

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday, October 11, 2018

5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center

514 Funny River Rd., Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, William Tappan, Ted Wellman, Lisa Gabriel, Ron Rogalsky, Jeff Dolifka, Mike Frost, Andrew Carmichael, Brent Hibbert, Andy Loranger, Jenny Gates, Francisco Sanchez, Monte Roberts, Jeanne Swartz and Jack Blackwell.
- B. **Minutes:** Minutes were amended under agency reports f. City of Kenai to change the biggest fish to the mystery weight. Also under committee reports b. guide advisory committee having a king stamp was changed to tell them they need a valid king stamp.

Minutes were approved as amended.

- C. **Agenda:** Agenda was approved.

- D. **Public Comment/Presentation:** Dwight Kramer recommended implementing mandatory wearing of Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) on the Kenai River. This needs to be moved into a regulation. The board needs to pursue this recommendation and ask that an emergency order be put into place for mandatory PFDs until the regulations is passed.

1. Agency and Government Reports:

- a. State Parks-Jack Blackwell provided the board with the following report:

- Jack welcomed the newest board member Jeff Dolifka to the board.
- The Bing's Landing floating dock was removed today so all state park docks are out of the river.
- In the 2017 case of an illegal fishing guide on the Kenai River, there has been a conviction and sentencing hearing. The illegal guide was convicted of seven charges and five were Class A Misdemeanors. Charges ranged from operating an unpermitted guide vessel, sport fishing without an Alaska Department of Fish and Game license, guiding without a State Park Commercial Operator permit and aiding of three individual clients. The results of the sentencing consisted of a \$35,000 dollar fine, 10 days in jail, the seizure of all boat and gear, and he is not able to fish with clients for one year. State Park staff will receive that boat, motor and trailer.
- Park Ranger Melissa Smith has worked with crews to build 400 feet of elevated light penetrating walkway at the Morgan Landings Day Use area. This is a great improvement from the muddy trail that was there.
- There were three citations issued to Kenai river Guides. This is down significantly from previous years. Some years there were as many as 12 or so citations.
- There is a new interpretive and informational panel that will be installed at Eagle Rock. It explains about how to fish with a legally registered guide and what you need to look for to make that determination.



- There will be four new electronic fee/credit card pay stations in Kenai area state parks. In addition to the new credit card station at Eagle rock and the one at the Bing's Backline, we are currently planning to install them at the Pillars, Kasilof River boat launch, Crooked Creek, and Bing's Landing. The legislature had approved the purchase of 20 new stations for State Parks and the Kenai area is receiving 4 of those.

Joe Connors commented that the Eagle Rock improvements work very well and it is a slick operation.

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

- DEC continues to work on integrated water report. DEC is hoping to have the 2014/2016 report completed and is waiting for the final approval from the commissioner. Once that is completed, DEC will put out the 2018 integrated report out for public review and then there will be a request sent out for data for the 2020 report. If this happens as planned, DEC can get back to the schedule cycle for reports.
- Anyone that may have provided comments regarding this report, may either receive responses directly or may find them on the DEC website once the report is finalized.
- The Alaska Clean Water Actions (ACWA) grants solicitation is up and going. You can find it at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/water-actions/acwa-application> . There are waterbody-specific actions for the Kenai River and a Kenai River Beach monitoring solicitation listed for this cycle. Also, some of the Stewardship grant opportunities may be applied to waters in and around the Kenai River. If anyone has questions about the solicitations or the process, please let me know. There will be a statewide ACWA grants informational webinar presented on October 16 at 2 PM to answer questions about the ACWA grants process. Information about how to participate in the webinar is available at the above link. All non-beach grants require a 40% non-federal funds match.

c. ADFG-Jenny Gates provided the board with the following report:

- The Division is currently scheduling interviews for the area manager for the Kenai Area Sport Fish manager position.
- The Tote Road Pike eradication treatment has been completed.
- 2018 Season summaries are posted on line and open for public review.
- Staff is currently preparing for the work session with the Board of Fish and looking as some changes request for the Cook Inlet Area.

d. USFWS-Andy Loranger provided the board with the following report:

- The Refuge is currently working on three projects. Two of the projects are the facilities located on Keystone Drive in Soldotna. They have completed some major repairs to one of the boardwalks/fishing facilities this summer. For the 2019 season they are looking at some major repairs to the downstream portion of the project. They are planning to complete some work on the boat launch at the end of Keystone Drive. They have a contract with a designer currently to get some conceptual designs for the area. This includes improving the road and ramp in the area. If all works out it could go to construction in 2019.
- Another project that the Refuge is looking at in the future is Jim's Landing up in Cooper Landing. They are currently working on some conceptual designs for the

area to improve the landing, add additional parking capacity and to improve traffic flow in the area.

- The regulation for subsistence fishing on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers remain the same for the 2019 season.
- e. USFS/Chugach National Forest –Francisco Sanchez provided the board with the following report:
- The Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is currently out for public review. The draft documents reflect years of analyses and extensive public participation. Review the documents on the Land Management Plan revision webpage and then submit your comments within the 90-day comment period (August 4, 2018 through November 1, 2018.)
 - Phase one of the Russian River Campground entrance is completed. A new overflow parking area, a new exit and contact station has been built. Phase 2 of the project is to fix the large slough area along the entrance road.
 - The Chugach National Forest is currently in the process of hiring there 2019 seasonal staff.
 - The final 2018 season Russian River Interagency Coordination meeting was held at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and the end of the season Stream Watch meeting was held at the Kenai Watershed office.
- f. City of Kenai – Lisa Gabriel provided the board with the following report:
- The Kenai River Silver Salmon Derby had approximately 71 participants for the 2018 derby with a profit of \$3095.00 dollars. The final 2018 report has not been completed.
- g. City of Soldotna – Andrew Carmichael provided the board with the following report:
- The fishing access platforms at Swiftwater are almost completed. They are currently at about 98% complete with some detail work to be done.
 - The City of Soldotna summer visitor use was down 19% and the Soldotna Chamber is reporting they were up 6%.
 - All the City of Soldotna parks are still open and all the infrastructure is still in the water. They will start working on that in the next few weeks.
- h. Kenai Peninsula Borough- Brent Hibbert provided the following report:
- The hospital expansion is on time and under budget. The facility should be open in September 2019.
 - The solid waste facility new cell to capture methane gas that forms in landfill when organic waste decomposes in the absence of oxygen is near completion. The borough has entered into a memorandum of understanding with Alaska Electric and Energy to conduct a feasibility study on the methane gas that is out there. This is to determine if the borough can create some heat and electricity.
 - The borough’s land trust fund has approximately \$7.2 million in the fund from land sales. They are looking at investing approximately \$5.2 million of the funds for a higher return rate around 6 %.



- The Central Emergency Services is looking for property to build a larger facility. They would like to be able to build a training site in the areas with the new facility.
- The Kenai Peninsula Borough is currently less than half million dollars in deficient for the 2019 fiscal year.

2. Committee Reports

a. President's Report-No Report

b. Guide Advisory-Monte Roberts provided the board with the following report:

- State Parks is currently working on a Go with a Guide informational panel. The panel will help the public to recognize that they are going out fishing with a currently registered Kenai River Guide and not an illegal guide.
- The committee also went over the current Kenai River guide stipulations. Ranger Kosto had a few recommendations to remove a few of the stipulations for they are covered in regulation. There are a few that State Parks needs to get clarification from the legal department.
- The guide advisory board was work on a cooperative agreement between guides and State Parks. At this time, there has been no resolution to this agreement and the Guide Association will be withdrawing all support for the Guide Academy course.
- There were three citations issued to Kenai River Guides in 2018 and one has been dismissed. One of the citations was logbook violation.

c. River Use – Bill Tappan provided the board with the following report:

- Dwight Kramer attended the meeting and discussed the mandatory PFD proposed regulations that has currently not been approved. Dwight recommendation is that the committee ask State Parks to issue an emergency order to make PFD mandatory on the Kenai River after the upcoming election.
- Bill Tappan made a motion that the Advisory Board sends a letter to the State Parks commissioner and director to seek an emergency order to have mandatory PFD put in place on the Kenai River until the final approval of the regulation packet.

Joe Connors second the motion.

Two were opposed and 10 were in favor of the letter.

- Comprehensive management plan for the Kenai River and how the committee can help to get a review and update to the plan. The committee decided to wait until after the election.
- The committee discuss the sockeye salmon stamp for the peninsula. It was decided that this should be given to the legislative committee to work on. The River Use committee will draft a letter of support for that concept. The goal of this stamp is to create revenue that would stay on the Kenai Peninsula and not into the general fund.
- The committee also discussed mid river crowding.

d. Legislative/Government Activities-No Report

II. OLD BUSINESS:

a. Appointment of Officers

Mike Frost nominated Ted Wellman for the chair of the Kenai River Special Management Area Board. Bill Tappan second the nomination.

Board approved unanimously.

Mike Frost nominated Joe Connors as Vice chair of the Kenai River Special Management Area Board. Bill Tappan Second the nomination.

Board approved unanimously.

b. Appointment of committee chair are as follows;

- River Use-Bill Tappan
- Guide Advisory-Monte Roberts
- Habitat Committee-Jeff Dolifka

Monte Roberts ask the question of how does the interview process work and why the appointment and the terms were determined for the last appointments.

Ted Wellman stated that he felt the commissioner would have to answer the questions as to how the appointments were determine. He also recommended that maybe the legislative committee should look as the current bylaws and see if there are any recommendation for changes in the process.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Proposed Memorial Bench at the Eagle Rock Boat Launch- Jack Blackwell reported to the board that the Division of Parks has a policy on memorial placed in State Parks. The State recognizes that family member might want to acknowledge their love ones with a bench or plaques (which the state discourages) the division can allow the installation as furniture, benches or planting trees as a memorial. The policy recommends that if the area has an advisory board that we work with the board to review the proposal. The family of Bill Hamel has contacted parks to install a bench of Eagle Rock. State Parks staff is open to the concept of allowing the bench to be installed downstream of the boat launch when the new walkway is installed. There is no cost to the state as for the family will pay for the construction and placement of the bench. The committee also talked about the future of memorials and to have some guideline put in place for memorials in KRSMA. The committee has not made recommendation at this time.

Joe Connors has concerns about including the public in the processes for this is going to set a precedent.

Jeff Dolifka agrees that the public needs to be involved in the process.



Andrew Carmichael said the City of Soldotna has a policy in place and one thing that works well is to have a consistency. Such as a standard one size fits all bench, that way they are all the same.

Jack Blackwell stated that the state has a standard bench style and it fits with the area.

Bill Tappan commented that when this came up to the River Use committee some sort of vetting of the people asking for the memorial.

Ted Wellman is going to assign the River committee to come up with some standard, guidelines and designs for the board to review at the next meeting.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

VI. BOARD COMMENTS:

- Andy Loranger commented that there is a new trail at the Skilak Wildlife area. Marsh Lake trail and it about a 3.5-mile trail to a beautiful trail.
- Francisco Sanchez has information about the 2019 summer employment for the Chugach National Forest service if anyone is interested.
- Monte appreciates everyone hard work and time on the board.
- Andrew traveled to Cordova and that the Kenai has it pretty good compared to the Cordova area. When it comes to fishing and services. PFDs are important and everyone should wear them.
- Joe Connors shared an experience a guide had viewing four different species of wildlife in one day.
- Jeff said he is happy to be on the committee and he is all for PFD but the last thing is to have another rule that if he did not have one it would be a ticket.

VII. ADJOURNMENT