

Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board

*** Meeting Minutes***

Thursday, November 12, 2015,
5:30 p.m. Gilman River Center
Soldotna, AK

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. **Roll Call:** Joe Connors, Ricky Gease, Brendyn Shiflea, Keith Baxter, Dwight Kramer, Ted Wellman, Branden Bornemann, Rick Koch, Brent Johnson, Matt Conner, Robert Begich, Jack Blackwell and Jeanne Swartz.
- B. **Minutes Approval:** Approved as written.
- C. **Agenda:** Three items were added to new business, 1) comments to FERC pertaining to the Alaska LNG project. 2) Development of the DNR Kasilof River North bank project. 3) Procedure for replacement for board member Andy Szczesny. The agenda was approved as amended.

II. Public Comments/Presentations- Larry Persily, Special Assistant for oil and gas to the borough Mayor gave a brief update on the proposed Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas project.

The first of a dozen meetings across Alaska for federal regulators to hear from the public on the Alaska LNG project is set for 6 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 27, in Nikiski — site of the proposed natural gas liquefaction plant and marine terminal. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has scheduled hearings statewide Oct. 27 through Nov. 19 to hear from the public on issues they want addressed in the environmental impact statement for the gas pipeline and LNG plant. The series of meetings will end with sessions in the state's two largest cities — Anchorage and Fairbanks — on Nov. 19. FERC is in charge of the single EIS that federal agencies will rely on for the Alaska project. The meetings are part of what is called the “scoping” process, providing the public a chance to comment on the scope of the environmental review, the range of specific topics or issues that should be addressed. Public comment on the EIS itself will come later, perhaps in 2017, after FERC and its contractor draft the environmental review based on information from the project sponsors and regulatory agencies.

III. REPORTS

1. Agency and Government Reports:

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

- With the mild fall the field staff has been completing project in the field.
- Upstream of Bing's landing the river has been busy with fisherman.

Ted asked about the status of the questions from the board that was submitted to the Directors office. Jack stated that the white paper pertaining to the question was not completed in time for the November meeting. Once this information is received Jack will send this to all board members and Parks is still planning on having Director Ben Ellis and Law Officer Ann Nelson present at the December Meeting.

2. DEC-Jeanne Swartz provided the board members with the following report:

- DEC has finished their methodology policy on turbidity; the Director of DEC has approved the report. It has now moved to EPA for their comments
- DEC staff was able to analyze the data that was collected from 2008 to 2010 by the Kenai Watershed Forum. A draft listing determination has been prepared and is currently being discussed with the DEC director. Depending on the director's decision, the determination will either be sent to the commissioner's office or sent back to staff for further revision.
- DEC has received all of the results from the Kenai Watershed baseline studies that were completed twice a year from 2000 to 2014. DEC has been able to determine that there are some parameters of the Kenai River that are in Attainment. This is good news that the water quality has gone from an impaired status to meeting the water quality standards. Jeanne is currently in the process of preparing that report.

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Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Department of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Kenai Peninsula Borough



Ted asked when the report might be available to the board. Jeanne said that once the director and commissioner approve the report it will then be available for public comment.

3. ADF&G-Robert Begich provided the board members with the following report:

- The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish (ADF&G) welcomes and encourages sport fishing business owners, guides and others interested in the guide registration and logbook program to meet with staff to discuss each program and provide input on how they might be improved. House Bill 41 (HB 41) was introduced in the 2015 legislative session and, if adopted, would re-establish sport fish business and guide license and vessel registration requirements and associated fees. ADF&G will be hosting public meetings in the communities and on the dates listed below to discuss the Sport Fish Guide Registration, Logbook Program, and HB 41.

The meetings on the Kenai Peninsula are scheduled as follows:

November 17, 5:30 p.m.: Soldotna – Donald E. Gilman River Center

November 18, 5:30 p.m.: Homer – Alaska Islands & Ocean Visitor Center, Seminar Room

November 19, 6:30 p.m.: Seward – Seward City Council Chamber

4. USF&WS- Matt Conner provided the board members with the following report:

- The ski trails located at the Refuge headquarters are open and have been improved. The spur trail that cuts through the woods from the visitor center. With more snowfall the trails will be groomed and there is a heater located at the visitor center.
- The project to add more Elevated Light Penetrating (ELP) walkway along the Russian River environmental assessment has been submitted. This will help improved access to the Kenai River and limit resource damage. The Refuge is currently being looking for partners in funding this project.

5. USFS/Chugach- Matt Conner provided the board members with the following report:

- The Forest Service is currently working on the new entry station to the Russian River Campground. This is slated to start spring of 2016.
- The Forest Service and the Refuge have issued a contract that was issued for interpretive planning and development. Matt is currently working on the messaging boards, so that they have joint message. The main points are proper fish handling, fish stringers, taking care of your personal items and being aware of cultural resources

6. City of Kenai-Rick Koch provided the board with the following report:

- Rick provided the board with the 2015 Kenai River dip net report. A copy of the report can be obtained from the City of Kenai.
- The Board of Fish has currently scheduled the 2017 Board of Fish meeting in Anchorage. The first proposed time slot of end of January beginning of February 2016 is not available. At the October 2016 work session the board added an agenda item to move the date of the meeting. The board voted to place this item on the December agenda with a 4 to three vote. It is currently being recommended to be move the meeting to March 2016. Rick Koch has submitted a proposal to have the board reconsider moving the meeting to the Kenai Peninsula. Currently the board has an action item on the December agenda to discuss this proposal. Public can submit comments on this proposal until October 19th, 2015.

7. City of Soldotna- Keith Baxter provided the board with the following report:

- City of Soldotna is currently waiting for the weather to cooperate for the construction of the walkway connection between the sport center complex and the visitor center.
- The Hydro study at Swiftwater is currently on hold until weather conditions improve for the parameters of the study.
- A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed upon between the City of Soldotna and Department of Natural Resources on developing information signs. With the existing resources and graphics the City will be able to produce more signs to be placed in the city parks.

8. Kenai Peninsula Borough-Brent Johnson provided to the board the following report:

- John Morton from the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge gave a report about the effort to eradicate Elodea from Stormy Lake out in Nikiski. The report shows that the efforts seem to be working in favor of eliminating Elodea from the Kenai Peninsula area.

2. Committee Reports

a. President's Report-No Report

b. Guide Advisory –Joe Connors provided the board members with the following report:

The guide committee discussed the following items:

- Getting guides more involved in the KRSMA process and the college class that we endorse. There are two classes schedule one in March and one in April of 2016. Jack, Joe and Gary Turner from the college with are discussing strategies on how to get new people involved in teaching the course and how to train them. They will also being looking at the content of the course and if any future changes need to be made.
- The concept of citations and how they pertain to guides. There is a concern about double and triple jeopardy when pertaining to Commercial Operators on the Kenai River. The committee would like to see State Parks come up with a point or demerit system.

c. Habitat –Keith Baxter provided the board members with the following report:

There were nine members in attendance and the following three committee priorities were identified:

- **Land Owner Outreach** – Review of plat proposals of concern to be brought before the committee via email for consideration and comments. Outreach to private property owners currently in violation of regulations. Outreach to the real estate community.
- **Consideration of Public Easements**-Review of the easement study conducted by a KWF in order to determine areas of greatest concern. Provide recommendations to vacate easements when/if determined appropriate.
- **Land Acquisition Recommendations for the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Trustee Council**-Identify strategic land acquisitions for EVOS Trustee consideration within KRSMA.
- The Habitat Committee will also continue to schedule informational presentations as opportunity and interest arises.

d. River Use – Dwight Kramer provided the board members with the following report:

- The PFD requirement is currently at the Directors level. As soon as DNR has put together a regulation package this requirement will be included.
- The committee is still encouraging the state to come up with a methodology on developing an on-line Kenai River water wise specific course. This would be very helpful in getting new user up to speed on the rules and regulation on the Kenai River.
- List of Goals for 2015-2016-
 - With more use predicted on the river the committee would line to look at access limitations and guide limitations. In a fair and acceptable manner and if this is possible.
 - Public Access limitation on the upper river. Methods of limiting that by permits, Federal vs State ownership.
 - King Fishery is a lower river activity to Sockeye and Coho fishery is more of an on shore/ bank fishery. This has a large impact on private and guide users, especially after guide hours of 6pm. Guides are able to fish on the shore with clients after 6pm.



- State to locate some ELP in some close areas, to re-opening these areas. This would help reduce the impact on the vegetation.
- Conflict between drift boat Monday and the powerboat operators.
- Development of the DNR Kasilof River North bank project. DNR is proposing to build a parking area that would accommodate 315 vehicles. This is a narrow road with beach access. This is a very large foot print for only a three or four week season. DNR is not having any public meeting on this project, but comments can be submitted until November 30th, 2015. Dwight would like to have KRSMA board submit a letter stating that DNR hold some public meetings to address some of the concern.
Rick Koch does not believe that KRSMA as a board has the authority to comment on an area that is not Kenai River. Ted commented that when something happens on the Kasilof, such as closure of the fishery, those users move to the Kenai and vice versa. But that is not enough to tie that into the KRSMA area. It was determined that this issue is outside the scope of the KRSMA board, but everyone individually can comment.

e. Legislative/Government Activities- Ricky Gease provided the board with the following report:

- Larry Persily, Special Assistant for oil and gas to the borough Mayor gave a brief update on the proposed Alaska LNG project. They also talked about the impact and the importance of identified the topics to keep on the FERC radar screen and include in the EIS. Currently at this time there is a 50/50 chance the project will move forward. The Kenai Spur Highway needs to be relocated. This will be a great indicator as to if the project will move forward or not. They have to acquire approximately 900 acres for the processing plant and they currently have 600 acres. The bulk of the construction workers would be here for five years. This may be a closed camp where workers could not leave the camp. Larry
- HB41 is still in before the legislature. This bill has to do with minimum standard for guides. Currently there are no standards to become a guide and a certificate would be required and would change the regulation for becoming a guide in the state.
- HB134 increases fees for anglers and hunter in the state. It is currently on hold and may not make through the processes. This bill had the sockeye stamp attached to it.
- State funding could result in decrease law enforcement. The possibility of only having three rangers and the impact on the parks may happen with the budget cuts looming for 2016.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Alaska LNG Project: It was determined that this project would directly impact the Kenai River with increased highway traffic along the river. With the increase area populations for the development and maintenance of the project would bring more users to the Kenai.
Ted asked if anyone if anyone had any objection to the board sending a letter to FERC recommending items to consider in the project EIS. There was no objection.
2. Procedure for replacement for board member Andy Szczesny: The board decided to open the application process until November 30, 2015 for those interested in serving on the board.

Interviews will be scheduled on December 7, 2015 at the Gilman River Center interviews.

Joe Connors made the motion to follow the abbreviated process stated above.
Dwight Second the motion.

It passed unanimously

Those interested in serving on the interview committee are-Ted Wellman, Joe Connors, Rick Koch, Dwight Kramer, Ricky Gease and Brendyn Shiflea

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

a. Board Comments