

***** Alaska State Park Northern Area *****
***** Citizen Advisory Board Meeting *****

Legislative Briefing

When: Monday December 9, 2019
Where: Legislative Information Office.
1292 Sadler Way, Ste 308
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Preliminaries

Meeting started at: 10:30am

Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) Members Present: Don Keily, Gail Davidson.
CAB Absent: Reinhard Neuhauser, Eileen Williams, Lambert Hazelaar, Scott Bothwell, Tanya Butorac, Darleen Masiak.

Legislators: Rep. Grier Hopkins, Tania Clucas for Rep Hopkins, Ashley Carrick for Rep. Wool, Joe Byrnes for Rep. LeBon, Rep. Steve Thompson, Seth Witten for Rep Thompson, Barbi Montgomery for Sen. Bishop, and Rep Scott Kawasaki.

Dept. Natural Resources Parks & Outdoor Recreation present: Brooks Ludwig, Lee Lemay.

Brooks Ludwig introduction:

Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) recently held 2 public meetings for Quartz lake and currently has a survey for the shooting range at 36.5-mile CHSR – Brooks handed out surveys to all present

Don Keily: Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) role is to represent the public on matters relating to state parks and outdoor recreation in the northern region. The Board provides a voice in how state parks are managed and represents a wide variety of user groups. – slide 2

Northern area parks consist of 17 units everything north of the Alaska range - slide 3,4

17 Parks units: 11 boat launches on 4 rivers and 6 lakes
20 campgrounds with 560 campsites
13 trailheads for 140 miles of maintained trail
16 Public use cabins
8 Ice fishing huts
9 Picnic pavilions and 108 picnic sites

Northern area program receipt revenues jumped 20% with the biggest reason was regaining management of the Chena River State Recreation Site by Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

Day use fees increased by 29% and Dingell Johnson sites (fishing) up by 4%

A reduction in FY18 came from the loss of revenues for the Delta park units which went to private contract – slide 5

Northern region issued 89 special park permits to user groups generating \$14,082 up 40% from FY18 as a result of permit price increases.

Camping generates the most revenue with public use cabins a close second
The cabin program generated over \$85,000 in FY19

Today we have 16 cabins with plans to bring another 4 cabins online over the next couple of seasons – slide 6

18 Commercial use permits were issued generating \$15,236.00 in revenue. They included boat rentals, fishing, rafting guides, along with tour bus companies. – Slide 7

The visitor industry economic impacts account for \$648 million dollars in tourist spending which represents 10% of the job market (all tourism)

14% visiting the interior stay at campgrounds

In 2019 over 700,000 people visited Northern Area state parks. Parks are economic engines and greatly add to Alaska's quality of life – slide 8

Projects accomplished:

- Electronic fee stations** - which generated \$55,675.00 this summer. Reduced staff and increased compliance by visitors.
- Fielding Lake** new fee area – repairs to the boat launch, a manual fee station installed to provide a revenue stream to support and maintain the facility under private contract.
- Mastodon Trail** completed. 15000-acre wildfire burned across 75% of the Mastodon trail which was still under construction.
Emergency funding through the Recreational Trail Grant program (RTP) added \$ 45000.00 to Happy Trails Inc contract enabling the completion of the 13 ½ mile trail in October
- Olnes Pond ATV Trail**- A 3-mile motorized trail was completed. This trail parallels the Chatanika river with 3 riverside picnic locations
The University of Alaska Center for Economic Development is studying the economic impacts of outdoor recreation in Alaska, using Olnes Pond as a case study.
- The 27-year-old **Granite Tors** boardwalk was upgraded thanks to the RTP with over 2 miles of boardwalk being replaced. Still need to dispose of old boards otherwise complete.
- RTP 2 new cabins** – Compeau cabin constructed summer 2019 at mile 2 Compeau Trail.

2nd cabin constructed by RTP in partnership with Fairbanks Folk school. Under the direction of Folk school instructor Sandy Jamieson will construct a scribe fit log cabin at Pioneer Park this winter, take apart and reassemble at the end of the new Mastodon trail in March.

Pursue Federal Grant money: All Federal revenue requires a state match.

Land & Water Conservation Fund: 2 new public use cabins in the Chena River State Recreation Area – Capital Improvement Project (CIP).

- New cabin at Stiles Extension trailhead mile 41.6 CHSR.
- New cabin at 48 Mile pond CHSR.
- FEMA funding request
 - Big Delta State Historical Park
 - Project has been accepted by the State awaiting review by the Region 10 office in Seattle WA. This will finish the bank stabilization at Rika’s Roadhouse.
- Pittman Robertson 2020 Proposed projects – Fish & Game partnering with Alaska State parks in developing the shooting range (36.4 mile CHSR) and the South Fork trailhead (45.5-mile CHSR).
- Dingell Johnson Projects
 - Improve boat launches at Chena Pump State Recreation Site.
 - Clearwater State Recreation Site.
 - Fielding State Recreation Area.
- Proposed trail Projects
 - Contracted
 - Maintenance of Compeau trail, Stiles Creek trail, Angel Creek Hillside trail.
- Legislative Mandate
 - Annual Parking pass increases \$50.00 to \$60.00 1/1/2020
 - Annual boat launch pass increases \$100.00 to \$150.00 1/1/2020
 - Other park fees will also increase.
- Challenges
 - Slow response time- snow plowing
 - Maintenance of existing infrastructure ie: shooting range
 - Equipment replacement – dependable equipment for Rangers to perform their jobs
 - Contracted sites are still the responsibility of Alaska State Parks
 - Emergency repairs \$\$ - Windmill at Rika’s Roadhouse, Colorado creek trail bridge collapse

Comments and Discussions:

Questions:

Rep. Thompson as part of the Fielding Lake Assoc: Inquired about a subsidized pass to access property at Fielding lake SRS. Brooks Ludwig stated that due to legal issues that Parks was staying away from the discounted passes. Currently the only 2 in the State are Quartz Lake owners and Salcha River owners.

Rep. Hopkins asked about the reliability of the fee stations. Brooks Ludwig replied that we have worked through a few issues with the solar and the printer (which was replaced) no other issues have appeared and Angel Rocks and Rosehip are on track for working all winter. Parks saw a huge increase of usage at Olnes Pond.

Seth Whitten asked about law enforcement in the Park. Brooks Ludwig replied with the that there are 3 highly skilled Rangers in Northern Parks who are equipped with the powers of a state peace officer. Last summer a northern ranger made 17 arrests in our region along with many drug and alcohol related issues in our parks close to Fairbanks. They assisted Alaska State Troopers on numerous occasions along with many search and rescue situations. The 3 Rangers have their assigned areas however they work together in all areas of the Parks.

Seth Witten asked about Parks merchandising: Brooks Ludwig replied that nothing is really being done. Parks was looking for a contractor to take it over but there have not been any interested parties.

Scott Kawasaki asked about bathrooms: Brooks Ludwig replied that the bathrooms were mostly closed in the winter months. The summer were all operational. Due to decreased funding it is getting harder to manage with a limited staff. This summer we had 2 nonpermanent staff who cleaned 170 bathrooms in Northern region which is creating a big challenge. It is tragic for where we are at, to do more with very little funding.

Rep. Hopkins inquired about grant percentage between Parks and nonprofit organizations: Brooks Ludwig replied that the RTP grants breakdown was still 50% Parks 50% nonprofit organizations. Grants stipulation type 1 is for maintaining existing trails. Other stipulation types require an environmental impact statement.

Don Keily asked in the information provided was useful to all in the room. What changes they would like... Rep. Scott Kawasaki said he liked it when parks had food at the briefings.

Ashley Carrick spoke up and said that she had stayed at multiple the cabins this past year and had very enjoyable experiences. She did mention that the Glatfelder cabin door did not shut. Brooks Ludwig mention that the Glatfelder cabin was very old but would let maintenance know of this issue. The Glatfelder was slated for a new outhouse.

Meeting concluded 11:30am