

# CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

Hybrid Electronic Microsoft Teams, 5:00 pm  
BP Energy Center

Minutes for April 14, 2025

Regular meeting #4

1. **Call to Order:** Irene called meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

2. **Roll Call & Board Member Introductions:**

- **Present:** Bill Britt, Clark Saunders, Gabbie Jordan, Gus Gustafson, Joe Hackenmueller, Kyle Shedd, Tyndall Ellis, Rob Clark, Ted Phelps, Sarah Brye, Irene Turlletes
- **Excused:** Kristen Vantrease, Mark Miner, Stephanie Rice
- **Absent:** None
- **Staff:** Ella Fitzwater, Justin Dipaola-Allen, Kellen Ford, Wendy Sailors via Teams
- **Public:** Matt Newman- Eagle River resident, Will Taygan- Chugach Mountain Bike Riders (CMBR), Kevin Keeler- Anchorage Ski Club Board of Directors, Monica Alvarez via Teams- DNR project manager for the latest revision of state park plan, Rob Earl via Teams- DNR planning, Carla SlatenBarker- resident of South Fork Eagle River, Cathy Hammond- resident of South Fork Eagle River, Shaun Saxton- resident of Chugiak.

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

- Long form introductions of CAB members due to the turnover we've experienced this year.
- Gabbie and Bill (of Trails and Access Committees) proposed the possibility of a long form workshop for future trails management plan.
- Summer schedule coordination: Which two months will the CAB take off? May will be a busy session.
- Justin added the CMBR Request for CSP Trail Plan Modification to the new business item 7a.

4. **Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:**

- Approved without edits.

5. **Public Comments:**

- Matt Newman: doesn't have comment, here to listen.
- Will Taygan and Kevin Keeler: don't have comments, here to listen.
- Cathy Hammond (online): here to listen.
- Carla SlatenBarker(online): here to listen.

6. **Old Business:**

- CSP Management and Trails Plan: DNR Project Managers

7. **New Business:**

- CMBR and SingleTrack Advocates (STA) request to amend the Trails Management Plan
  - Letters of support on this topic have been received from Alaska Trails, Anchorage Ski Club, and Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers (WMBaH)
  - Requesting a modification of the trails plan to include bicycles on the Arctic to Indian Traverse and a letter of support from the CAB to support bicycles on the traverse.
  - We are on schedule for the plan to be revisited, not entirely rewritten. Just looking for a change in the design use AND to upgrade to a class 3.

- Most users approve of the current plan and they do not want any changes to current trails. Therefore, we should keep this change very focused and targeted, not about opening new trails.
- Concerns about maintenance: Class 3 allows for 4wheeler maintenance.
- Avoid scope creep: We don't need a full plan review, just keep it *targeted to this one trail designation*. Muktuk Marston was also built within the wilderness area as a Class 3 trail. Not asking for a change to the wilderness designation unless we think that's ideal.
- Clark brought up E-bike considerations: This would allow Class 1 e-bikes because those don't have throttles. State wilderness allows bikes (non-motorized), national wilderness does not (non-mechanized). -bikes are a technical exemption by the state parks in regulation. A prohibition on non-motorization would make maintenance difficult for staff. For example, CMBR has permits for motorized maintenance in different parts of the park.
- Rob brought up a 10-year outlook: what does the next decade look like if this is approved?
  - First step is to change the plan.
  - CMBR invests in trail development.
  - CMBR has hired cartographers to do the maps we have today.
  - CMBR will then hire a field expert to go into the field and verify the path.
  - The trail can probably be built a few miles per year. Fundraising will help this.
  - National law just passed regarding BOLT act. Example: efforts on the Kenai can help turn the Kenai 250 into the Kenai 350.
  - BLM parcel could help qualify it for federal dollars but managed as state park.
  - Speculation: Part of the reason the wilderness designation applies to that area is because it was a firing range and the clearing it would have been timely and costly.
  - Bill asked the planners what the method is for proceeding if we favor it but don't want to open the entire plan? Bill asked Monica and she said we can do a targeted amendment. It would be changed what they're managed for, which right now is for primitive use. Not a small thing.
  - Scoping process, put it out for public review, more than a 2-step process.
- Justin *doesn't* think this applies for special exception in the trails plan. If changing a designation that is a bigger issue.
- Tyndall asked Monica: It seems there are 2 options to evaluate how specific of a request to make.
  - Option 1: just ask to add biking and make it a class 3.
  - Option 2: add buffer around the trail to manage it as recreational use. If we add the buffer, does that impact the process? Monica said no.
  - It is already a very fundamental change of how it's managed so *it doesn't matter what option you go with*. Not managed for high use.
  - Therefore, *what option does the CAB prefer?* Who has reservations about Option 1?
    - Sarah asked for clarification on whether bikes could be on a Class 2 trail. That was the initial ask from CMBR was to just add bikes, but Ben encouraged them to up the ask to do Class 3 trail since the ends of that trail are class 3. Justin clarified the difference between

- class 2 and 3, how they are efficient and easy to build. Class 2 is narrower and it's harder to maintain.
  - Even if you build the trail to Class 3, it'll end up being single track based on use. Will mentioned that most trails in ANC were built as class 3 and grow back into class 2. Class 3 will also be able to accommodate wider bikes. Class 3 is much cheaper to build, Justin elaborated that it's hard to find a work force to build Class 2. Trails are about water flow and ensuring water won't pool. Bulldozer blades can do the cross slope much more efficiently.
- Design use vs. managed use. Currently managed as pack and saddle but needs to be designed for bicycle class 3. How would this change given the current management use? The class system is important because the builders need to know what specifications to build it to.
- Considerations from CAB Members and Guests
  - Bill: is this a one-time use issue that we decide on or is it an ongoing concern?
  - Irene: clarified that our discussion shouldn't be limited to today, it takes a lot of effort for these changes to be made.
  - Will: clarified that the existing plan has many opportunities for cyclists. The current projects in use are still going and qualify for federal funding. The management regulations can be a little more flexible for the staff to permit and adjust (example: fat bikes).
  - Justin: the plan was not written to be complicated.
  - Bill: the plan was written back when we didn't know how scarce resources would be.
  - Tyndall: the current plan wasn't written to accommodate how much cycling has grown. It's easier to allow bicycling through regulatory approval in certain areas instead of allowing them everywhere and then restricting them on what trails are not good for that.
  - Sarah: how will allowing bikes change the design? Rolling grade dip, instead of straight roll. It's very resistant to erosion, similar to Muktuk Marston. Sunnyside of Flattop and Little O'Malley trail were also designed this way to help with management costs. It won't have the same features that Hemlock Burn has.
  - Will: there will be bikers asking for features, but it'll be up to the staff to determine whether the options are built. It's worth including in the conversation, but since it's a 2-way trail features will be limited.
  - Justin: it has to be managed for pack and saddle, hiking, biking. Therefore, it's a compromise.
  - Irene: brought up Mark Miner's pre-submitted concern regarding the cost of a long trail. Class 3 trail construction will help with that.
  - Will asked: what trail should we fix up and allow bikes on?
  - Justin: The more uses a trail has, the more user groups that will help maintain the trail.
  - Kyle: If this trail is built as a Class 3, it'll be a better ski trail as well (not reliant on snow bridges).
  - Rob: brought up the possibility of hunters using the trail.
- Three Action Items to Help the CAB Proceed
  - Vote on trail plan modification

- Vote on Class 2 vs. Class 3
- Vote on wilderness corridor
  - Tyndall elaborated on his concern regarding the wilderness corridor because it's managed differently. Example: Crow Pass. There is a benefit to allowing a corridor through the wilderness area. Just because it's a scenic or recreational area doesn't mean it must have those extra things.
  - Kevin (guest) was an administrator for the INHT (have him email those credentials): explained the 100-foot buffer for the trail around Crow Pass, having a base for maintenance operations, etc. The business of operating the trail can happen in there.
  - Justin cautioned that if we want this to happen faster, we should be hesitant to change the designation out of wilderness because there will be public push back. We can allow bikes without changing the designation.
  - Matt Newman (guest) mentioned a lot of terms mentioned are confusing and was curious about how we got from allowing bikes to allowing bathrooms.
  - Will clarified "rudimentary" and explained that Muktuk Marston was allowed as a class 3 through a wilderness area. Bridges are preferred to boards across rivers to allow use by hand cyclists.
  - Justin brought up page 39 of the management plan (2 paragraphs that explain wilderness).
  - Will: Trails are not allowed in wilderness unless they're in the trails plan.
  - Gus brought up the point that this discussion is taking a while but do we need the letter tonight?
  - Irene's question surrounding the wilderness amendment: will removing the wilderness designation be approved? Monica mentioned that the public process would reveal whether people want it to remain as wilderness or not.
- Trail Plan Modification: Rob moved that the CAB write a letter of support to park staff to modify the trails plan to allow bikes. Bill seconded. Motion approved. None opposed.
- Class 2 vs. Class 3: Rob moved that we write a letter of support (or include in above letter) including language requesting a plan review targeting this trail and allowing classification change from 2 to 3. Seconded by Ted online. None opposed.
- Wilderness Corridor: Tyndall moved to include in the letter that the scoping process consider the land use designation and consider that needed change in the process (wilderness vs. not wilderness). Monica clarified that both wilderness vs. not and class 2/3 are both difficult. Seconded by Gabbie. None opposed. Clarification: corridor is what we are requesting that DNR consider changing it.
- Next Steps
  - Justin and Monica work together
  - Justin suspects the Director will opens up the plan and will report at next meeting.
    - Letters of support will help.
    - Kyle brought up that other uses exist.
- CAB Member Introductions
  - Moved to May's Meeting
  - Moved by Rob, seconded by Tyndall
- Summer Schedule
  - May will be a busy session, Gabbie moved, ayes have it
  - Two month summer break will occur in July and August. Moved by Gabbie, none opposed.

- Optional field trips for those months: members should give “dream retreat” ideas during their intro during May’s meeting.

#### **8. CSP Staff Report:** Justin Dipaola-Allen, Ella Fitzwater, Law Enforcement report from Kellan

- Law Enforcement Report:
  - LE staffing sparse the past month with Leave, Military Obligation, and annual 40 hr LE Training
  - Wildlife Meeting: ADF&G, AST/AWT, APD, JBER conservation
    - Annual summit/working group of agencies addressing wildlife issues in Anchorage area before busy summer season
  - Commercial permittees
    - One cited for noncompliance with permit stipulation (timely submittal of end of season report, multiple reminders ignored)
    - A couple of other investigations ongoing of possible commercial use without permit
  - Search and Rescue
    - Flattop, 4/1 teen with ankle injury
    - AST/RCC response
    - Lifemed attempted but unable due to terrain
  - ERNC Crash
    - Suspected DUI driver late night crash into concrete barrier
    - Vehicle disabled and discovered off roadway
    - Now an APD case
  - Abandoned vehicle Ptarmigan Valley trailhead
    - Discovered and reported by park user.
    - Ranger Gurnett arranging to have vehicle impounded
    - CAB meeting guest showed appreciation for these efforts
  - LEIS
    - AK State Parks rangers in Anchorage for annual week long LE training this past week
  - Motorist Assists
    - Multiple incidents this past month
    - Vehicles in ditches as well as 3 accidents with injuries Rangers assisted victims with – Basher Drive, Monte Rd, and Mi 7 Glenn Hwy
  - Rangers continuing to do trailhead fee enforcement while on patrol.
  - ATV season reopened April 1<sup>st</sup>
    - Eklutna and Bird Valley
  - Eklutna Lake overflow campsites have been open, never closed for winter
  - Bird Creek Campground reopened, one minor incident (abandoned camp)

#### **9. Committee Reports:**

- Access (Bill):
  - CASA bond passed but hope next year’s will be larger. The assembly passed AR No. 2025-85, which codifies CASA into the next CIP.
  - Trail access plan funding was pegged at half million dollars. A challenge for committee was for us to stay involved and monitor.

- We are losing some strong advocates on the assembly: Zac Johnson and Kent Kohlase; Bill will stay in touch with him. SB47 is in Juneau and very critical for CASA progress. It allows easements creates better bond between state and muni. Bill's contacts think it will pass (yay!).
  - HLB 2025 draft annual program is out for review and goes to assembly next week, we won't have an opportunity to chime in this time around but next year we will be on top of it. Ryan Yelle, head of HLB, says trailhead limitations are the lack of funding and isolated parcels (2 issues). CASA is tailor made to address the funding if SB47 passes (in that case CASA can be used on HLB lands).
  - Justin is getting notifications of what happens within 500 feet of the park.
  - Kyle: Assembly addresses CASA plan every 5 years (AR No. 2025-85), so it's not written in stone. The CAB letter of opposition for a HLB parcel sale to private developer was successful.
  - Bill expressed concern about staff in park having the same work our committee does and was curious how we can support each other instead of stepping on toes.
- **Budget (Tyndall):**
    - Limited budget, it'll be a struggle to get additional dollars.
    - VRT bill is going through the steps right now. This would close the loophole to collect that tax. They will bring all VRTs down to 9% although there is another bill that will compromise.
    - Shaun asked about budget set aside for Eklutna trails? Justin was not sure off the top of his head. Most of that work is complete from last year.
- **Nomination (Gus):**
    - One very good application in and will speak with Bill before next meeting then email the committee.
    - Possibility of waiting until the fall to bring on a new member.
- **Seward Highway Design (Stephanie):**
    - Website now says the plan will be out in Fall 2025 for public comment.
    - Tyndall asked about land swap: can DOT build a parking lot and then give us the land to increase the value of the land they'll give us? Justin has had discussions about this. It will cost more to look into where a parking lot will go than what it's worth (the right of way is already 300 feet). It also depends on the corridor, ex: Bird Ridge parking lot. LWCF 4F and 6F mitigation. One has to be value in kind, the other is all recreational impacts that occur as a result of the project (which must be mitigated). Example: material sites can become trail heads.
    - Ben had a very robust plan and Justin orienting himself with it.
- **Trails (Gabrielle):**
    - Encouraged members comment on the BLM land use study that suggested the Arctic to Indian Traverse would not be suitable for the Alaska Long Trail. Public comment closes today.
    - Thanks to Rob for sitting in on the AMATS meeting, next one will be on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- **Chugach Park Fund (Kyle):**

- Had meeting with Justin to get acquainted. Williwaw Trail is this summer's big project, they'll be sponsoring 6 volunteer events.
- Haley is no longer on CPF as she is now the Executive Director of Alaska Trails.
- **Wildlife (Gus):**
  - Thanks to Ella for giving a wildlife safety talk at the ERNC as did a ADFG person gave one last week.
  - Summer coming up will have more reports.
- **Planning (Stephanie):**
  - N/A
- **Outreach (Rob):**
  - ERNC outreach with Haley regarding Ram Valley.
- **Ram Valley (Rob):**
  - Spoke with Haley to get status update on Ram Valley, funds are remaining for route verification.

**10. Adjournment:**

- Motion to adjourn at 6:58 pm.
- Moved by Gus, seconded by Tyndall.