

CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

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

Agenda for September 8, 2025

Regular meeting #7

1. Call to Order:

2. Roll Call & Board Member Introductions:

- a. **Present:** Mark Minor, Gus Gustafson, Gabrielle Jordan, Joe Hackenmueller, Kyle Shedd, Bill Britt, Tyndall Ellis, Sarah Brey, Clark Saunders, Kim Fantrease, Alision Smith, Irene Turletes
- b. **Excused:** Rob Clark, Ted Phelps
- c. **Staff:** Justin Dipaola-Allen, Ella Fitzwater, Kellen Ford, Tim Gurnett
- d. **Other guests present:**
 - Cameron Sanders- ORCA (Off-Road Cycling Association)
 - Casey Durand- member of the public
 - Katie Connor- Alaskan Glamping
 - Shaun Sexton- resident of Eagle River
 - Bill Sherwonit- resident of Eagle River

3. Changes to Agenda & Approval:

- Irene added Alaska Trails: item 7d
- No other agenda
- Motioned/seconded

4. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:

- Shaun Sexton asked that his public comment from the June 9th (2025 meeting #6, public comment E) be edited to show that Justin Dipaola-Allen referenced AO358, not Shaun.
- Minutes approved.

5. Public Comments:

- a. Bill Sherwonit: hasn't received an agenda but is here in case the CAB discusses the bike access in the Ship Creek Valley and park wilderness area.
- b. Shaun Sexton: is concerned about the erosion and lack of revegetation in the park. He requests that the park reference the 2011 Stormwater Guide (brought copy) and asked that staff and budgets take into consideration sustainable management. His example of a well-designed project is Ladybug Rock; his example of a poorly designed project is the work along Eklutna Lakeside trail last year.
- c. Cameron Sanders: representing the Off-Road Cycling Alliance (ORCA). They are working with CMBR for various long distance bike routes and can add comments or expertise on trails. The two organizations just proposed 3 different bike routes that would connect Anchorage with the Kenai. BOLT (Biking on Long Distance Trails) is a new designation from the end of the Biden administration. There are 10 possible routes on federal land that is open to bicycles. For more information, check out are on their website: Orca.bike. Clarification: Arctic to Indian is not part of their efforts, but ultimate outcome would mirror the ALT.
- d. Shaun Sexton: would like follow up on what happened to his report on fish waste being improperly disposed in the park.

- e. Will Taygan: provided an update from Happy Trails on Rendezvous Ridge regarding some switchbacks being moved. The current planning process is evaluating Upper Powerline Pass. He will provide an update on the trail reroute for us. Will also asked about the timeline for opening the parks plan, which Justin explained is now in the process of being opened with the DNR. No timeline yet but it won't be fast.
- f. Bill Sherwonit: added to his public comment that some people in the community have concerns about the Arctic to Indian bike route.

6. Old Business:

- a. Long Intros for CAB Members: name, favorite trail, what you do for work, and how long you've lived in Alaska. Further descriptions will be done at another time.
 - 1. Gabbie: Turnagain Arm trail
 - 2. Kristin Vantrease: Grand View trail to McHugh
 - 3. Tyndall: Near Point
 - 4. Kyle Shedd: Upper Huffman trailhead
 - 5. Mark Miner: Middle Fork trail
 - 6. Allison Smith: all of them are her favorite, but latest used was German Bridge
 - 7. Joe: partial to all trails in Eagle River and South Fork.
 - 8. Gus: Trails Dew Mound trail
 - 9. Sarah Brye: Bird Ridge trail
 - 10. Bill Britt: No favorite trail because he's been on all of them, therefore the next one built is his favorite.
 - 11. Irene: Near Point trail.
 - 12. Gurnett: Pepper Peak
 - 13. Justin: the sheep trail from Chugiak to Eklutna Lake
 - 14. Ella: Likes all trails, but most recently used is South Fork
 - 15. Clark: Rendezvous ridge to Muktuk Marston loop
- b. Alison Smith is our newest CAB member: welcome!

7. New Business:

- a. Stewart Trail
 - 1. Through Great Land Trust, two properties were donated to CSP. Justin displayed the map from GLT website. These parcels used to be private and can be accessed via an easement through private land, which was won after extensive legal battle.
 - 2. There's very limited parking in this area. Justin encouraged users to not use that area if there's no parking. More like Mile High than Bear Valley. The access area is all municipal land, so CSP will be working with the city.
 - 3. Ruby Ridge is a great access to McHugh as well.
 - 4. Site inspection was performed last month (or maybe week).
 - 5. Justin clarified that the process was happening well before Justin got assumed his current position.
 - 6. What are the next steps? New property boundaries of the state park must be surveyed., then they can put in new signs. GLT has applied for a grant to help with planning and surveying should happen this fall.
 - 7. For pedestrian traffic: if you are on the road, you're on the easement that's owned by the municipality, not CSP. The park cannot put signs on property owned by other entities.

8. Clark suggested the thru hike Steamboat to McHugh trailhead on Turnagain Arm (get dropped off on Steamboat).
 9. One lot was owned by the zoo, one by the botanical gardens, the Stewart family willed those parcels to the nonprofits.
 10. This is a potential CASA projects, coordinating with local road board or municipality. Friends of Stewart Trail is an organization that has been advocating for this for a long time. Vacant lands could spur the municipality to build more parking or infrastructure in that area.
 11. Note: Easement is only for foot traffic.
- b. Basher, Canyon Road, CASA**
1. Justin has had one meeting with the municipality about Basher. Timeline is unknown and they are hoping to get something next summer.
 2. Canyon Road is in design phase, hope for construction next summer. CSP is trying to do what they can with limited funds and resources. Timeline for construction unknown.
 3. Mark received email from the Public Works Department which administrates CASA with projects slated for 2026-2030.
 - a. Bill mentioned his involvement with CASA and the current void, not much is going on. There is a meeting on the September 12th. Bill's main concern is that there hasn't been any action since it was passed and the assembly has been fairly "cranky" about it, but will get a status update on Friday. CASA was supposed to roll into the Capital Improvements Process (CIP). Bill will report to the CAB the meeting notes and action items. Public Works owns CASA and they are supposed to be driving the process. Excited that they sent out the email to community councils but disappointed that nothing was done.
 - b. Seems like there needs to be relationship building between the parks and city. It's possible that Rhys Miranda and Ricky Geese are already discussing their involvement.
- c. Recreational Trails Program (RTP): Letters of Support**
- a. Justin and CSP staff have been putting together a grant request and would like a letter of support from the CAB. The three categories are motorized, non-motorized, and diversified. CSP has trails and trailheads that support both types of uses, so they are requesting a "Back to the Basics" grant: staff are spending a lot of time on fee stations and latrines (at least half a dozen people have been stuck this year). Costs are extensive: \$400/ handle, \$3,000/door. Fire department needs to destroy door when they rescue users from the latrines. The request also includes landscaping equipment to enhance trailheads. Grant limit is \$100,000, just for materials and equipment, no design. They do not plan on replacing the entire latrines, just locks and hardware. The request will be for the entire amount.
 - i. Tyndall asked how much CSP has allocated for capital maintenance. Zero is the number, according to Justin.
 - ii. Chugach Park Fund: guest is meeting with them tomorrow and asked if this is these requests can be accommodated by CPF. Kyle clarified it is for large improvements to the park, not regular maintenance.
 - iii. Litigation danger from people locked in bathrooms? Yes. Attorney generals should be advocating for CSP, but they are also understaffed and overfunded.
 - iv. Mark asked about signs and trash cans for dog poop. No staff to make that happen, plus bears. This is a future goal, but no money right now.

- v. RTP information is disseminated by public notice and can collect public support. The application can be seen by the public once it's open, each item must be accounted for so the process is very tedious.
 - vi. Motioned/seconded by Bill/Tyndall. None opposed, letter of support will be written.
- b. Additional request by Gus, Clark, and Joe (all are on the board of the ERNC so they will recuse themselves from the vote). ERNC is applying for RTP grant for equipment to assist volunteer trail crew. Under ERNC contract with the CSP, they maintain trails from the Nature Center to Echo Bend (approximately 11.5 miles). Volunteers work on Thursdays. To be more efficient, they would like to purchase Polaris ranger: crew cab with pull behind trailer for faster transportation to trail heads. This equipment will also be available to rangers for SARS, etc. The request also includes PPE such as helmets and eye/ear protection, specialized hand tools, as theirs are over 20 years old, and a street legal trailer for transporting vehicles to on-road locations for maintenance. They are requesting a letter of support from the CAB, the total amount is just shy of \$50,000 from the non-motorized trail designation.
 - i. Justin mentioned that ERNC is what the entire park could look like if they had funding to not defer maintenance. The ERNC PUC is booked through the next September. Motioned/seconded by Bill/Mark. (sustained votes listed above). No opposition.
- d. Alaska Trails Update
 1. Haley Johnston, was on the CAB for 6 years and termed out in December 2024.
 2. She is currently the Executive Director of Alaska Trails.
 3. Williwaw Trail project was funded almost exclusively by CFP. 5-person crew. 3 total crews worked throughout the state for summer 2025. The Williwaw crew hiked in and out daily and the project wrapped up last week. They are now doing other hot spot improvements throughout the park. All projects hand built.
 4. Summer 2026: Looking for another full crew for the full summer if they have the money and funding for it.
 5. Alaska Trails hosted 22 volunteer events throughout the summer. September 27th is National Public Lands trail and there is an event on Middle Fork for those interested in helping out.
 6. 40% of Alaska Trails projects were in CSP this year.
 7. Over \$20,000 of volunteer labor donated to the park this summer. Volunteer demographics skewed young and from JBER.
 8. Still coordinating the Indian to Arctic trail. Was subcontracted to Happy Trails, but now that crew will be working in Indian Valley due to municipal issues preventing them from working in Russian Jack. Currently over 4 miles in, past the first creek crossing. No bridges yet, those will be in 2026. First 2 miles is complete. Great drainage work.
 9. FY 24 they received planning dollars for Ram Valley. Some landscape architects have worked on that project, there are 5 different trail options and they will get prices for each of those and then work with Rhys and Tony to collect parking options.
 10. Note on grant money usage: if organizations don't spend the money from the grant, it's reimbursable. If they are awarded \$1 million but only spend \$800,000, only \$800,000 is distributed to the organization.
 11. Unsure what capital funds Alaska Trails will apply for due to the uncertainty with the state economy. Continuity of support is important but they don't want to be tone deaf when many essential services lack funding.

12. Tyndall: how far up Indian will the current budget allow the crew to work? A little over 7 miles to the pass, they should get there this season. They don't want to leave a chasm in the middle so they're leaving money for bridges. Current trail is above tree line.
13. Signage celebration with CSP on September 15th at 3 pm at Glen Alps lower parking lot.
14. Alaska Trails Fall Fundraiser will be October 9th at Hilltop with silent auction.
15. Trail Tails Events are posted on Alaska Trails website.

8. CSP Staff Reports:

a. Ella: Staff Report

- i. Apologized for outhouse issues. There are over 80 latrines in the park, staff has been making repairs. Lots of trail work this season with Alaska Trails and Interior Trails.
- ii. Gates and security: Upper Huffmann and Birds bridge gates are now closed at night to prevent vandalism.
- iii. Over 100 white spruce were planted.
- iv. Volunteer hosts are gone for the season, with the exception of the year round host at Glen Alps.
- v. Thanks to the Boy Scouts for their work in the park this summer.
- vi. 3 new Public Use Cabin are now reservable on Reserve America
- vii. Host cabin remodels are finished at Eagle River and Bird Point.

b. Justin: Superintendent Report

- i. Indigenous place sign names have been installed, the final product is great.
- ii. South Fork/White Spruce/Rim Rail was paid for by STA and was brushed this month to a very high standard.
- iii. This fall: statewide managers meeting and statewide park specialists meeting, which will help the specialists have a better idea of their role.
- iv. Just under a year ago the law enforcement was separated from park specialists.
- v. CSP has a new trails boss: Leo. No returners from last year but hopefully next year will have returning crewmembers. The crew this year logged the entire Crow Pass trail (Leo did it twice).
- vi. Turnagain Arm Trail was brushed from Potter to McHugh.
- vii. Landslide on TAT: temporary signs were put up in the spring. DOT sent a geologist to evaluate. Rockfall mitigation is crucial to mitigating hazards right now, DOT is cleaning it out twice a week as there is lots of material up there. No good direction as this is a long-term issue that will require long-term funding, most likely summer after next (2027). Wildfires took all the good vegetation so erosion is now a huge problem.
- viii. Shaun asked where to send violation requests: CSP@alaska.gov

c. Tim: Law Enforcement Report May thru present

- i. 17 SARs, including high angle rescue on Bold Peak and Flat Top Mountain. Suicidal man on the cliff and was placed in title 47 custody. A hiker fell on Flat Top and was severely injured, resulting in a 30 minute helicopter rescue.
- ii. 1 black bear euthanized at Eklutna (hazing was attempted first)
- iii. 4 citations issued for bear-accessible food.

- iv. Also hazed bears at Eagle River Campground
- v. Multiple arrests made for weapons, drugs, and DUIs.
- vi. 145 citations for failure to pay fees, speeding, camping in undesignated areas, parking in handicapped area, littering, illegal dumping, etc.
- vii. Game cameras have been installed throughout the park which have helped. They are assisting with dumpings that range from grass clippings to entire household goods have been an issue at Briggs Bridge. They also helped locate two dirt bike riders. He acknowledged fish waste that Shaun reported but has a suspect but no identity. For immediate needs relating to enforcement or public safety issues, CAB members are encouraged to contact LEOs:
 - 1. Kellan Ford: 907-310-4844
 - 2. Tim Gurnett: 907-244-6068
- viii. Rangers are attempting to address homelessness, as they are failing to pay fees and camping in undesignated areas. Those tools have limited effectiveness as many homeless people cited in the park do not want to go to homeless shelters. Meth and fentanyl have been taken from many of them. Please let rangers know if you have an issue with homeless people "camping."
- ix. Mark asked about incidents: Powerline pass dirt bike issue and South Fork smash and dash. Photos help to investigate violators, and the smash and dash seemed isolated and resulted from complacency from park user.
- x. Clarification: LEOs are now only law enforcement and park specialists are helping manage the park.

9. Committee Reports:

- a. **Access (Bill):** Much of the CASA updates were covered in new business. Gus asked whether Access Committee covers new access or existing access. It's both.
- b. **Budget (Tyndall):** Previous legislative session was pretty brutal. Regarding LWCF: the state normally puts up matching money for the grant and the state chose not to put up as much as they could have. Therefore, it's up to municipalities and boroughs to close the gap. If members know of ways to match the LWCF grants, Tyndall requested that we work our contacts and skills.
- c. **Nomination (Gus):** Welcome Alison Smith, our newest member. One more open seat, ideally a diverse member with hunting and snowmachining interests will apply.
- d. **Seward Highway Design (no chair):** Will need a new chair. Justin is the OWJ (officer with jurisdiction for CSP) and has had meetings regarding the highway redesign. DOT will get an EA once all comments are taken into consideration. Progress will be made in the fall.
- e. **Trails (Gabrielle):** No update.

- f. **Chugach Park Fund (Kyle):** Gave a brief explanation of the CPF for Alison and other guests. They typically fund one big project per year plus smaller volunteer events throughout the year, such as brushing events. Summer update: July match was reached! They hit \$20,000 in July and a generous individual matched. They've raised almost \$¾ million since they started in 2017. The final cost of the Williwaw Lakes trail work will be posted at the next meeting.
- g. **Wildlife (Gus):** After conflict season ends, Corey Stantorf will coordinate with Justin to present to the CAB. Possible opening of the park to sheep hunting but much is unknown at this time. Closure of Albert Loop for the bears to eat the fish in peace. There are 9 individual brown bears in the 1 square mile section within the four corners from the ERNC parking lot and Gus' driveway. A few trails are closed until further notice, under Director's Order. The issue is not the bears, it is the people not giving bears their space. Salmon deck is the main attraction, all salmon made it past the beaver damn. Guest inquired about poached moose, along South Fork Campbell Creek. There was one illegally taken at Gasline/Powerline.
- h. **Planning (no chair):** No updates, need new chair.
- i. **Outreach (Rob):** No update.
- j. **Ram Valley (Rob):** No update.

10. Adjournment