

## Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

### \*\*\* Meeting Minutes\*\*\*

Thursday May 14, 2015,  
5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center  
Soldotna, AK

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Brenda Trefon, Keith Baxter, Dwight Kramer, Andrew Szczesny, Ted Wellman, Andrew Carmichael, Matt Connor, Robert Begich, Jack Blackwell, Ben Ellis and Cindy Gilder.
- B. **Minutes Approval:** Approved as written.
- C. **Agenda:** Approved as written.

#### II. Public Comments/Presentations

1. Dean Hughes from Alaska Department of Fish and Game with Heather Fuller from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave an overview presentation of the Kenai Habitat Restoration and Protection Cost Share Program. This program provides private land owners with technical expertise and funding for habitat restoration and protection projects along salmon streams on the Kenai Peninsula. Examples of past successful projects included: bank stabilization techniques such as installing rootwads, bio-engineered bank solutions, and cabled spruce trees; protecting existing bank vegetation by constructing, light-penetrating gratwalks, decks, and stairways; and removing structures that are detrimental to salmon, such as jetties and bulkheads.
2. Robert Ruffner gave an overview presentation of The Kenai River Fish Habitat Partnership. The mission of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan is to protect, restore and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation and improve the quality of life for the American people. This mission will be achieved by supporting existing fish habitat partnerships and fostering new efforts.; mobilizing and focusing national and local support for achieving fish habitat conservation goals; setting national and regional fish habitat conservation goals; measuring and communicating the status and needs of fish habitats; and providing national leadership and coordination to conserve fish habitats. The Goals are to: protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems; prevent further degradation of fish habitats that have been adversely affected; reverse declines in the quality and quantity of aquatic habitats to improve the overall health of fish and other aquatic organisms; and increase the quality and quantity of fish habitats that support a broad natural diversity of fish and other aquatic species

#### III. REPORTS

##### 1. Agency and Government Reports:

###### A. State Parks-Jack Blackwell provided the board members with the following report:

- The current development plans for the River Ranch project have been submitted to the Bureau of Land Management. The plans need to meet the conservation easement criteria prior to moving forward with the planning process.
- Izaak Walton SRA is currently closed for boat launch, dock and water well improvement. It is projected to be open by May 15th, 2015. Eagle Rock is closed until water level rise in the river.
- The Kenai state park office is currently looking for hosts at several of the recreation areas on the peninsula. The Eagle Rock volunteer position has yet to be hired.
- Stormy Lake in Nikiski is still closed until September for evasive species removal of Elodea.
- Kasilof boat retrieval site. State has purchase the Kimbrough property which is upstream of the Trujillo property. Jim Trujillo has shown interest in selling his 11 acre parcel to the state. A current purchase agreement is being discussed and further environmental studies will be conducted on site.

Ben Ellis, Director of Alaska State Parks, provided the board members with the following report:

- The KRSMA nominating committee conducted seven interviews for the three open positions. The seven applications with recommendation, notes and comments were sent to the Commissioner's office for the selection of the three open positions.



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Kenai Peninsula Borough, 144 N. Binkley, Soldotna, AK 99669 907-262-4441  
Gilman River Center 514 Funny River Road, Soldotna, AK 99669, 907-260-4882  
Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Kenai Peninsula Borough



- The current budget for FY 2016 includes a \$500,000 cut to the state parks. Approximately 78% of the budget is personnel. In response to this proposed cut, Parks is planning to eliminate all services and staff in Valdez and Sitka. In addition, a ranger in Wood Tikchik State Park will also be eliminated.
  - The Governor is considering the possibility of a state government shutdown. The two possible times a shutdown could occur is at the beginning of the Fiscal year, July 1, 2015 or the second option would be when the department would run out of money. That would be an October or November time. At this time, this is very unlikely, but the possibility exists.
  - Currently State Parks is working to stay within the budget that has been proposed by the governor. This will spread state park employees thin and may reduce services in several areas throughout the state.
  - For the 2015 season several park fees have been increased. Some of the increases include commercial operator permit, boat launch decals, day use passes, camping fee, per client fees and public use cabin. Also, a new park unit will be opening soon in the Matsu area. Currently fees are approximately 42% of the current operating budget and the projection for the 2016 season is to be 50% of the operating budget.
- B. DEC-Cindy Gilder provided the board members with the following report:
- A five year strategical planning process within the agency has been completed and the Kenai River is still listed as a high priority for protection and assessment.
  - DEC is also looking at such things as bacteria, turbidity and toxic specific to metals and sediments. The group is looking a criterion for evaluating water bodies for listing as impaired. The listing criteria would include for such things as petroleum, turbidity and evasive species.
- C. ADF&G-Robert Begich provided the board members with the following report.
- Field crews are currently gearing up the 2015 season. The lower King salmon sonar site is slated to up and running by the 16<sup>th</sup> of May.
  - The early run Russian River sockeye run is been predicted to be above average,
  - The early run King salmon season is closed. The second run of king season will be determined in the first week July.
- D. USF&WS- Matt Conner provided the board members with the following report:
- The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge visitor center will have a grand opening on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 1pm. The center is currently open to visitors and the number of visitors compared to last year at this time has tripled.
  - The cabin crew is fully staff and working on repairing and maintaining cabins through the refuge system.
  - The trail crews are currently working on maintaining and clearing area trails.
  - A student conservation group will spike out in the refuge for about four weeks. How to manage trails.
  - Youth conservation core will be working with the cabin and trails crew and assisting them in many projects.
  - The visitor center will be sponsoring a showcase event every Saturday at 1pm through August. Watch the local paper for the schedule.
- E. USFS/Chugach- No Report
- F. City of Kenai--No Report
- G. City of Soldotna- Andrew Carmichael provided the board members with the following report:
- The crews are working to install all the stairs and walkways in at the City of Soldotna recreation areas.
  - 190 feet of walkway and stairs have been installed at Centennial Park. This is to keep people in the water and off the bank.
  - The connection with the walkways between Centennial and the City of Soldotna visitor's center has been put on hold until the next fall.
  - The lagoon at Centennial Park has been dredged for the 2015 season.
  - Swiftwater Campground expansion will start in May 2015. This will add 42 additional sites to the campground.
- H. Kenai Peninsula Borough-No report.
- I. Keith Baxter reported to the board that the Kenai River week long cleanup is coming to an end. To date 536 school children with 105 adults have collected 3,660 pounds of trash off the banks of the Kenai River. From Skilak Lake to Jim's landing 206 pounds of trash has been collected. Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup> will be the final day for the cleanup. A barbecue will be for 10.30am until 1 pm at Soldotna Creek park. Keith is hoping to break the 4000 pound mark this year.

Jack Blackwell thanked Keith Baxter and Mark Glassmaker for coordinating this event and many of the sponsors and event partners that are involved.

## 2. Committee Reports

- a. President's Report-Ted Wellman reported to the board that the Federal Subsistence net proposal for the Kenai River is still an open issue. The Kenai River Sport fishing Association has resources to help with individuals that would like to send a letter opposing this proposal. Over 100 letters of reconsideration have been submitted to date.
- b. Guide Advisory –No Report
- c. Habitat –No Report
- d. River Use –No Report
- e. Legislative/Government Activities-No Report
- f. Board Development –No Report
- g. Agenda/Board Structure/Housekeeping-No Report

## 3. OLD BUSINESS

1. ADOT Cooper Landing Bypass-Dwight Kramer gave the motion to support the Juneau Creek Alternative for the Cooper Landing Bypass. Joe Connors seconds the motion. Dwight said that the River Use Committee recommended moving the highway as far away from the Kenai River as possible. The Juneau Creek alternative stays away from the river the most and protecting the river basin.

Andy Szczesny hope that the process moves forward and it does not come back for discussion in 10 years.

Joe Connors called the question.

The board unanimously supported moving the Sterling Highway that currently goes through Cooper Landing to the Proposed Juneau Creek Alternative route.

2. Homer Electric Grant Lake Hydro project- Joe Connors made a motion to support the Homer Electric Grant Lake Hydro project. Keith Baxter seconds the motion.

Ted Wellman commented about the presentation that was given by Mike Selzetti and Joe Gallagher of Homer Electric. The presentation discussed the FERC process and how more fish habitat would be created for fish then there currently is.

Keith Baxter asked if we were going to discuss the road to access the power plant. Brenda Trefon- amended the proposal to have the road closed to vehicle traffic by the public. Dwight second the motion.

Brenda would like to have the road restricted to no motorized vehicles, not public use. Pam Russell explained that the road would be an easement and would have to go through the public process. At that time many of the questions of use would be addresses.

Ted called the question on the amendment to close the road to vehicular traffic by the public. The amendment was defeated.

Joe Connors called the question to vote on the original proposal to support the Grant Lake hydro project.

The original motion passed unanimously.

## 4. NEW BUSINESS

5. **CORRESPONDENCE** –The boating safety mandatory PFD resolution was drafted, signed by Ted Wellman and submitted to Alaska State Park Director Ben Ellis. Jack Blackwell said this will be submitted in the next regulations package.

**PUBLIC COMMENT-** None

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

- A. Board Comments
- B. Date/Agenda of Next Meeting September 10, 2015 at 5:30 p.m

