

Seward State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes

Wednesday, October 21, 2020 5:30-7:00pm

Branson Pavilion, Seward, AK

I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order by Chair Jordan at 5:34 pm
- B. Minutes taker: Carol Griswold
- C. Roll Call: Carol Griswold, Nick Jordan, Cliff Reid, Tess Tulley
- D. Board members absent: Bob Barnwell, Mark Luttrell, Paul Paquette
- E. State Park Staff: District Ranger Jack Ransom
- F. Public Present: none
- G. Minutes Approval for February 19, 2020 Carol moved, Cliff second, Unanimous. Note there was no quorum in January, meetings after February were canceled due to Covid.
- H. Agenda Changes and Approval: Postpone Bylaws: Carol move, Tess second, Unanimous

II. Public Comments: none

III. Board Contact and Correspondence:

- a. Nick sent email and letter of support for CHSRA Trails Grant to Division of Parks and Outdoor Rec; it was also included with application.
- b. Carol reported contact with participant at The Mermaid Event at Lowell Point SRS on September 27. The Mermaid was there the previous weekend too, spreading joy in times of Covid to Girdwood, Seward, and Homer. Parking lot was full (22) and cars parked all along Pinnacle View Drive and around the corner (18). Discussion about need for parking payment in lot, event permit, and event acknowledgement of Alaska State Parks. Recently, a couple remarked that Lowell Point Beach was their favorite beach.

IV. Reports:

- A. Staff Report and Report/Update from Jack Ransom:
 - Many cancellations including volunteer at ranger station, no place to house volunteers or ACC as bunkhouses closed, Sierra Club (rescheduled for next summer), Kids Don't Float event, ranger training, N Beach trail maintenance grant (reapplied). Callisto Cabin renovation postponed.
 - Michael Burmeister completed many jobs, including cleaning up a spike camp where someone quarantined for two weeks at South Beach and left a mess.
 - ACC hire got a lot accomplished.
 - Thanks to Cliff Reid for help with maintenance jobs.
 - Half of the new interpretive signs for Caines Head were installed.
 - Extremely busy all summer with many Alaskans recreating here especially on weekends; many had parking passes; PUCs generally full capacity from late April on. Also several large weddings.
 - Tremendous damage on Tonsina Trail at switchbacks; many groups of 6-10 people in their social bubbles created numerous social trails, shortcuts, and pullouts in an attempt to avoid other hikers, resulting in erosion and destruction of vegetation. Years and years of revegetation and grant work was destroyed. This was trail money and volunteer and staff money, not FEMA. The trail counter counted 300 hikers in 2-3 hours while staff was out there, a steady drone of people. Sections of seine netting were installed and despite people removing some of them, helped to keep people on the trail.

- Michael and Kathleen finally received Boating Safety Letter of Commendation for rescuing boater in harbor last year.
- Revenues up this year from parking and PUC fees, likely due to proximity to Anchorage and accessibility as Alaskans traveled in state due to Covid.
- New board member, Bob Barnwell, finally approved for three-year term until October 1, 2023.

Discussion on carrying capacity; this summer's high use is the future for these park units. The tremendous number of visitors damaged the natural resources and trails, exceeded the capacity of the latrines and parking lots, stretched limited staff and volunteers, and negatively impacted the safety of tourists and the Lowell Point community.

B. Committee Reports

1. Tonsina Mining Issue: Cliff will contact ADFG re: permit for stream crossing. Lots of Chum and Pinks in Tonsina Creek this summer and Dollys were all the way up to the waterfall by the mine site. Jack reported the mining camp at the beach was again a mess with the Argo parked there, the tent, beer cans. Mining site also a mess with even more stuff accumulating and stashed under tarps.
2. Local issues: Discussion of new "parking lot" created along west side of Pinnacle View Drive ROW where electric department cleared under power lines, leveled and smoothed ground. Area was filled to the max this summer with cars and RVs, but creates liability and responsibility issues if made official. Discussion of amended Borough Code allowing citations with fines, MOA with Borough to let state parks enforce it as an access safety issue; need for "No Parking Fire Lane" signs on one side, and enforcement of illegal parking before next summer.

Jack noted issues with overfull parking lots preventing fire truck from turning around; it had to be backed out. Also tsunami sirens caused chaos as more people tried to escape into upper parking lot Tsunami Evacuation Route that was already over capacity. Trailers and RVs must be managed better.

3. Website and Interpretation: Video of CHSRA trail system is posted on State Parks website. Carol is working with interp on new signs in second round of KMTA grant.
4. Anniversary 50th: Tess generated a lot of enthusiasm and support for Seward area state parks by local businesses and organizations, but all events were cancelled. Maybe next year for the 51st Anniversary?

V. Old Business:

1. Mining communications / updates: see above.

VI. New Business:

1. Seward Area State Park Bylaws: postponed
2. Letter of support for revisions of Caines Head Recreational Management Plan: Kachemak Bay State Park plan update just finished, now is a good time to get in the queue. Carol moved, Cliff seconded, Unanimous. Carol will sign and send by mail and email.
3. Elect new CAB Board Chair: Carol nominated by Nick, Cliff second, Unanimous

VII. Public Comments: none

VIII. Adjournment

- A. Board Comments: This was the most unusual meeting ever: outside with facial masks, sitting at individual picnic tables in the pavilion, 35°, propane heater, and increasing dark. We will probably have to meet indoors in November.
- B. Date/Location of next meeting: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 at 5:30 pm. TBA. Jack will look into the AVTEC Culinary Academy location.
- C. Motion to Adjourn: Nick moved, Tess second, Unanimous at 6:57 pm.