

Planning for the Future of the Kenai River Ranch

Kenai River Special Management Area

DNR- Parks and Outdoor Recreation and ADF&G Habitat and Restoration

Public Scoping Written Comments

Between August 25, 2015 and September 25, 2015, the Department of Natural Resources and Fish and Game accepted written comments as part of the initial scoping phase for the planning of the Kenai River Ranch. Names are listed only where the name of the individual or organization was expressly stated within the body of the comment.

The planning team would like to thank those that took time to submit written comments. The following is a compilation of the scoping comments submitted.

Comment 1 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, August 26, 2015 9:58 PM

I was one of the parties that was not in support of the development of any kind on the Kenai River Ranch property – therefore I guess you could say that I support Option 1. With regard to Options 2 & 3, these options would impact my property across the street. I've attached your drawings with the addition of highlighting our property for a visual.

As I mentioned before at the meeting in Anchorage Owen Road encroaches across not only ours but several other owners west boundary approx. 20-50 feet – this is a state owned road as of last year, and Cowen Road to the north (a borough owned road) encroaches across our north boundary. The states property (Owen Rd) is closer to the power lines, but over time the plowing services seem to be expanding into our property more and more away from the power lines. If I were to put a fence up it would go down the middle of Owen Road to take our property back, this would greatly upset all the other property owners. To take back our property at the intersection of Owen Road and Cowen Road could potentially prohibit access through this area at all.

Are there any plans to survey this property to verify the lot lines and boundaries of the Kenai River Ranch property? Has the State had discussions with the Borough regarding the development of this property? Has there been an impact study done on the property?

Again I am greatly concerned as many times there can be too much government overreach and details (like this issue) forgotten. I would be an adjoining property owner that would insist on correcting the roads as part of moving this project forward.

If you have any additional information on this topic I would greatly appreciate the information, and thank you for your continued circulating of updates on this project.

Comment 2 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 2, 2015 11:10 AM

Just wanted to comment on the Kenai River Ranch proposal. I'm still in favor of leaving it undeveloped for future generations. The development is not needed as we have lots of areas already available for a variety of activities along the Kenai River.

In these hard economic times and with the financial future not looking very well, this would be a good project to put aside.

We do not need the development. It's nice to have a bit of relatively "untouched" land along the Kenai River.

Comment 3 of 34 – submitted Friday, September 4, 2015 4:53 PM

I vote for concept ONE.

Comment 4 of 34 – submitted Tuesday, September 8, 2015 4:02 PM

I support concept number 1 No development would be better... Leave it as natural as possible.

Comment 5 of 34 – submitted Tuesday, September 8, 2015 4:04 PM

I'm in favor of no development. Leave in a natural state for the next generation to enjoy.

Comment 6 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 9, 2015 12:25 PM

I live in the neighborhood directly across the river from this proposed development. My neighbors and I strongly object and resent this development being considered. We all know that this entire River bank has been closed to fishing for many years; closed due to important spawning grounds and fry habitat.

We are against anything being done to this pristine area, with the exception of concept 1. This area is used as a nesting area for hundreds of Sandhills cranes, moose, caribou, bear and eagles. If you take that away from this area, you are killing a very important reason most of us chose to live here. The noise pollution and population increase to this small area will negatively impact us all.

I ask the people who are voting on this project to consider the people who live here. Absolutely none of us want this project.

Please give us a reason to believe you care about the residents of this area: Choose Concept One!

Comment 7 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 9, 2015 3:34 PM

We are writing you as concerned residents over the proposed development directly across the river from us. We have lived overlooking this field for almost twenty years, and we continually witness the wildlife that depends upon that property for nesting, birthing and feeding. We greatly oppose this development, beyond concept one. The bank protection is probably necessary for the continued spawning and growth of the fry. That bank has been closed to fishing for many years, in order to protect the sockeye run. We ask that you honor this protection of this stretch of the river, and keep it in force. Our river is indeed in trouble, we do not need anymore developments, which will put added strain on the river.

Comment 8 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:30 PM

Concept one is the only one that preserves this piece of pristine property. If funding is approved/granted/available to restore the riparian habitat and clean up the site, that effort would be in vain if the area is open to the public for use, unless ample policing is provided. Costly.

Comment 9 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:30 PM

Funny River Road improvements for increased traffic. Trash transfer station enlarged to handle increased trash from day campers. Then concept one.

Comment 10 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:30 PM

If the concern is for the fish and habitat these concepts are irrelevant to the priority of this development. My personal concern is regarding to the access and exit of the Funny River Bridge. Traffic will increase tremendously with the campground. The bank in the Kenai River Ranch needs restoration. Stop the erosion by changing the boat motor regulations back to less than 35hp or event 25hp. Could we even think of slowing the erosion by regulating to drift boats only?

Concept one seems to allow for bank restoration first. Minimal development beyond present usage is best. There is no need for a care taker, nor care takers cabin at this time.

Comment 11 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:30 PM

Bridge should be replaced with a permanent bridge instead of wooden bridge in the event of a wildfire it could leave many people stranded.

Comment 12 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:30 PM

Our biggest concern is the infrastructure of road bridge does not support any develop of property that would add more us in the community. We support only concept #1 at this time.

Comment 13 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 10, 2015 11:35 AM

I would first like to thank you all for all the work that has gone into creating the 3 concepts presented at the meeting last night. (9/9/15) After reviewing the options we choose to select option #1. This decision is made for several reasons. First and foremost the current infrastructure of the Funny River Community (road conditions, FR Bridge, law enforcement & solid waste) can not support additional use at this time. Until funding can be acquired in order to upgrade these issues nothing should be encouraged to increase local use of the community. I realize these are not projects controlled through Natural Resources but they have a very huge impact on the residents who live in the community. We are constantly being reminded of the fragile condition of the Kenai River - why then would we in good conscious support additional activity and access to the river. Leave the property as it is - do no construction - keep the banks restored let another generation become the stewards.

Comment 14 of 34 – submitted Saturday, September 12, 2015 9:03 AM

I favor option #1.

No development of the property. There is plenty of River access lower on the river. There aren't large areas of undisturbed river bank. Leave it alone.

I would just like to say please leave it alone. Funny River, does not need any more traffic on the road. If you are set on making a boat launch or camping go 1 mile down and improve what is already established.

Comment 15 of 34 – submitted Monday, September 14, 2015 12:14 PM

Thank you for managing the open meeting on the concept proposals for the development of the Kenai River Ranch here at Funny River.

Attached is our supporting documentation for Concept 2: Boat Launch, bank fishing, access road, parking area, toilet, caretaker, active restoration, and no camping. We are also mailing a signed document to you at the address you provided (above).

Our understanding is that you will take comments on the proposed concepts until September 25 then analyze and submit a proposal to BLM for their approval.

I have spoken to staff at our Honorable Senator Peter Micciche's office of the proposed concepts. The Honorable Senator supported the proposal for the planning funds to initiate the process the Funny River Community requested. I might be wrong, but it appears that copies of the proposed concepts were not provided to his office. We have our copies of the proposals to provide his office if you do not have any available for him (please let us know if you want us to provide the Senator our copy).

Comment 16 of 34 – submitted Monday, September 14, 2015 5:00 PM

In regards to the development of the Hansen Ranch in Funny River, We both highly support concept #2. We live on King Salmon Ave in this area. The only boat launch on this side of the river is in our subdivision and it causes significant problems. There is no room to park or fish. This proposed boat launch and bank fishing site is urgently needed for the Funny River community.

Comment 17 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 16, 2015 7:52 PM

Here are my comments to DNR's request for comments to the concept proposals addressed at the Gillman center on September 10, 2015.

I agree with elements of all three concept proposals. However, my first and overwhelming concern is the lack of public boat access to the Kenai River for all the "pioneer" families and the hundreds of new families now relocating to the Funny River community. As I have advised in the past, this is because of the 2014 USAD actions, access to natural gas on their property and the affordability of lots on the Funny River side v/v similar lots on the Sterling side of the river.

The negative issues associated with the current use of MyKiss Road access with absolutely no facilities at that location and the trespass issues and parking on borough ROWs will only be exasperated over the next few years as families relocate to the community. As I stated to you before, the building lot development now occurring between mile 5.2 to mile 6 on Funny River Road and all the development South and West of Brown's Lake is beyond anything I though I would see in my lifetime.

With this stated, I would first like to see a public boat launch and bathroom facilities in the same area as the boat launch that was on the Hansen Property in the 1980s. Even if you just cut the small amount of brush at the old launch site (a 10 minute job with a lopper) and provide a gravel road access to the launch site from Funny River Road, I would be more than satisfied. Of course, an off current launch access would be much safer for young children than using the current launch site.

I would also like to see ELP bank fishing opportunities if the elevated platform is not so high that it discourages fishing as that type constructed in the Morgan Landing area. I believe that the recreational fishing opportunities and use of this area if the ELP concept is correctively installed would be extensive as there is no public access to the river except for the Funny River State recreational area which has very limited fishing use - about 5 people on a good day because limited bank access.

I also would like some acknowledgement of the Hansen Family and how the property was acquired. A simple pack may be in order to acknowledge their use of the property and how the State acquired the property with EVOS funding.

I am totally against any overnight camping.

The opportunity to use two public use cabins is worth considering but would it be cost prohibitive to plow the access road in the winter. Just a thought for consideration.

Again, build it and they will come...may be more than you think as the Funny River Community grows with new families relocating every day.

Comment 18 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 17, 2015 6:42 AM

The meeting in Soldotna regarding the Kenai River Ranch was a waste of state funds and attendees time.

1. The State of Alaska is broke and may be for some time to come. The dollars spent on the plan with the least improvements (plan #1) would serve for people and would have a high cost and would impact the park department for years.
2. The Funny River Road (State Highway) is dangerous, in poor condition and of limited capacity.
3. An increase of human habitation on or near the Kenai River will contribute the degradation of an already threatened river.

Suggestions

1. Do nothing except place a contract caretaker on the property and charge rent to that individual.
2. If funds must be spent provide a pullout on or near the Funny River Road explain the historical significance of the Kenai River Ranch and the homesteading in the Funny River area.

Notes

1. Very few attendees where in favor of any changes from the status quo.
2. The group make was at least 85% Funny River residents
3. Plans 2&3 should not be considered at all.

4. Only two people in attendance were interested in a boat launch.

Comment 19 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 17, 2015

We live less than a mile from the Kenai River Ranch property on King Salmon Avenue.

Our disclaimer is that improving or not improving the property does not affect or benefit us because we already have access to the river and enjoy it immensely as it is, and we currently have other places to go to fish also.

These, our comments, are intended for the benefit of the community and state and not any special interest(s) or private stakeholder(s).

CONCEPT TWO: Boat launch, bank fishing, access road, parking area, toilet, caretaker, active restoration, and no camping is the best concept for the Funny River Community and the State of Alaska for the following reasons:

1. It upholds the Alaska Constitution by providing access to Alaskans to its wonderful resources. It does so in a way that still protects the habitat by providing a regulated and reasonable environment for boating and fishing as well; as more than 80% of the property remains well protected for the environment.
2. It is the most fair concept to all; providing access to those with minimal resources as well as to those who have much. There are many here at Funny River who do not own boats and want only to be able to “catch” their fish for sustenance, and enjoy doing it, but they are currently strapped and have to rely on a very small shoreline at a not-regulated borough boat launch or at a hard to get to and limited fishing space at the state park by Funny River. The bank fishing area proposed in concept two will be a dream-come-true for these people. Yet, the area will also be accessible to boaters and other fisher-persons as well, available to those from Anchorage and other areas of the state and even those touring our wonderful state.
3. There are those who say “there’s already a boat launch just up the road.” The fact is, it is a borough boat launch and we have never seen any borough presence there. That never happens at State Park controlled boat launches. The borough boat launch is limited access, with no real parking of boat trailers except along the path or on private property by trespassing. The lots around the boat launch area is developed and privately owned. There are no signs except a private land owners “private property” sign that is ignored and the other property owners property is inundated with vehicles and trailers and the property owners just ignore the issue out of their goodness of their heart, but, we understand that they have occasionally talked about building a fence. Although the borough’s launch is a “boat launch” it is also used by mostly community people for fishing; and of course, we understand their want and need to do so, and leave them pretty much along. Many of us who bought property here years ago were told by the seller that the boat launch was private to the subdivision which was not true, but that’s another issue. There are no signs regulating anything at the boroughs boat launch

4. Trying to get into the Borough boat launch can be tricky and unsafe due to cars and pickups with boat trailers parked along the path providing only a very narrow trail; and fisherpersons walking along the shoreline also creates a problem. The separated boat launch and fishing areas at the location selected in concept two for parking will also tremendously improve safety. Additionally, there are not signs regulating anything at the borough boat launch. Proper signage as we find at State Park facilities around the state will also improve safety. The location selected for the boat launch in proposal two will work well.
5. There are no facilities or any place for facilities at the borough boat launch area. The bathroom is a very good idea and necessary. You will find tissue and waste in the bushes at the borough launch area; mostly in adjacent private property.
6. Where the planned access road is identified for in concept two is excellent, as the old road bed is already there. We know an old road exists because we have walked our dogs in this area for well more than a decade. Brush and some trees have overgrown the area, but the road bed is there none-the-less.
7. The locations of the boat launch and fishing areas are good selection. They are the least impact areas in the Ranch to the environment and ecosystem. The faster running water where the fishing area is proposed does not currently have fry habitat, but sockeye run through that location as they go upstream. When we bought our property on the river, we where naïve and, like others, thought reds (sockeye) ran everywhere on the river, and because they don't, we do not have hardly any run by our property- they run on the other side of the river. Therefore we have to hop on our boat and go to a place to fish like many others and we do have a location we love to fish at. We know, thought that the location proposed in concept two is an excellent area where Reds run and will provide good fishing to those who go there.
8. We support active restoration proposed in concept two also. We know from experience that restoration works.

Comment 20 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 17, 2015

As a concerned interested homeowner residing across the river from the south end of the Kenai Ranch we thank you for the opportunity to participate in this study. We also congratulate and commend the entire staff for their hard work and their efforts in developing and presenting these concepts which gives all citizens the opportunity to support our original submission, concept #1 with no development. Let's protect the conservation and wild life habitat currently location on the adjacent to subject property. We definitely do not need or want a boat launch or installation of ELPS for fishing which require cost and manpower maintenance and care of the facilities. The state is already strapped for funding and making drastic cuts to continue existing programs. The existing campground at Funny River Road is an ideal location to install a boat launch, ELP for fishing, parking and camping so let's develop it further rather than start another unnecessary project. Preserve this pristine property because over the years we have developed and expanded so much of our beautiful land for housing, nosiness, etc. Future generation need to covet and protect this opportunity. There is now very little property left like this piece and our future generation will enjoy its' natural habitat stage. The EVOS Trustee Council outlined

their objectives with much thought and good intent so we should fully support them and abide by their original intent and purpose. Bottom line, leave it as is and concept #1 defined it very well.

Comment 21 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 17, 2015

My husband and I have owned our property across from this project since 1976 which is now our primary residence. I can't understand why we have never received notices of meetings regarding this project. I was told at the 9-9-15 gathering that mailing was not sent due to budget cuts. Not acceptable. These decisions are being made while so many seniors/snowbirds leave the state for winter. This is a great concern of mine. How are we expected to voice opinions on this project when we are already out of state? So many people are not aware of this comment option.

With budget cuts in funding with Fish and Game and State employees how is it expected to keep up with maintenance of three parks/recreation facilities all within a mile of each other?

Floating on this beautiful river you can see the disappearing beauty and very little land left undeveloped and natural. Why would anyone want to develop this land so you can see campers, trash cans, and outhouses, 20-30 spaces to park trailers and boats and people fishing? This will not be hidden due to lack of tall trees as we all realize the length in time for growth in Alaska.

Why take a beautiful part of this river and develop it when there are already 2 other State Parks in the same area within a mile of each other? Morgan's Landing is never used a 100% of capacity. If a boat ramp is necessary put at Funny River Recreation Site which is established already. People do not respect property of others and you're no fishing signs do not work.

Option #1 is my request. Website not user friendly.

Comment 22 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 17, 2015

I believe that option #1 is the best concept for this parcel. Since the state purchased this parcel in the late 1990's, we have noticed major increase in wildlife along the river banks to include; moose, bear, eagles, ducks and wolves. I believe this has occurred because this land has not been utilized or farmed in recent years. If we look at the development of the middle part of the Kenai River in the last 10-15 years, we find that there is very little undeveloped land remaining. Since restricting of bank fishing, we have also noticed an increase of fish jumping along these bank areas to include; trout, reds and kings. This river in the area of the project is fast and rocky and I don't feel it is suitable for bank fishing. As for the land itself if the land is restored and allowed to re-vegetate back to its natural state it will further become a natural site to support additional wildlife within the vicinity of the river. As for a needed boat ramp – the Funny River side I feel (if really required) one could be established to meet needs at the Funny River Recreation Park. We need to maintain the undeveloped parcels of this land running along the river so everyone can enjoy what's left with the beauty of this river.

In addition, I believe I remember that in a discussion of the last general meeting a boat dock was not required in this area of the river when Morgan's Landing was developed, so what has changed now and why is it required to have a boat dock on his parcel? Option #1. Form is not – User Friendly.

Comment 23 of 34 – submitted Friday, September 18, 2015 6:24 PM

I would like to add to my suggestion of keeping with option #1 but to include a road side pull off along Funny River Rd. Creating an informational site that tells the history of the homesteaders and the early development of the community

Comment 24 of 34 – submitted Sunday, September 20, 2015 1:02 PM

After speaking to you about the fishing regulations at the proposed Kenai River Ranch State Park my comment will be that the only concept I could accept would be Concept #3. The reason is because #3 is the only concept that doesn't include Owen Street as the main entry to the project; it would only create a traffic problem to people living on or off that street. Also, after asking you about the fishing regulations that will remain in place at Concept #1, I consulted the ADF&G 2015 regulations and it says that on the south bank of river mile 31.5 and 32.5 it is closed to fishing and I could find no fishing regulations south of mile 31.5 south of the property.

Comment 25 of 34 – submitted Monday, September 21, 2015 7:40 AM

I oppose any development on the land referred to as The Kenai River Ranch. I own and use property directly across the river from the proposed site and have witnessed first hand the increase in wild animals using the land since the property became a State parcel instead of a working farm/homestead. The increase use of the area by waterfowl, moose, caribou, bear, and other animals has been significant and noticeable. Increased human activity on the property would only reduce the size of what has become once again a natural habitat for the animals that are indigenous to the area. I vote no to development of The Kenai River Ranch.

Comment 26 of 34 – submitted Tuesday, September 22, 2015 6:47 PM

I'm emailing you because of my concern about the proposed Kenai River Ranch development. I would prefer to see it left entirely alone and not developed in any way. I want the property to remain undeveloped. Directly across from the property the Kenai Peninsula Borough Land mass area with 3,000 feet of riverbank habitat area has been set aside as a no bank fishing no development area. This is due to the fact this area is noted as the second best king rearing habitat in the whole Kenai River.

The Kenai River Ranch habitat has a variety of wildlife in it. We've seen black and brown bear there as well as wolves, coyotes, lynx, eagles, sand hill cranes, we've seen lots of moose and the occasional caribou cross to that area. I really think it should be left as a natural untouched area where the next generation can see undeveloped Kenai River habitat.

Comment 27 of 34 – submitted Wednesday, September 23, 2015 10:53 AM

This e-mail is in response to the Alaska State Parks survey as to how we would like to see how the River Ranch Properties Developed.

Our choice is Option 2, which would include fishing, parking, and boat launch, But no camping.

Comment 28 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 23, 2015 1:32 PM

Option #1 is my vote for Kenai River Ranch I have lived on Kenai River since 1975. Unreal development has occurred. This has resulted in the lost of beauty and serenity for our river. I am wondering why Morgan's Landing or the Funny River Recreation Park, which already exist would be a more logical choice for a boat ramp, etc. – if only necessary. Please consider my vote Option #1 as my decision.

Comment 29 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 23, 2015 1:35 PM

I believe options #1 would be the best concept for this parcel. We do not need this portion of the river to be commercialized like the lower river. With budget cuts in funding with fish and game how are they expected to maintain the new development and maintain the other three facilities, all within a mile of each other?

More people bring more trash and abuse to the river bank. The road system would have to be upgraded to support the additional traffic. Again option #1 is my request.

Comment 30 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 24, 2015 10:01 AM

Here are my comments on the development of the subject property:

I encourage the proposed use of the site as a riparian refuge. I have owned a parcel directly across from the KRR parcel since early 1990 and it is noticeable that there is considerable increase in wildlife activity on the KRR property, both by mammals, waterfowl and birdlife.

There has been considerable impact on the fish in this area of the River due to overfishing; therefore, it is important to keep the restrictions along the bank of the KRR. Bank fishing has a negative impact for fingerlings to develop into future generations of the fish resource. Even with light penetrating fishing platforms, there is still foot traffic leading to these platforms which has a negative impact on the bank.

I feel at this time the protection of the River to return it to its former healthy fishing, especially in regard to salmon, should be the priority.

Comment 31 of 34 – submitted Thursday, September 24, 2015 6:37 PM

My family and I strongly favor Option 1. We believe it is the most consistent with past and current use of the property, as well as the best alternative for the habitat. The property is wildlife rich and that character should be preserved.

If that option is not adopted, then the second choice would be Option 3. That option would still have a very strong element of habitat preservation, while providing several recreational options. One hesitation with the bank fishing proposal is that it likely will expand beyond the area of proposed ELP. There are other no fishing areas nearby where the signs typically are torn down and the area is fished intensely. In fact, there have been people fishing on the lower part of the subject property the last couple of years where I am fairly certain there are "no fishing" signs. To avoid this improper use of areas where the bank is protected, a proposal like Option 3 would require regular enforcement visits.

We strongly oppose Option 2 because of the boat launch. A boat launch is the worst option with respect to the property and surrounding habitat. There already is a severe erosion problem in that area of the river. Guide traffic in that part of the river has become much more intense with the poor king salmon seasons. A launch there will be a huge change to the current use and condition of the property. Of all the elements of the various options, a boat launch would have the maximum negative impact on the habitat and the river.

There is little support for the boat launch option. At the Anchorage meetings, there was almost unanimous opposition to the boat launch. We understand there is a small group that is very vocal about the boat launch. At the first meeting in Soldotna, reportedly one of those folks stated he was the spokesperson for the Funny River Community and that the community wanted a boat launch, but was effectively shouted down. The actual members of the community were adamant that he did not speak for them and that they did not want a launch on the property. But the bottom line is that a boat launch will have the most adverse impact on the habitat and the property. It is inconsistent with what the EVOS money should be use for, and with the wishes of the Hanson's that this should be a conservation area.

None of the other elements of the various options will have a great adverse impact on the habitat. Even the walk-in cabins of Option 3 would have minimal impact on the habitat. Moreover, they would provide a way to enjoy the peace and serenity of the property, as well as the varied wildlife it holds.

This property is one of the few unspoiled areas left on the river. It should be preserved as close to its present condition as possible. Doing so may make some small amends for the overdevelopment and degradation of the habitat on the rest of this beautiful river.

Comment 32 of 34 – submitted Friday, September 25, 2015 9:44 AM

Good morning! Just want to offer the opinions of myself and my husband on the development of the Kenai River Ranch. We attended the meeting at the River Center on September 9 and gleaned information. We are both in favor of Plan #2. We have lived in Funny River on a full time basis for four years now. We have owned our property here for close to twenty years. Our big problem is that we cannot afford to live on the river, and to fish, we need to drive clear into Soldotna to fish at Swiftwater Park. There are very few spots in Funny River that allow public fishing, and that's the main reason we are in favor of Plan #2. Also, it would be lovely to have a park in the vicinity to enjoy year round where we could walk by the river and enjoy the Alaska we came to experience.

Comment 33 of 34 – submitted Friday, September 25, 2015 10:19 AM

In February of this year, Kenai River Sport fishing Association provided comment on the proposal for development of the Kenai River Ranch property. At that time we noted that the property has high values for fish and wildlife conservation, as a large undeveloped footprint along the Kenai River. These are important values to consider when looking at development options of the property, a sentiment echoed by many local residents. At that time, we supported exploration of limited development options for a boat launch and did not support a larger concept based on overnight camping with bank angling.

This September we attended both public meetings in Anchorage and Soldotna, and we have reviewed the three options put forth by DNR. We are pleased to see that each option contains rehabilitation of riparian fish habitat and other land mitigation measures. In our view we feel that this is the most important first step – repair and mitigate past impacts on the property.

We observed that option one – no development – had the most support from those who attended the public meetings. An important question raised in discussions at the meetings was whether or not options two and three (boat launch / bank fishing & extended trail system) can be done in a responsible and sustainable manner, given the current state of the budget in Alaska. Additionally, how does a boat launch and or bank angler access project at the Kenai River Ranch rank in comparison to other such potential projects along the Kenai River watershed?

With respect to the current fiscal reality, it is doubtful that any additional capital projects will be soon forthcoming. At the present time, from commentary of local residents who attended the public meetings and feedback from our members, it seems that existing angler access in the area is sufficient to meet the current range of angler days and that there does not exist at this time a compelling need to further explore options two or three.

KRSA supports a strategic planning process that identifies boating and angler access needs along specific reaches of the Kenai River and then ranks such needs in a prioritized manner. A prioritized list would be beneficial so that when adequate funding does become available in the future there is a plan in place to direct further angler access projects in a comprehensive manner instead of a piecemeal fashion. Relative to bank angler access projects, river transportation to bank angling locations, primarily for sockeye salmon, is becoming more popular and a forward thinking option for future consideration is to develop bank angling platforms accessible primarily from the river itself.

We feel that a systematic planning process should take place sooner rather than later. The Kenai River is already home to the largest sport and personal use fisheries in Alaska and the region may soon be home to the terminus of one of the largest natural gas pipelines in the world – which most likely will translate into a healthy addition of more local residents within the next decade. Such a process could be complementary to a future update of the KRSMA comprehensive management plan.

Comment 34 of 34 – submitted Friday, September 25, 2015 3:32 PM

I again want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the departments three options developed from the public scoping phase for the Kenai River Ranch property (KRR).

I was not surprised that a camping option was not developed given the overwhelming comments against camping. However, I was surprised that Option 2 for a boat launch/bank fishing and Option 3 for bank fishing/cabins/trails were developed given the vast majority of participants in the Anchorage and Soldotna meetings, and the submitted comments, were against any development.

It appears from the meetings and comments submitted that a boat launch is of interest to a few Funny River residents in the immediate area to make it more convenient for them. I still believe that other options exist to expand opportunities for launching boats without developing the KRR property.

Development of a launch at the Funny River Campground is an example. I visited the campground and believe it to be a very viable and cost effective alternative. Other options may exist and should be thoroughly inventoried and studied prior to making a decision to build a boat launch on the KRR. Other concerns with a launch at the KRR site have been previously stated but include the speed of the current, numerous rocks in the area, and the importance of the spawning grounds in that span of the river. As Lucille Baranko, Landscape Specialist with Alaska State Parks, stated at the Anchorage meeting on September 8, it seems like we are trying to "put a square peg in a round hole...a boat launch on the KRR property doesn't seem like a good idea". I agree.

With regard to bank fishing included in the two options noted above, I did not hear any comments at the Anchorage meetings and the submitted comments did not include a request for bank fishing. The KRR is valuable habitat and should not be opened to bank fishing.

With regard to the interpretive nature/ skiing/ hiking trails, this was mentioned by one lady as an idea at the Anchorage meeting, IF and only IF, development had to occur. It doesn't. Cabins were never mentioned by anyone.

Obviously, I am in agreement with the vast majority of the people that attended the meetings and submitted comments. Specifically, the Kenai River Ranch property should be left in its current state with no development.