

# CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

(Hybrid-with in person at Potter Section House/Microsoft Teams Electronic Meeting)

**DRAFT--Minutes of the February 12, 2024 Meeting**

**REGULAR MEETING # 2**

1. **Call to Order:** Vice Chair Haley Johnston called the meeting to order at 6:00PM

2. **Roll Call & Introductions:**

**Present:** Jeff Bidinger, Bill Britt, Rob Clark, Tyndall Ellis, Gus Gustafson, Dave Hart, Haley Johnston, Claire LeClair, Stephanie Rice, Kyle Shedd, Irene Turletes

**Excused:** Ted Phelps, Mark Miner

**Absent:**

**Staff:** Keith Wilson, Chief Ranger, Chugach State Park

**Public:** Shaun Sexton

3. **Changes to Agenda & Approval:** Agenda approved.

4. **Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:** Minutes of the January 8, 2024 meeting were approved with no objection on motion made and seconded by Shedd/Ellis.

5. **Public Comments:**

- Shaun Sexton-Met a park employee out at Eklutna who said that Alaska State Parks has a \$5 million shortfall. Keith addressed that, said that there is a deferred maintenance backlog on both infrastructure and equipment. Shaun suggests having DOT take care of equipment used for park maintenance and state park roads and parking areas.

6. **Old Business:**

- a. **Eklutna Hydro Update (Planning Committee, Rob Clark and Jeff Bidinger)**-Rob and Jeff recommend that the CAB submit comments on the Draft Fish and Wildlife Program by the February 19 deadline and that the comments focus on recreation resources and recreational use in the park rather than on specifics of any of the alternatives outlined in the Draft Fish and Wildlife Plan. Motion was made/seconded for Rob and Jeff to draft a letter to include the following: -role & purpose of the CAB, -draft F&W program has insufficient analysis of current recreation use and no consideration of future recreation use even though timeline is 35 years, -request that damage to recreation infrastructure be considered and mitigated regardless of alternative selected, -create mechanism for owners to pay for damage to lake trail and other recreation structures due to their operations, -support delaying action until more thorough analysis of recreation use and future recreational use is completed, and - recommend adding dam removal as one of the alternatives. Motion passed with no objection; draft letter will be circulated and voted on by email.

## 7. New Business:

- a. **Officer Elections (Haley)**-Motion made and seconded to nominate Haley Johnston for Chair of the CAB; motion approved with no objection. Motion made and seconded to nominate Irene Turletes for Vice-Chair; motion approved with no objection. Motion made and seconded to nominate Claire Clair for Admin Officer; motion approved with no objection. Motion made and seconded to nominate Kyle Shedd for Deputy Admin Officer motion approved with no objection.
- b. **Committee Assignments (Haley)**-Haley read through the current committees which include nine standing and one ad-hoc. Members volunteered to be assigned to two or three committees of their choice and chairs/co-chairs were selected. An updated list will be distributed prior to the next meeting.

## 8. Staff Report: Keith Wilson

- Tim Gurnett and Kellen Ford started law enforcement training at the Department of Public Safety academy on January 28, training ends in May, then they will go into eight weeks of field training; hope to have three rangers (+Keith) working in the park by late summer;
- Just hired Leo Jaschek, who has been working as a Natural Resource Technician (NRT) for the park, to the Park Specialist position, formerly filled by Tim Gurnett; candidates for the NRT position have been interviewed, hope to hire someone soon;
- All six snow machine areas in the park are currently open; warm temps and wind may change that;
- There have been a lot of equipment challenges this winter;
- Winter killed moose on Near Point Trail, that trail is closed;
- SnowLine is still the contractor plowing Hillside Trailheads;
- Latrine replacement at McHugh is stalled;
- Icy River Rampage-70 showed up and 40 finished (it was -30 F on the river);
- Avalanche rescue skills workshop held February 3;
- LE report: illegal trapline on Peters Creek, Seward Highway speeding tickets, a number of vehicle accidents, Ranger Levi Schmidt responded to a domestic violence call.

## 9. Committee Reports:

- **Access (Dave/Jeff)**: Dave observed that the snow machine community was posting a lot of negative comments on social media regarding the timing of when the Hillside area was open to snow machining. Discussion regarding how best to communicate the reasons why areas are not open to use (typically because there is not enough snow to protect vegetation). Update on CASA bond: the only project on the bond that was approved by the full Assembly was the Canyon Road project for \$5 million.
- **Budget (Tyndall)**: Our letter in support for SB 127 submitted; a total of three CABs (including Chugach) have submitted letters of support, two more have approved letters and two other CABs currently considering letters of support. Tyndall called into a hearing in late January to comment in support of the bill; there were a number of comments in opposition to the bill, including from a legal representative of Truro. SB 127 currently in Senate Finance; has not been scheduled for any additional hearing/consideration.
- **Nomination (Dave)**: Two vacancies, soon to be three; encourages everyone to help recruit applicants.
- **Seward Highway Design (Irene)**: Seward Highway design team had a 3-day cost and schedule risk analysis to look at the preferred alternatives and what their schedule and cost risks. Likely the analysis

will determine that the project is more expensive and will take longer than current estimates, which may result in design team being directed to go back and consider the less preferred alternatives.

- **Trails (Irene):** Alaska Trails is planning to re-submit the Flattop trail project CIP project (\$2.7 million) to the Legislature and two others: 1-the connection from Arctic Valley to Indian Pass (\$3.0 million) and 2-funding for Ram Valley trailhead and trail construction (\$1.5 million); motion made and seconded to write letters in support of the two projects, motion passed with no objection. Still planning to have Jon Underwood come to the April board meeting to update the CAB on the Indian Valley trail project.
- **Chugach Park Fund (Haley/Claire):** Trail Tales was a success in terms of attendance and fundraising; received a grant from Conoco-Phillips to assess up to three trail projects in order to produce cost estimates/project plans which will be used for future fundraising; 2024 projects that CPF is pursuing are drainage improvements on Hidden Lake Trail and six volunteer events.
- **Wildlife (no chair):** N/A
- **Planning (Jeff):** N/A
- **Outreach (Rob):** Idea for the Outreach committee: solicit volunteers from the CAB to attend Community Council meetings once per quarter or so to help facilitate communication and perhaps recruit new members. Source for list of community councils and when/where they meet:  
<https://www.communitycouncils.org>
- **Ram Valley (Haley):** Haley will be scheduling a committee meeting this week to review a report that shows alternatives for the trail alignment as well as possible access points.

10. Adjournment: Motion made and seconded; Meeting adjourned at **8:03PM**.