

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

***** Meeting Minutes*****

Thursday January 8, 2015

5:30 p.m.

Gilman River Center

Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

1. **Roll Call:** Joe Conners, Ricky Gease, Brenda Trefon, Keith Baxter, Clayton Holland, Dwight Kramer, Andrew Szczesny, Ted Wellman, Andrew Carmichael, Brent Johnson, Andy Loranger, Matt Conner, Robert Begich, Jack Blackwell, Tim Stevens and Jack Blackwell.

Guests: Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Natural Resource Ed Fogels, Director of Alaska State Park Ben Ellis.

2. **Minutes Approval:** Approved as written.

3. **Agenda Changes:** Joe Conners recommended that under new business we add item C recruitment and under old business item B, sockeye stamp/user fee. Change under old business item "b" to "a" and "a" to "b."

Approval: Agenda was approved as amended.

II. Public Comments/Presentations: Steve Vanek commented that he was interested in the election of President and Vice president of the Kenai River Special Management Area board.

1. Agency and Government Reports:

A. State Parks

- Deputy Commissioner Ed Fogels thanked the board for all the work they do and also the work on the bylaws changes. It's an interesting time; Governor Walker has appointed Mark Myers Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources starting January 15, 2015. Marty Rutherford is the Deputy Commissioner, who has previously worked for the department for 19 years. At this time the rest of the department is on hold for any changes to staff.
- Director Ben Ellis gave an update on the budget process. Currently, Governor Walker moved forward the proposed budget by Governor Parnell with little changes. The only significant change the Governor Walker made was that every capital budget project that did not have federal funding associated with it was pulled out of the budget. This budget has currently been submitted to the legislature and the Governor has until February 18th to turn in his final budget. This past week the state purchased the Kimbrough property on the Kasilof River and this site will be the future State Park boat retrieval site. State Park's is also currently in discussion with Jim Trujillo for the possible purchase of his property that is the adjacent to the Kimbrough's property. This would make a combined ten acre lot and would help in additional parking and entering and exiting of the boat retrieval area. Parks is looking at the safest boat retrieval mechanism possible.

Jack Blackwell provided the board members with the following report:

- Jack announces the hiring of the new Kenai River Ranger Melissa Smith.
- State Parks and the Department of Fish and Game co-manage the River Ranch property along the Kenai River. This includes 130 acres off the Funny River Road near Kenai River Mile 31. Last session, the Funny River community secured \$35,000 to conduct a planning process for the property. Parks and ADFG have formed a planning team for this project and will be coordinating public scoping meetings in January. The first public scoping meeting will be held on January 20, 2015 at the Gilman River Center in Soldotna and the second public scoping meeting will be held on



January 21, 2015 at the Atwood Building in Anchorage. The planning team is hoping to have a site plan developed by May 2015.

B. DEC –Tim Stevens provided board members with the following report:

The two “Actions” for the Kenai River that are in our grant solicitation that is open until February 9, 2015. Alaska Clean Water Action FY16 grants info.

Concern: Enterococci and/or fecal coliform bacteria

Action a: Develop planning documents

THIS ACTION IS ELIGIBLE FOR BEACH FUNDING. Bacteria monitoring has been conducted at the Kenai River beaches each summer since 2010. Exceedances of state’s bacteria water quality standards were found during each sampling period. The objective of this action is to create a final report that can be used by the City of Kenai and state agencies to make future management decisions. The report will include an evaluation of the bacteria data collected from 2010-2015 and a comparison of the results to the State’s water quality standards. The report will compare the data to water quality criteria protecting the designated uses for both recreation and harvesting of raw mollusk and other aquatic life in marine waters including single sample or 10% exceedance criteria, and the geometric mean exceedance criteria. The applicant will conduct a trend analysis to determine if bacteria levels have increased or decreased over the five year sampling period. The report should also include a discussion of the human health risk based on the source of the bacteria. The report will include a history of services provided by the City of Kenai to beach users such as: beach raking, dumpsters, toilets, fresh water, beach access and camping; a comparison of the personal use fishery harvest records for the last 10 years to the levels of bacteria found; a discussion on other possible bacteria sources such as: waterfowl, other wildlife (seals, belugas), the City of Kenai wastewater treatment facility, beach dumpsters and toilets; and information on the size, growth, and timing of the gull rookery located upstream of the beaches and possible relationship to tidal influences. The applicant will provide a draft report to DEC and the City of Kenai for review and comment; comments will be incorporated into a final report.

If you follow the link at the end of this email it will take you to the EPA factsheet that talks about the new recreational waters water quality criteria and standards. Currently the state uses fecal coliform as the indicator bacteria we test for. The indicator bacteria EPA would like states to use are *E. coli* and enterococci. *E. coli* and enterococci are more specific to warm blooded animal than fecal Coliform which can be found in the soil - go figure. Our fecal coliform standard is 200 CFU (colony forming units) per 100 ml of water. If you go to the link you will see the *E. coli* and enterococci levels are much lower. Based on the fecal coliform and enterococci data we collected at the Kenia River beaches over the last five years we believe the levels we found are higher than the new EPA standards.

<http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/standards/criteria/health/recreation/upload/factsheet2012.pdf>

Concern: Turbidity

Action b: Conduct education and outreach

THIS IS A HIGH PRIORITY ACTION. Turbidity data collected from 2008 through 2010 indicate human caused turbidity levels in the lower Kenai River (RM 13.0 to RM 5) are elevated above natural conditions. Elevated turbidity levels and changes in turbidity outside of natural occurrences can have negative impacts to fish, other aquatic life, and recreational users. This action will begin a public dialogue concerning human caused turbidity in the lower Kenai River and seek input on possible solutions. The applicant will engage the public and agencies (Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Kenai Peninsula Borough) and other interested parties to solicit and evaluate potential actions that can be taken to reduce turbidity in the river. The applicant will compile the information gathered and submit the draft report to DEC and involved parties for review and comment. The report will include a discussion on each potential action identified by the public, the pros and cons (in tables) for each action and the steps that must be taken before an action can successfully be implemented (e.g., voluntary action vs. regulatory action, and if regulatory, what agency has the authority to regulate). The applicant will incorporate comments into the final report for submittal. The 2008-2010 lower Kenai River turbidity report can be viewed by clicking on the following web link:

http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wnpssc/protection_restoration/KenaiRiverWQ/pdfs/KWF_KENAI_RIVER_TURBIDITY_REPORT.pdf.

C. **ADF&G** –Robert Begich provided the board members with the following report:

- The 2015 Chinook salmon research initiative project lists for the Kenai Rivers have not been finalized. Also, the Chinook salmon forecast for 2015 are on the same timeline as 2014 for the board of fisheries and may be available in February.

D. **USFS/Chugach**-No Report

E. **US F&WS**- Andy Loranger provided board members with the following report:

- The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge comprehensive, conservation management plan was finalized in 2010. There were some changes to regulations such as the dispersed camping on the upper Kenai River. The draft language being proposed is as follow: **“Within 100 yards of the Kenai River banks along the Upper Kenai River from river mile 73 to its confluence with Skilak Lake (river mile 65), and along the middle Kenai River downstream of Skilak Lake (river mile 50 to river mile 45.5) , we allow camping only at designated primitive campsites. Campers can spend no more than 3 consecutive nights at the designated primitive campsites.”**

Matt Conner provided board members with the following report:

- The date has changed for the “soft opening” of the new Kenai National Wildlife Refuge visitor center to February 13, 2015 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. This is to give all the partners a chance to view the center before it opens to the public in May 2015.

F. **City of Kenai**-No Report

G. **City of Soldotna** –Andrew Carmichael provided board members with the following report:

- The city is waiting for snow to start the hydrological study for Swiftwater campground for future improvements, such as access and bank improvements.
- The city is also currently working with Parks and Department of Fish and Game in establishing a connecting trail on the state property that is located between the Soldotna visitor center and Centennial Campground.
- The city is moving forward with the river information signage program. This would help with getting people to the river and to protect the habitat area. The signs would provide and develop a signage program for environmental responsible use of the river.

H. **Kenai Peninsula Borough**-Brent Johnson had no report.

C. **Committee Reports**

- a. **President’s Report**-Joe Connors announced two set of appointments to sub-committees of the Kenai River Special management board as follows: Brent Johnson and Keith Baxter will co-chair the habitat committee. Andy Szczesny and Dwight Kramer will co-chair the Habitat committee. Joe also thanked everyone that participated in all of the committee meetings.
- b. **Guide Advisory**-Joe Connors reported that the committee met and talked about a variety of subject. One of the items discussed was about the fee structure and the increase in fees within the Kenai River Special Management Area. All annual passes are increasing except for day parking. Boat launch fees are increasing and the Pillars is going up from \$15.00 to \$20.00. Commercial operator’s fees are also increasing by \$50.00 .

Another item on the agenda was guided shore anglers versus guide boats. Bank anglers and guide boats use the same shore line, often causing overcrowding. There are a lot of people using the resource and it is causing conflict. There will be future discussion.

There was discussion about a sockeye salmon stamp fee. The committee will be developing a proposal of implementation of the stamp, fee and dispersal of revenue.



- c. **Habitat** – Brent Johnson reported that the habitat committee discussed the Kenai River Special Management Area downstream of the Warren Ames Bridge. This discussion included the user groups during the dip net fishery and possible solutions of the bank erosion that is currently occurring. Some of the proposed solutions included spreading the dip net fishery upstream of the Warren Ames Bridge and adding elevated walkway near the bridge along the shore to direct people off the vegetative area along the river.
The KRSMA boundary is downstream of the bridge and motors are limited to 50 horsepower or less. The effects of the waters high tides in the area have cause unique bank erosion and have made bank restoration solutions difficult. There is discussion to form a bridge access working group which would include agencies and state officials to look at the area and possible solutions.
Ideas to accomplish this year include looking at Mary King habitat reports and where are they now. Sockeye stamp and needed for funds for habitat restoration and infrastructure along the river. There was a proposal in sending a letter to bank violators along the Kenai River. Bank camping on the river is a problem. Create new river access along the river to help with overcrowding. The committee recommended extending the state parks regulations to have 50 horsepower motor restriction down to the city of Kenai dock.
- d. **River Use** – No Report
- e. **Legislative/Government Activities** – No Report
- f. **Board Development/ Nomination** – No Report
- g. **Agenda/Board Structure/Housekeeping** – No Report

III. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Sockeye Stamp/User fee- These are recommendation as to why the group sold move forward with the recommendation:
 1. The comprehensive plane suggests that a user fee should be implemented with the recommendation that it is used for enforcement and other things on the Kenai River.
 2. Revenue-this would be implemented throughout the state and would also include a sockeye stamp. How would the monies would be distributed with all state, local and federal entities? Ricky Gease commented that through the Governor’s transition team, recommendations for this process will be outlines in the report due out within the next two weeks. This would have to go through a legislative process. The KRSMA would be a good avenue for forwarding suggestion to the legislation.
 3. Many would be in favor as long as the monies went back to into the Kenai River Special Management Area resources. More definition is required before moving forward.
 4. Joe Connors and Dwight Kramer recommend this be moved to the legislative committee for further development.
 5. Focusing the money on enforcement and not just capital projects.
 6. Should this be just area or statewide in implementation?
 7. Should this be narrow in the scope or should it be just implemented on the Kenai Peninsula, Kasilof and Kenai or just Kenai.
 8. KRSMA should send this recommendation to the commissioner.
 9. Rough out what you want the process to look at.

- b. Election of President and Vice President

There are two openings and there will be written ballots submitted for each position.

Dwight nominated Ted Wellman for president. Ted accepted.

Dwight moved to close the nomination, Brent Second.

The vote passed unanimously

Ricky nominated Brent Johnson for Vice

Nominations are closed.

The vote passed unanimously

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Bing's Landing Update- Jack reported that there was a joint committee meeting between the guide and river use committees for the Bing's boat landing area. There were three concepts of floating docks that were presented. A floating dock in front or downstream of the existing platform and possible improvements upstream of the boat launch for additional use, such as articulated mating for boats. Staff will be meeting with River center agencies discussing these concepts and there will be another joint meeting in February about the concept.
Also in February we will be discussing new concepts for the Izaak Walton boat launch area.
- b. Recruitment-Jack Blackwell reported the terms of the members expires the end of October of each respectful year. The new bylaws state that the terms will expire June 30, 2015. Currently there is some lag time between the current year and the next recruitment. The first option is the three people whose term expires this year in October be cut short to expire June 30 of this year. State Parks would start recruitment January 15, 2015 and close February 15, 2015. The board and the Director of Park and Outdoor recreation of designee shall discuss the application and no later than a month prior to expiration of the term of office, nominate to the commissioner individuals for each vacancy. This would cut all future members by two months.

The Motion passed unanimously.

V. CORRESPONDENCE:

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Steve Vanek from Ninilchik has been drifting in the inlet for 50 and said the drift fisherman cannot catch the same fish as the set netters.
- Dave Martin of Clam Gulch said the Sockeye user fee is a tax and this concept needs to be brought before the public. It may be a hard sell.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

- a. Board Comments:
 - Keith appreciated everyone that attended the meeting and also on Mr. Martins comments.
 - Matt enjoyed the committee meetings.
 - Clayton also enjoyed the habitat meeting.
 - Ricky congratulated the president and vice. Also looking forward to look at additional funding for the River, such as the Sockeye stamp. There is habitat friendly access.
 - Ben thanked the board and appreciated the boards' advice.
 - Brenda will not be in attendance for the February meeting.
 - Brent thanked the board for being elected vice president. He will review the packets and bring them back to the next meeting.
 - Dwight really appreciated the level of energy that was felt with this last meeting
 - Robert thanked Joe for his past service.
 - Andy was glad to be back on the board.
 - Ted thanked Joe for his service.

