

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday, March 8, 2018

5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center

514 Funny River Rd., Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Keith Baxter, William Tappan, Glen Arundell, Monte Roberts, Ted Wellman, Michael Frost, Brent Hibbert, Matt Connor, Brian Marston, Andrew Carmichael, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.
- B. **Minutes:** Minutes were approved as written.
- C. **Agenda:** Agenda was approved.
- D. **Public Comment/Presentation:**

II. REPORTS

- 1. Agency and Government Reports:
 - a. State Parks-Jack Blackwell provided the board with the following report:
 - The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have signed and published a final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Sterling Highway (milepost 45 – 60) improvement project near Cooper Landing . The Final EIS contains updates and changes to the March 2015 Draft Supplemental EIS (DSEIS) based on comments and new information. The Juneau Creek route is the preferred alternative.
 - The Eagle Rock boat launch and parking area improvement project is underway.
 - The Spur Highway realignment project will begin this summer and the first phase will improve the highway between Kenai and the Eagle Rock boat launch. This was going to initially impact the right-of-way (ROW) near the Eagle Rock boat launch and displace people that would be parking in the area. DOT has informed Parks that a small section of the ROW will not be affected in the first phase of construction. Because of this, State Parks will not be issuing a Request for Proposals to provide off-site parking.
 - The minutes have been updated on the KRSMA website.
 - The KRSMA board recruitment is open until March 31, 2018. Applications are available on-line or by contacting Jack Blackwell at 907-262-5581 Ext. 21 or jack.blackwell@alaska .gov
 - b. DEC-Jeanne Swartz provided the board with the following report:
 - DEC is currently working on preparing the responses to the public regarding the comments received on the 2014/2016 draft integrated water quality monitoring and assessment report. From the 20 comments received, 17 pertain to the Kenai River. The final report will be sent to EPA for approval and that is when the River will be listed.
 - DEC is currently working on the 2018 integrated report which is scheduled to be completed by April 2018.
 - The 2018 Aqua Grants have been approved for project that are focused on improving water quality. Three of these grants will be on the Kenai Peninsula. The projects



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include the Kenai Watershed, Kenai River Boat count on the lower Kenai River, Beach monitoring during the Kenai River Dip Net season and stream bank restoration at Anchor River. The grant season runs through February 2018.

- c. ADF&G- Brain Marston provided the board with the following report:
- The 2018 outlook for Kenai River Early and Lat Run King salmon are available online at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?>
- d. USF&WS-Matt Connors provided the board with the following report:
- The Refuge is currently working on hiring camp hosts. They currently have one couple for Hidden Lake and one for Upper Skilak Lake. The monies from the per client fees that the Refuge collects from Commercial Operators are going to be used to pay a stipend to these volunteers.
 - Volunteer staff is also being hired for the visitor center. Matt currently has two couples from the lower 48 with their own RV.

Keith Baxter asked for clarification of the camping regulation that was proposed for below Skilak Lake area. Matt said that the proposal to limit camping below Skilak Lake was included in the proposed regulations plan, but after extensive public comment and the completion of the process the proposal was removed from the plan. More information about the process can be found at:https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Kenai/visit/proposed_public_use_regulations.html

- e. USFS/Chugach National Forest –Marion Glaser provided the board with the following report:
- The Forest Service is in the process of hiring seasonal staff for the summer.
 - Marion is currently working on the Educational Interpretation Plan.
 - Phase 1 of the Russian River entrance redesign is scheduled to begin soon.
- f. City of Kenai – No Report
- g. City of Soldotna – Andrew Carmichael provided the board with the following report:
- The City of Soldotna has currently appropriated \$35,000 dollars for a wastewater study. One of the goals it to connect the City of Soldotna with Kenai’s wastewater facility.
 - The addition of walkways, French drain and spruce tree revetment is ongoing at Swiftwater Park.
- h. Kenai Peninsula Borough- Brent Hibbert provided the board with the following report:
- The Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly proposed bed tax did not pass.
 - The Assembly is still working with the school district in finalizing the budget.
 - Kelly Cooper from Homer proposed to raise the sales tax cap from 3% to 3.5%. The next hearing for that is scheduled for April.

2. Committee Reports

- a. President’s Report-Ted Wellman commented that since the February board meeting he received several negative comments in reference to the letter that was sent to DEC regarding the turbidity listing. The feedback he received has been widely varied in terms of some that say it is too aggressive and other say it was not aggressive enough. Ted

attended a few council meetings to address their concerns to the letter and the board responses to major topics and issues. This will be discussed more under new business. One question was how do you address if there is a representative on the board, is the decision that the representative makes that of the full body they are representing? Ted recommended that the full body they represent should submit their own comments or recommendation and that the representative on the KRSMA board abstain from the voting on the matter. Joe Connors and Ted had a discussion with Robert Ruffner about the matter and the larger issue is notification of meetings and issues that are being discussed at the Kenai River Special Management board meetings. The board is going to work on making this process easier.

Keith talked about the letter that was put on the agenda by a Soldotna City council member. The letter was supported by the council. Keith also supplied Pam with the email address of the council members to be added to the KRSMA mailing list for future announcement on meeting agendas and minutes.

- b. Guide Advisory –Monte Roberts reported that the committee review the list of Kenai River bank closure from the list that was provided by Brian Marston from Alaska Department of Fish and Game. There was also discussion about the two separate DNR and DFG signs and their meaning. One sign is for the activity of the angler and the other sign protects the habitat. The committee did not find any current closure that could be changed.
- c. Habitat -Keith Baxter provided the committee with a list of topics for discussion to aid in setting the habitat committee priorities for the Kenai River. One item was a plan for human waste and over use camping along the Kenai River above Bing's Landing SRA. The committee recommendation was to focus on the turbidity listing on the Kenai and human waste on the upper river.
- d. River Use –Bill Tappan reported that there is a tremendous amount of overlap between the Habitat and River Use committee. It is recommended that the two committee have a joint meeting to discuss sanitation on the upper Kenai River and camping below Skilak Lake. Bill was assigned to contact Andy Loranger of the Refuge to assign a Refuge representative to participate in the discussion about sanitation and camping on the upper river. The committee talked about options such as the success of the composting toilet that is currently in Kachemak Bay State Park, Halibut Cove Lagoon area. There was also discussion about anchor floating restroom on the river. At the April River Use committee meeting the topic regarding derbies on the Kenai River will be discussed.
- e. Legislative/Government Activities-No Report

III. OLD BUSINESS:

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Letters written to Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and to Department of Environment Conservation.

Keith also recommended that the board write a letter to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in regard to reviewing the regulations about the camping below Skilak Lake.

Keith made a motion that the board write a letter to the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge regarding Camping and Sanitation at campsites within the Refuge below Skilak Lake.

Glen Arundell second the motion.

Ted will send a draft of the letter to the board for comments before sending it to the Refuge.

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Mike Frost would like to see the letter focus more on human waste and disposal methods than camping.

The motion passed unanimously.

Keith made a motion that the board send a letter to DEC requesting to give a presentation followed by a discussion to the board, committees and any interested parties to educate about turbidity and the background information so that everyone can have a better understand the scientific principles underlying turbidity. There would also be time for the interested parties to ask questions.

Monte seconds the motion

The motion passed unanimously

2. **Board Response to Major Topics and Issues-** Ted said that he would like to have feedback from the board on how we handle this difficult problem. Most of the time we have had the opportunity to have time for a letter or response to be formulated and the board is able to wain on the matter. But there are times that the issue has a deadline that does not allow the board to take the time to go back to their organization and get feedback on the issue. Former board member Rick Koch developed a policy on how to handle issue the same night they are presented if there is a time limitation to meet filing deadlines. Discuss it the same night to get a feeling of what everyone thoughts are then draft the letter, send it to the board for discussion at the next meeting. Bill Tappan recommended that there could be another meeting scheduled to. Mike Frost said that the letter is the feeling and thoughts of the board and the other entities can submit their own letter or recommendations. Ted said if the letter is sent out for comments to all the board members, how do your address each representative comment if there is a short period of time.

Keith would like to see that any correspondence be sent to the board members prior to sending it. Keith recommended that the letters are sent to all the voting members and there is an up or down vote conducted via email. That way the record would reflect the results.

Glenn commented that if the advisory board agrees on something then if the other representative is not in agreement they would be able to send in a letter from there organization.

Ted recommended that we take a vote by asking each voting member and record what each member's reply. So, if a representative abstains that can be recorded.

Keith recommends that we record each member vote.

Ted commented that this is something that has been done in the pass.

Brent would like to have the letter in hand to present to the Mayor and borough assembly would have time to review the letter.

Monte recommended that the legislative committee look at the procedure and policy and bring a recommendation back to the board.

V. CORRESPONDENCE:

- VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Todd Smith commented that he has been receiving the announcements for the committee and board meetings for the last 6 years but he did not receive the email pertaining to the

discussion regarding the 2014/2016 draft integrated water quality monitoring and assessment report. Turbidity is not the biggest issue the board has to deal with, it is more the way the process of how the letter was drafted and sent was the problem. Look back at the original intent of the board and that the management plan needs to be updated.

Commented that we follow the bylaws as close as possible, but there are exceptions.

Jeff Dolifka commented that is very hard exceptionally when it is a political or allocation subject. He commented that the board did the best they could with the issue at hand.

VII. BOARD COMMENTS

Keith Baxter is resigning from the KRSMA board because he is taking a new job in Anchorage.

Brian Marston commented that they had good response to open recruitment for the Fish and Game Assistant Sport Fish managers position. Interviews have not been scheduled.

Bill commented at the Trout Unlimited meeting the board voted to make a priority to study anadromous stream populations in drainage that are not accounted for presently or may have not been study in a long time.

Jack Blackwell thanked Keith Baxter for his service on the board

Ted Wellman will not be at the April meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT



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