marmot, red squirrels, and snowshoe hares can be trapped or shot without limit any time of year. The draft regulations for state parks reduce discharge of firearms from 1/2 mile to 1/4 mile from developed facilities (cabins, parking lot, picnic shelter, campground, bridges, trails excluded). Cliff felt banning trapping would be a hard fight and noted despite tremendous support for a 50-yard trap setback on designated multiuse trails in Mat-Su, the Alaska Board of Game voted it down 0-7. Mark pointed out the Board of Game is composed of trappers, hunters, and guides who are against any restrictions to trapping.

2. Draft letter to Governor re: regulation changes (Carol): The Director did not respond to the previous letter requesting that the comment period be reopened as this CAB was not informed. This draft letter expressed concerns about allowing bicycles on Seward area state park beaches, hunting, and trapping in our area state parks. Nancy Lake State Park prohibits trapping around PUCs. Blackwell clarified that the regulations do not affect the right to carry firearms. Commercial operators may not be permitted to use fat bikes on beaches here, if that issue arises. It's important to be proactive to protect park resources. It was unclear how offenses would be addressed. After much discussion, the Board declined to support the letter.

3. Discussion of installing pet waste disposal stations at LPSRS (Carol): Jack R said there already is one in the upper parking lot area, but still there are bags of poop left everywhere. He has another one and plans to install it this summer by the beach after consolidating the numerous signs onto one 6x6 post. Nick noted a need for a pet waste disposal station by the Tonsina Trail gate.

VII. Public Comments: none

VIII. Adjournment

- A. Board Comments: Mica wondered about adding a new Board member; the next available term expiration is in June, though the term restructuring might make other seats available.

- B. Date/Location of next meeting: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 at 5:30 pm. TBA

C. Cliff moved to adjourn, Mica second, unanimous at 7:37 pm.