

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board
***** Meeting Minutes*****

Thursday, September 14, 2017
5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center
514 Funny River Rd., Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Keith Baxter, William Tappan, Joe Connors, Ted Wellman, Lisa Gabriel, Andrew Carmichael, Andy Loranger, Marion Glaser (via phone), Brian Marston, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.
- B. **Minutes:** Approved as written.
- C. **Agenda:** Approved as written
- D. **Public Comment/Presentation:** Jeanne Swartz from the Department of Environmental Conservation gave a presentation on the Clean Water Act requirements for states to issue biannual waterbody health reports to EPA, DEC's current Integrated Report status, DEC's options regarding the Integrated Report actions and impaired waterbody remediation remedies.

II. REPORTS

1. Agency and Government Reports:

a. State Parks

Jack Blackwell provided the board with the following report:

- Jack welcomed Glen Arundell and Mike Frost to the board as new members and Ricky Gease and Monte Roberts were re-appointed. KRSMA now has a full board with all positions filled.
- Commissioner Andy Mack has appointed Ethan Tyler as the new director of State Parks. Ethan background is in tourism and he was an economist with the State before coming to parks.
- The Eagle Rock boat launch construction work is slated to start in fall of 2017. This includes a double launch, parking and road improvements, and a walkway along the river.
- The new Bing's Backline day use area was completed in June. These improvements included a parking area, trail and stairways down to the river. This help to eliminate conflict in the adjacent subdivision with parking along the roads on Rapids Avenue.
- State Parks has their first credit card machine at the Bing's Landing say use area. This tends to increase compliance for parking fees by 30%.
- The new Bing's Landing floating dock was installed in June. There has been very positive feedback.
- Anne Nelson the lead attorney was on the Kenai River looking at sites in the middle Kenai River in June.
- Jack introduced Melisa Smith the park ranger for the middle river.
- Jack spent some time with the Commissioner and Director in August on the Kenai River. This was a great opportunity to introduce them both to the area.
- Discussions continue with the Corr family about possibly selling their property to the EVOS Trustee Council for conservation purposes.



- A boating accident occurred on the Kenai in August that ended in a death of the boat operator. Jack complimented state park staff and everyone involved in the coordination in the search for the missing boater.
 - Rangers have had a busy summer and there are a few high-profile cases. One involves an illegal guide that was reported by several users on the river. This illegal guide has been charged with several counts of illegal guiding and the case is currently on going.
 - The Dow Island Habitat violation is moving forward and park staff is working with the Department of Law at this time.
 - Commissioner Andy Mack has asked that the Kasilof boat retrieval project resume the planning phase of this project.
- b. DEC-Jeanne Swartz-No Report
- c. ADF&G-Brian Marston provided the board with the following report:
- Attached is the following the table that summarizes the Kenai River Sockeye and King Salmon run for the Kenai River.
 - The Russian River weir has been removed so all project are out of the water for the summer season.
- d. USF&WS-Andy Loranger provided the board members with the following report:
- The Refuge had a very busy summer season. Tourism numbers appear to be up this year.
 - Selection and issuance process for the commercial operator permits on the upper Kenai River has been on going. The application period is now closed and is currently in the first stage of the process. The selection committee have been sending requests for reference for the application that have been received. Formal review will happen in the coming weeks and the ranking will occur and decision will be made by December.
 - The subsistence gillnet was in operation during the month of July to mid-August in the middle Kenai River. Approximately 2200 sockeye and a very small number if any King salmon were captured. There was a theft of some equipment toward the end of the season that prohibit them to complete the fishing season.
 - The project across from the Russian River ferry has been completed.
- e. USFS/Chugach National Forest – Marion Glaser provided the board with the following report:
- The USFS is wrapping up projects from the summer.
 - Many employees have assisted with forest fires out of state.
 - The trails crew has been cleaning tree blow-down on the Russian Lakes and Resurrection Pass Trail following a windstorm on 8/30.
 - The trail improvement project at the Russian River from Access Pt 32 to the canyon looks great. The social trail was stabilized with gravel and erosion matting. Handrails were also added to deter the public from trampling stream banks.
 - Average water levels on the Russian River were low this summer. This provided good fishing during the first run, and lots of work for the USFS techs and Kenaitze/CIRI Fish Crew. At the peak of the run, the Kenaitze Fish techs were removing over 1,000 carcasses per day.
 - ADF&G escapement goals for early and late run sockeye salmon were met this year for both runs.

- There was high bear activity on the Kenai and Russian Rivers throughout the summer. Several bears were present in the area for weeks at a time and became human habituated and food conditioned prompting heightened management response. This included stricter enforcement of food storage regulations, as well as increased monitoring and signage.
 - Overall, the techs collected ~200 bear reports from the summer. This is similar to many other years with average bear activity. Most of the reports were collected from Guardrail Hole managed by the FWS.
 - There were no injuries to humans caused by bears this summer. There was damage to a tent that occurred in May, prior to the start of the fishing season.
 - Stream Watch was active in the KRCC all summer and worked closely with agency crews to educate the public, pick up litter, and assist with the habitat fencing.
 - The Stream Watch MOU as well as the Service First Agreement between the USFS and the FWS have both been updated and will be effective for the next 5 years.
 - The Chugach National Forest is working on a new Interpretive Plan for the Kenai-Russian River Area as well as several other areas on the forest.
- f. City of Kenai – Lisa Gabriel provided the board with the following report:
- For the first day of the Silver Salmon derby 44 fish were entered in for the magic weight drawing.
 - The bluff erosion project in Old Town Kenai is moving forward and the decision document should be available by spring. This will help in determining the scope of the project.
 - This was an uneventful dipnet season which appeared to be down from last. The annual report will be out soon.
- g. City of Soldotna – Andrew Carmichael provided the board with the following report:
- The 2017 summer season was flat for the city of Soldotna and was down approximately 1% from last year.
 - The 600 feet of boardwalk was completed within the Centennial park. Two or three new sets of stairways are proposed at Swiftwater in an area that has unimproved access. The property on West Redoubt will also be looked at for improvement for the 2018 summer season.
 - The City of Soldotna had 10 to 15 bear reports which included one at Rotary Park that closed the area for about 22 hours to allow the bears to move along.
- h. Kenai Peninsula Borough- No Report

2. Committee Reports

- a. President's Report-Ted Wellman provided the board with the following report:
- Ted copy of a letter that was written to Ethan Tyler from the board. (attached to the minutes) Ted and Joe Connors had a meeting with Commissioner Mack, Acting Deputy Commissioner Masterman and Director Tyler. It covers many of the items of concerns that the board has over the last few years. One major concern Ted discussed is that the board has difficulty in getting issues resolved. This appears to be a problem with the office in Anchorage. They covered several items and spent about an hour and a half with them. Ted felt the commissioners were very responsive but talk is cheap and actions are tougher. Ted hopes that they have a good dialog and hope to continue this in the future.



Joe said he agreed with Ted assessment and felt this was a very good meeting.

Ted also reminded all board members that next meeting is election for president and vice president. Also, all board members need to consider what committee they would like to be on and possible chair for the 2017-2018 board session.

- b. Guide Advisory –No Report
- c. Habitat –No Report
- d. River Use –No Report
- e. Legislative/Government Activities-No Report
- f. Board Development-No Report
- g. Agenda/Board Structure/Housekeeping-No Report

III. OLD BUSINESS

- a. The Kenai River Silver Salmon Derby-Jack Blackwell reported that the permit was issued for this derby according to the Kenai River Special Management Plan. The derby is scheduled for September 13 through the 17, 2017. Joe complimented how the organizers of this derby listen to input from the board.
- b. Eagle Rock Boat Launch Update-Construction of this project will include double wide boat launch, walkways, floating dock and additional parking. Work may begin as soon as this fall.
- c. Spur Highway improvements – This may start as soon as this fall on the Spur highway between Kenai and Soldotna. The overflow parking in the right of way across from Eagle Rock road will not be available in 2018.
- d. Cooper Landing Bypass-The decision may be reconsidered due to the letters that were sent the Department of Interior by the Governor and our congressional delegation. ADOT has not issued any change or reconsideration documents at this time.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Morgan's Landing Trail Improvement Grant Application Letter of Support-Ranger Melissa Smith is asking for a letter of support from the KRSMA board for the Recreational Grant application that will be submitted for the for a portion of the trail along the river that is heavily used by fisherman. It is a wet and soft area that needs improvement and it is approximately 7/10 of a mile. The cost is about \$35,000 for the upgrades. This may also include extending this trail along the river that would create a loop for the summer but also be used as a ski trail in the winter. Federal dollars that come to the state. Some funding is used for Parks and the rest is used for the other agencies such as non-profits. Joe moves that the board write a letter. Keith seconds that motion. It is passed unanimously.
- b. Management Plan Revision-Jack reported the management plan goes back to 1997. The state planners work on one state park management plan a year and they are currently working on the Kachemak Bay Management plan. Currently at this time the next plan has not been identified for revision.

- V. CORRESPONDENCE-None**
- VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:**
- VII. BOARD MEMBERS COMMENT**
- VIII. AJOURNMENT**