

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday, January 12, 2017
5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center
Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Keith Baxter, William Tappan, Dwight Kramer, Monte Roberts, Ted Wellman, Branden Bornemann, Andrew Carmichael, Matt Kelly, Matt Connors, Brian Marston, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.
- B. **Minutes:** Approved as written.
- C. **Agenda:** Ted Wellman added under New Business C. Habitat Resolution 2017-01. The agenda was approved as amended.

II. Public Comments: No Comments

III. REPORTS

1. Agency and Government Reports:

a. State Parks

Jack Blackwell provided the board with the following report:

- Jack welcomed Brian Marston, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Area Sportfish biologist as a new member to the Kenai River Special Management Area Board.
- The Governor's 2018 proposed budget has been released. The current proposed budget does not have a direct impact on the Kenai Area State Parks, but we will see a reduction in the following areas. Northern Area: positions eliminated total: \$328,400.00, 2 Park Specialist, Maintenance Generalist, Sub Journey II, Long Term Non Perm and (7) ACC positions. The Office of History and Archeology, will be reduced uncollectable Federal Receipts \$100,000 in travel. Also included in the reductions in the Capital budget is to the Recreational Trails Program. Reduction of \$50,000 in General Funds to administer the program. This will be absorbed throughout the division.
- No other Parks capital projects are listed for FY18. This directly affects how we maintain our facilities.
- There is also a proposed funding swap that would move \$500,000 from general funds to program receipts.
- Jack also said that Parks now has the authority to sell merchandise. There wasn't any funding appropriated with this recent authorization, but Parks was able to develop some state park merchandise which is available on-line. The on-line store can be found at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/>.
- Ranger Don Barber who worked on the Upper Kenai River has retired after 33 years with the department. Parks is currently working on filling that position.
- The Corr family has express interest about selling their property to the state for habitat protection.

b. DEC-Jeanne Swartz provided the board member's with the following report:

- DEC has engaged a short term contractor to assist DEC with the finalization on the turbidity determination on the Lower Kenai River. The contractor will be going through the document and adding their comments and expertise to the document. The goal is to provide DEC with a revision so that they may develop a final document to be out for the public. The company reviewing the document is Geo Syntac in Anchorage.



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Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Kenai Peninsula Borough



- c. ADF&G –Brian Marston provided the board with the following report.
 - Brain is excited about currently working on the board and just started with the Department on the Kenai Peninsula as of January 2017.
 - Brain is currently working on the currently Area Management Report which will be published for the board in February.
 - Fish and Game are working on comments for the Board of Fish proposals. The comments will be available in February.
 - A change to the escapement goals of King salmon on the Kenai will mainly focus on large fish. This would focus on all fish 34 inches or larger instead of all sizes. The reason behind this is that when you are counting Kings it is often mistaken that a fish smaller than 34 inches could be a sockeye.

- d. USF&WS- Matt Connor provided the board members with the following report:
 - The bank restoration and stairways projects at the Russian River are completed and now the wooden fence is slated to be completed in 2017. The Refuge is asking for any partnering groups that would like to help as there are several holes that need to be dug for the post. Contact Matt Connor for more information.
 - The Refuge is currently moving forward to get design and cost estimates for the repair of the Moose Range Meadows platforms and stairways.
 - The agency just finished putting out a bid for proposals for managing the Sportsman’s and ferry area on the upper river. This is a special use permit as a competitive use area and the permit will be issued for five years with a five year extension. This new process would allow the money to be collected and a portion would be allocated back to the Refuge here on the Kenai. The Refuge is able to save this money for larger projects and does not need to spend it by the end of the fiscal year.
 - This is also the year for all the guides to submit their proposal for the competitive use permits on the Upper Kenai River. This proposal includes 19 fishing guides, 4-class A and 5- class B scenic permits. The process will begin on February 1 and run through August 1.

- e. USFS/Chugach National Forest - No Report

- f. City of Kenai – Matt Kelley provided the board with the following report:
 - The City of Kenai hired Paul Ostrander as their new manager. Paul hopes to come to one of the KRSMA meetings in the future.
 - Integrity Survey is working with the City of Kenai to vacate the section line easement on old Cannery Road. They are also continuing to work on the ROW that is partially owned by the City of Kenai and DNR. This would join all the parcels together into one larger parcel. This would close the existing access to the beach and the public would then use the new road.

- g. City of Soldotna- Andrew Carmichael provided the board members with the following report.
 - The city is currently getting ready to install 600 feet of new trail at Centennial Camp Site that will be considered the back loop to the already existing trail. The purpose of this new loop is to help keep public off the main entrance road to the park.
 - The design to place two or three sets of large stairways down to the Kenai River on the lower portion of the Swiftwater Use area. Is being developed. This is to provide more access down to the fishery and to keep public off the vegetated areas along the river.

- h. Kenai Peninsula Borough- No Report

2. Committee Reports

- a. President’s Report-

- b. Guide Advisory –Monte Roberts provided the board members with the following report:
- The committee reviewed the commercial operator’s stipulations for fishing guides on the Kenai River. The committee approved the amendments and changes that were previously made. This process will continue to be worked on in the future.
 - It was also discussed to develop a memorandum of understanding with the guides about the process for addressing violation suspensions on the river.
- c. Habitat –Keith Baxter provided the board members with the following report:
- The committee discussed the existing habitat plans that area available. It was determined that the committee will discuss each of the following plans in future meetings: Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership Strategic and Freshwater Conservation Action Planning; Kenai Mountains to Sea Strategic Plan and The Cook Inlet Keeper Stream Temperature Action Plan. . Keith sent the information about these plans to everyone via email.
 - 2017 priorities were discussed. The two identified were on going education to land owners along the river and to identify Kenai River friendly habitat measured for river bank closures.
 - Another outreach project for the committee is for the agencies at the River Center to reach out to the real estate association and give a presentation of how each agency managed areas along the river. Keith has contacted the association and will work with the agencies to help make this happen.
- d. River Use –Dwight Kramer provided the board members with the following report:
- Boating Accident / Injury Report: Jack provided us with a boating accident and injury report that covered the last few years. In reviewing the report from various agencies and municipalities it became obvious that work needs to be done to improve reporting procedures and coordination with agencies along the river. Jack mentioned that he would bring it forward to the other agencies when they hold their annual preseason meeting. We asked Jack if he thought a resolution from the KRSMA Board might be in order to further this effort and he agreed that it would help. We will be working on a draft resolution at the next River Use Comm. meeting to accomplish this task. The resolution will deal with determining better ways to collect, consolidate and coordinate accident / injury reporting between the various agencies who collect such data on the Kenai River.
 - Small Watercraft Safety Discussion: During our November meeting several member expressed their concerns regarding increased use of smaller watercraft on the Kenai River and safety issues. At that time we decided to discuss it further so I invited people associated with the Peninsula Kayaking and Canoeing organization to attend and provide input about their recreational activities on the river. About 7 – 8 kayak and canoeing enthusiasts attended the meeting and participated. The discussions centered on safety issues for the various types of small watercrafts we are seeing on the river these days. Everyone seemed to welcome the discussion and information exchange. Matt Connor, from USF&W, suggested that the group may want to engage in a kayaking and canoeing safety seminar during the agencies preseason event. They agreed that it would be something they would be interested in and will work with him on follow up.
 - Turbidity: Jeanne Swartz provided the committee with an overview of where DEC is with the turbidity report. At this point, the agency has hired a private contractor to review the turbidity information and data. Jeanne estimated the results should be back to DEC within the next couple of months and then DEC will determine what direction they will take on the turbidity issue.
- e. Legislative/Government Activities- No Report

IV. OLD BUSSINESS

V. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Cooper Landing Bypass- Ricky Gease, Ted Wellman and Joe Connors had a discussion about the meeting that was held on December 21, 2016. The Juneau Creek Route was the overwhelming preferred alternative based on public feedback. It was also asked if all necessary permits were in hand for the G south route, such as all necessary permits for the proposed new bridge across the Kenai River, which they have not. It was strongly recommended that the board and the public weigh in on this matter. A strategy needs to be developed and the president Ted Wellman has determined a special committee of the KRSMA board needs to be developed. Joe Connors has



volunteered to chair the committee. Ricky Gease, Bill Tappan, Ted Wellman, Monte Roberts, Matt Kelley and any agencies such as State Parks, Kenai Peninsula Borough, and Fish and Game to develop a strategy to send DOT message that Juneau Creek Route is the overwhelming preferred alternative.

- b. Advisory Board Recruitment-Jack reported that there are three members who board appointments expire on June 30, 2017. Recruitment is currently open until March 30, 2017.
- c. Habitat Resolution- The board reviewed the following resolution. Resolution 2017-01 is from the Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board requesting Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Department of Natural Resources to add a sunset clause to a proposed regulation for habitat protection.

WHEREAS, the area downstream of the Warren Ames bridge has suffered extensive habitat damage from dip net fishing in the personal use fishery; and

WHEREAS, the ADF&G has proposed to close that area due to habitat damage through a Board of Fish Proposal; and

WHEREAS, the DNR has sought and received a grant from the Exxon Valdez Council to restore the habitat damage in 2019;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Kenai River Special Management Area Board recommends to DNR and ADF&G that any regulation adopted to close the area be subject to a three year sunset clause.

Bill Tappan motion to approve Resolution 2017-1, Keith Baxter seconds the motion.

Andrew Carmichael opposed the motion. The rest of the board moved to approve the motion.

The motion passed.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE: None

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

VIII. AJOURNMENT Matt Connors commented that the February 9, 2017 meeting will be held the Kenai Wildlife Refuge. Brandon thanks all the users that participated in the committee meetings.