

CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

Hybrid Electronic Microsoft Teams, 5:00 pm

BP Energy Center

Agenda for May 11, 2026

Regular meeting #5

1. Call to Order: 5:02 pm

2. Roll Call:

	May 11
Kyle Shedd	Excused
Bill Britt	Excused
Robin Dublin	Present
Tyndall Ellis	Present
Rob Clark	
Sarah Brey	Present
Clark Saunders	Excused
Kristin Vantrease	Present
Alison Smith	Present
Irene Turletes	Present
Mark Miner	Present
Gus Gustafson	Present
Gabbie Jordan	Present
Joe Hackenmueller	Present
Open position	

3. Changes to Agenda & Approval:

- Add JBER Environmental Assessment
- Tyndall motioned /Gabbie seconded

4. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:

- Approved

5. Public Comments:

- Acknowledged letters received
 - Bill Sherwonit, will be attached to the current minutes regarding Wildlife Committee
- Remind folks that 3 min max, and we'd like to only hear NEW comments, no need to repeat comments made previously.

6. Old Business: None

7. New Business:

A. Alaska Trails 2026 Trail Season Update

- a. 6 CSP events with volunteer events, first is 6/6 on Panorama Trail
- b. 5 listed on AT website, 1 is skills-specific so not available on website
- c. Park adjacent: Pioneer Peak trail but not funded by CPF
- d. 3 professional trail crews, 1 in the CSP on Lost Cabin/Wolverine Bowl. Trailhead will be impacted by helicopter operations on the move in and move out date.
- e. Sub-contractor Happy Trails working in Indian Valley
- f. A few more loops in Russian Jack springs park
- g. Applying for funding for bridges on Indian Valley trail
- h. Indian Valley ribbon cutting will happen in the fall
- i. Trails Conference was a great success, over 80 attendees.
- j. Trail prescriptions: CPF needs prescriptions to plan its funding. How are projects scoped out?
 - i. Trying to be more proactive about assessments and design being done before asking for funding.
 - ii. Good design and assessment will cost \$10-15k.
 - iii. Little O'Malley Peak trail was designed by Blaine Smith, volunteer. (less volunteer design work being done these days).
 - iv. Companies include: Kijik, Interior Trails, Alaska Trails just onboarded a Trails Program Officer with 13 years of trail design who will shadow other trail designers throughout the summer.
 - v. Near Point, Wolverine, Falls Creek: how to get trails prescriptions and how to know what can be funded? Have "plans on shelves" ready for execution.

- vi. Does the CAB want to weigh in on priorities? Justin's priorities are: Near Point, Falls Creek, Wolverine.
- vii. Falls Creek will probably be much more than expected.
- viii. 8 miles of Curry Ridge took 20 days.
- ix. Shorten the "catchup time" of trail improvement vs. access point improvement.
- x. Indian Valley improvements: 7.5 miles
- xi. IV: Now that it's not solely a winter trail, it's a lot higher than previously expected. In the winter it's a wash for avalanche exposure. Future potential for winter cut.

B. Memorial Request

- a. NOT a memorial! Dave and Kate Slyker.
- b. Friends of them suggested it after their son's passing.
- c. Requesting a special use permit to erect structure on trail.
- d. A known point for people to access outside and be prescribed by mental health professionals.
- e. Many organizations and professional organizations have committed support (see PowerPoint for list)
- f. Dozens of individual community support
- g. Using the Indigenous Place Names, working in harmony with nature. NOT a bench
- h. Structure content:
 - i. Mental health reflection
 - ii. Direction to mental health support resources
 - iii. Artwork from Dylan Slyker
- i. Destination name open for options
- j. Many aspects already taken care of with supplies/installation/design
- k. Proposed timing: late summer/early fall this year
- l. What can the CAB do? Letter of support and spread the word.
- m. Loop in Bill Pagaran, who fought to rename the Suicide Peaks
- n. Marker will not be right on the trail
- o. Special Use Permit will be renewed every 5 years
- p. Letter of support motioned by Tyndall/seconded by Robin
 - i. Yes votes
 - 1. Robin
 - 2. Tyndall
 - 3. Sarah

4. Kristin
5. Alison
6. Irene
7. Gus
8. Gabbie
9. Mark
10. Joe

C. JBER EA

- a. Public comment period from April 30-May 30
- b. They have had many trespass incidents in the past few years that are of concern
- c. Critical zones: Ship Creek along the highway and Landfill (6 ft tall fences with barbed wire)
- d. Doesn't directly impact CSP
- e. Vulnerable area A: neighborhoods along Muldoon, cut a buffer and upgrade fencing 3-4 recreational access points through the fence to control access.
- f. Hard vs. soft systems: fence vs. camera/electronics systems
- g. Military land is BLM land that has been leased to the military. Military manages their land while they have the lease.
- h. CAB should comment on:
 - i. Stuckagain Heights trailhead.
 - ii. Generically request wildlife corridors (studies)
 - iii. Strongly suggest not having human/wildlife combined crossings
 - iv. Request more comment time.
- i. Let Gabbie know if you have a more substantive comment idea.
- j. Justin encourages letters from the CAB and individuals. Motioned by Mark/seconded by Gus.
- k. None opposed. Gabbie will send out letter to CAB by 18th.

8. CSP Staff Report: Justin Dipaola-Allen, Ella Fitzwater

A. Justin

- a. Staff is getting everything opened for the summer season.
- b. America State Parks conference held in Girdwood, supported by CSP staff.
- c. Ella and Spencer graduated from Future Leader Summit.

- d. Hired new park tech with lots of prior history with trails and parks.
 - e. Campground hosts are setting up and will be trained this week.
 - f. Finalized hiring for their trail crew this summer, working primarily on Turnagain Arm Trail. If extra time, work towards Falls Creek.
 - g. Alaska Travels Forum event with land managers, mental health trust has lots of landholdings within the park.
 - h. Met with AAS and CNFAIC to keep current avalanche forecaster employed.
 - i. Native Plant Society
 - i. Hosts guided plant walk on Indian House.
 - ii. Turnagain Arm has been battling tropogonon species.
 - iii. Signs will be placed.
 - iv. Guided plant walks are on Tuesday nights.
 - j. Long Trail Coordinator new to Alaska Trails, met with Justin.
 - k. Opening dates for campgrounds:
 - i. Bird Creek: Friday, May 15th
 - ii. Eagle River: May 22nd
 - 1. Opening date is the top question to the DNR
 - iii. Eklutna: May 22nd
- B. Rangers:
- a. Participated in wildlife incidents meeting with multiple agencies
 - b. Brown bear baiting along Eagle River road
 - c. Multiple issues of illegal/unauthorized camping in the park
 - d. Falls Creek avalanche SAR April 17th
 - e. Getting boat ready for Eklutna
 - f. 2 SARs Glen Alps on same day, one avalanche and another person lost and wet
 - g. Signage will be installed that hiking Flat Top in the winter is in an avalanche zone
 - h. Avalanche beacon beeping sign will be installed at Glen Alps, which is the most visited avalanche terrain in Alaska
 - i. Turnagain Arm Hillside- someone had moved into a cave
- C. No work on McHugh rock slide because of no fundig. Potential to install a cable across since a reroute would not be trivial work.
- D. Several vacancies for rangers in the state parks.
- E. Matsu superintendent retired and staff is acting. Tiffany Walters moving to Fairbanks. General lack of staffing.

- F. Current AOs (administrative orders regarding hiring freeze) need to be officially rescinded, they won't automatically expire at end of term.
- G. Joe: Eklutna land claim along the high water mark of the river. Justin will look into it on the south side of Knik River valley.
- H. Justin gave history on land claims in AK and NALA.

9. Committee Reports:

- A. Discussion on reimplementing Wildlife Committee
 - a. Thanks to Bill for his letter and input.
 - b. Gus was former chair of Wildlife Committee
 - c. Moved back to standing committee. Gus and Robin will chat about it.
- B. Access (Bill): None
- C. Budget (Tyndall):
 - a. Joe reached out to Senator Merrick and asked about Capital Improvement projects from this year. None made it through the capital budget process, but additional \$2 mil was proposed for state parks and facilities that would generate revenue (such as cabins at ER campground).
 - b. Tyndall tracked \$2 mil and is in the senate operating bill and the house didn't pass. TBD if it all trickles out in the end.
 - c. It's promising because they spent two years trying to get the state to accept VRT from online rental programs, which was in limbo with vetoes but ultimately passed. Goal of getting funding to improve existing trails instead of just capital improvements.
- D. Nomination (Gus): None
- E. Seward Highway Design (Alison):
 - a. Nothing new on the website, waiting on 6F.
- F. Trails (Gabrielle): None.
- G. Chugach Park Fund (Kyle):
 - a. Trail Tails raised more money than ever before.
 - b. Continuing to get grants from AARP, APF, etc. CPF is funding \$150-200k of trail work this summer.
 - c. Trail work needs 10-15% of a total cost going to a prescription.
 - d. CPF trying to balance design vs. construction in the budget.
- H. Outreach (Robin): None.
- I. Wildlife (Gus/Robin): None.

Reminder that we have a **three month** break. On call for Justin if we need to call a special meeting.

10. Adjournment: Gus/Tyndall. 6:54.

From: Bill Sherwonit akgriz@hotmail.com

Subject: Some reasons that continuing (or resuming) a Wildlife Committee makes sense

Date: May 7, 2026 at 12:52

To: i.turletes i.turletes@gmail.com, Bill Britt bill@billbritt.us, jhackenm@gmail.com, vankristin@gmail.com, Mark Miner mcrminak@yahoo.com, Gus Gustafson gusgustafson99577@gmail.com, R Tyndall Ellis tyndall.ellis@gmail.com, Gabrielle Jordan gabrielle.jo27@gmail.com, sarahbrey@gmail.com, kylershedd@gmail.com, ted@alaskarockgym.com, Rob Clark 1robclark@gmail.com, clarksaunders@gmail.com, alisonalaska3@gmail.com, radublin907@gmail.com

Cc: Dipaola-Allen, Justin A (DNR) justin.dipaola-allen@alaska.gov

BS

Greetings once again to the CAB,

I sense that I sometimes come across as a grouchy old man when speaking to the board (or sending emails, like this one) about park issues. Maybe that's partly because my perspective often seems at odds with the CAB's and I'm too sensitive about that. I will strive to be more cheerful, though I'll still likely have plenty to say (or write). Like now.

Looking back at the email I sent you in March, I see that I've already made a strong pitch for the necessity of having an ongoing Wildlife Committee rather than an ad hoc one. Because the CAB will apparently reconsider this issue at the May meeting—something that I greatly appreciate—I will take this opportunity to repeat the arguments I made then and add one or two more.

For starters, I would remind CAB members that the high-profile presence of wildlife—in the form of bears, Dall sheep, moose, wolverines, and many other less "charismatic" species—is one of Chugach State Park's greatest values. And attractions. Here I will offer some prime examples: first, Windy Corner Dall sheep. As many and perhaps all of you are aware, Chugach State Park is the only place in Alaska—and the world—where Dall sheep can be viewed at sea level (or in a coastal area). Even more amazing, they can be easily seen, year-round, within a highway corridor that's a short drive from Alaska's urban center. And at times they're a remarkably short distance from that highway. How amazing is that?

Though it's not an activity that I support, I'll also point out that the park is a favored place for hunters to seek out mature rams, for both "trophies" and meat. The balance between sheep viewing and hunting, and the health of the park's Dall sheep population, are things that a Wildlife Committee should, in my opinion, keep close tabs on.

The park is also one of the best places in Alaska—and the world—to see large numbers of moose during the autumn. A primary "post-rut" gathering occurs in the South Fork Campbell Creek valley, just a short walk from the Glen Alps parking lot. Large numbers of people watch this "wildlife spectacle" every fall. At the same time, later in the fall hunters leave from Glen Alps to hunt moose in that same valley, an easily accessible hunting opportunity unique (I would argue) to CSP.

Here's another notable example: Chugach State Park is an important refugia for wolverines, with trapping allowed on nearby or even adjacent state lands. Several years ago (well over a decade at this point), the Board of Game (BOG) voted to change the park's trapping regulations to include wolverines, which had been protected since the park's earliest years. Because no one from the park—either staff or the CAB—testified against this proposal, the BOG assumed CSP's managers had no problems with this change and voted to allow wolverine trapping (despite the strong opposition of the local wildlife manager, then Rick Sinnott). Fortunately several local

opposition of the local wildlife manager, then Rick Shilott. Fortunately several local wildlife advocates (including former governor Tony Knowles!) formed a group called "Team Wolverine," and we stirred up enough local opposition that the BOG reversed its vote and again chose to protect wolverines inside the park. I bring this up as a cautionary tale of sorts, and further evidence of the need to have an active Wildlife Committee year round.

Something similar to the wolverine situation nearly happened this year, but thanks to a last-minute push by Justin, with help from some CAB members I believe, testimony on behalf of the park was presented in a timely manner to the BOG. As I noted in my earlier email, tracking Fish and Game's management of wildlife within the park is to me a primary responsibility of the board, in large part (and here I'm repeating myself) because the presence of wildlife in CSP is one of the park's chief assets.

I will also again emphasize the need--and value--of a Wildlife Committee that builds a solid relationship with the local area management biologist, right now Cory Stantorf. As I have previously noted, his appearance at the January meeting would have been an ideal opportunity to ask him about the upcoming BOG meeting, what he viewed as significant proposals affecting the park, and his position on various proposals (and his rationale for his positions). Hunts occur in the park for much of the year: in the spring and again from late summer into fall and (depending on the weather) even early winter. At least some of those hunts affect other recreational activities, for instance the moose hunt that occurs in the South Fork Campbell Creek valley and assorted Dall sheep hunts, including a hunt in one of my favorite places, Falls Creek Valley. In the past, the creation of new hunts has sometimes proved controversial and the CAB has taken public testimony and weighed in on some of those hunts, including black (and eventually brown) bear hunts in McHugh Creek valley. I could go on, but I'll simply repeat my main point: to me, keeping track of the park's wildlife and their management should be an ongoing CAB priority.

That's all I have to say—for now anyway. 😊 Because you now have this extended email argument in support of a full-time Wildlife Committee, I expect I'll have little to say about the subject on Monday, except to again thank you for reconsidering your earlier decision to make it an ad-hoc thing. (I think I have that right.)

Thanks again to those who've stayed with me—and for the opportunity to participate in the board process and express my opinions and perspectives. I do appreciate the importance of what you do and your investment of time and energy on behalf of the park and all it includes. Cheers,
Bill Sherwonit