

Seward State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes

Wednesday, March 17, 2021 5:30-7:30 pm

Teleconference

I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order: 5:32 pm
- B. Minutes taker: Luttrell
- C. Roll Call: Carol Griswold, Nick Jordan, Mark Luttrell, Paul Paquette, Cliff Reid, Tess Tulley
- D. Board members absent: Bob Barnwell
- E. State Park Staff: District Ranger Jack Ransom, Park Specialist Michael Burmeister
- F. Public Present: Kat Sorenson
- G. Minutes Approval for February 17, 2021: Paul moved, Cliff seconded. Unanimous approval.
- H. Agenda Changes and Approval: Nick will add Lowell Point update in Local Issues. Unanimous approval.

II. Public Comments: Kat Sorenson joined us as a potential board member. She will listen in for as long as possible but has another commitment.

III. Board Contact and Correspondence: Another new board member inquiry received, (Kat).

IV. Reports:

A. Staff Report: Jack Ransom introduced himself and Michael Burmeister for Kat's benefit. Michael returned March 1 and it's great to have his help.

- 1) Tonsina PUC: Michael and Jack made several trips to respond to mechanical issues and user errors with stove, especially important with families with small children and snow.
- 2) continuing work and hazard inspections at Lowell Point and will soon go to Whittier and Valdez.
- 3) Munson landing craft is nearly ready to be on the water. Naiad is operational for local use.
- 4) still waiting and feeling hopeful about \$55-58,000 Recreational Trails grant for CHSRA remote trails and routine Tonsina trail. COVID mitigation protocols will be adhered to for trail crew housing at Ranger Station and Lowell Point.
- 5) may be able to secure an Alaska Conservation Corp (ACC) employee; will know between May 1 - June 1.
- 6) long-time volunteer hosts will return to Tonsina upper parking lot. Jack is glad to have people he knows and can count on.
- 7) budget concerns: not anticipating surprises here or for Prince William Sound, but parks on the other side of the Peninsula will be closed and services cut due to budget shortfalls. Here, we'll be in full swing operations. Many director's orders have been circulating, but fee increases for parking will not occur.

Action items for Jack from last meeting:

1) Pursue a special permit with parameters for this mining activity; stipulations and expiration date including access to mining claim, anadromous stream crossing with stipulations, approved by ADFG; proper disposal of garbage, camping standards, Argo/equipment storage, etc.: Jack said miner is complying with AFDG. DMLW sent out a “cease and desist” letter explaining liability regarding leaving garbage. Parks is looking at writing a permit for miner to better monitor his activities and keep a paper trail.

Carol asked if the board could review the draft permit Jack is working on. Jack supports input; there’s no procedural reason not to share with SCAB.

Mark asked if draft permit will be complete before summer. Jack hopes so.

Carol asked if we can get copy of DMLW letter to miner. Jack will have to check before committing to that.

Cliff: Brian Blossom (ADFG) will check to see if Luck has ADFG permit. Jack noted Luck *does* have the permit to cross stream. Better for Luck to cross South Fork rather than North Fork.

2. Work with miner to relocate gear out of sight to rear of campground and remove gear in the winter: Jack noted there are HIPAA privacy rules protecting an individuals’ health information, and disabilities must be considered. Jack would like a lawyer’s opinion. Jack contacted miner Luck and hopes a lot can be accomplished by talking to the miner and the permit. Jack expects cooperation from the two miners.

Cliff clarified that Woodside did a quit claim in December 2019, so the only miner now is Luck.

Nick asked, when does miner’s property become abandoned property (thinking about miner’s equipment left over the winter)? Jack: after 72 hours without any evidence of owner, Jack can then impound. But permit should address concerns. Park’s policy is to store stuff from tents, for example, for a year or dispose of it, if trash.

3) Ask department lawyer for opinion if miner has legal authority to cross state park land which extends 100’ below Ordinary High Water (OHW) to access the mining claim inland on general state land, and other access issues:

Jack sent a letter to lawyer via Chief of Operations and is waiting for a response. Jack wants a precise legal explanation regarding State and Parks lands regarding access. How does the constitution or case law apply?

4) Ask department lawyer for opinion on designation of 200-yard-wide critical habitat corridor along Tonsina Creek North and South Forks from beach to state land: Jack thinks that’s still a possibility, possibly with a director’s order, but didn’t think a lawyer was needed. But another possibility is to relocate the starting point and boat beaching site to protect beach rye grass habitat and start miner’s operations inland. Maybe the permit Jack is working on will cover that protection concern.

Jack felt this was a full-blown operation and would be an annual activity; he is here to stay. It’s time to clean up the operation with the new gold mining activity permit.

B. Committee Reports

1. Tonsina Mining Issue: Mark asked if the Tonsina Mining committee could meet to corral information and then report to the board. Consists of Tess, Mark, Cliff. Mark will chair. Carol suggested this committee could review the draft permit Jack is working on.

2. Local issues (Nick): Nick met with Lowell Point Community Council in February.

1) The Council is aware of the no parking signs and parking tickets being issued. New "No Parking" signs were installed. The Borough has no funds to correct the road alignment for more parking space.

2) Upper parking lot has gotten very icy and needs gravel. Nick will check with Metco (sand and gravel provider) to make sure they know contract includes gravel.

3) Council drafted a letter of concern to State Representatives including Senate President Micciche regarding increased use, parking, need for better latrines and trail improvements, and noted that LPSRS parking fees go to the State General Fund, not to state parks. A big issue is user capacity. The biggest concern is plowing the lower parking lot, and keeping Pinnacle accessible for emergency vehicles and the big fire truck. Good meeting and he will attend the next one.

Carol: Could the first 20' of the lower parking lot be plowed for 4-5 spaces?

Paul: There is no trail from the parking lot to the beach. Unusual winter this year with so much snow and rain.

Jack: Noticed a huge improvement in the second half of the winter with more sanding and general maintenance for safe access at the upper parking lot- word got out. There is no funding for the lower parking lot. The tickets were a big shock; a solution needs to be found to plow lower parking lot for 2012. There's a few years' worth of credit with Metco for services but it isn't designated for plowing. Jack mentioned that, as another option, third party plowers are eligible for a voucher for 2-3 nights' stay at a PUC. Nick mentioned that KPB Assemblyman Kenn Carpenter has been contacted by Lowell Point community member.

3. Kelp Farm Committee (Bob, Tess, Cliff, Tess): Tess reported that Briana had a great conversation with Bob Barnwell about Pony Cove and they were able to visit Pony Cove. Breanna will check to see if her permit applies to Pony Cove rather than the location of original application. Tess responded to Carol's question about sunlight needs for kelp. Briana said harvesting in spring and fall is ideal because in the summer it is competing with other organisms. She grateful and excited for Bob's/SCAB involvement.

V. Old Business:

1. Carol emailed approved letter to Superintendent Jack Blackwell re: request for winter maintenance of LPSRS parking lots and access. He replied that improved access is desirable but there is no funding, and \$30K must be cut from the regional budget in the next four months.

2. ADFG Advisory Board provide signs for N and S Fork bridges (Cliff) Jay Baumer got back to him on signs. They are planning on getting and installing signs at both bridges.

VI. New Business:

1. Review Goals and update: Goals are still relevant and help guide future.

Top action goals:

- LPSRS parking, on-going.
- Additional directional and information signage for LPSRS and CHSRA; we have some new interpretive signs but directional signs need to be improved, some are misleading and potentially dangerous.
- Support and assist with National historic Register nomination for Fort McGilvray: Michael noted that an archaeologist plans to visit in May and there may be a field trip beforehand. They are using original plats from the military. Carol offered that Board could write a letter of support if needed. Cliff noted there is a declassified Seacoast Defense website that has old maps.

1. Support development of new Resurrection Area State Parks Management Plan including:

a. Expansion of CHSRA or LPSRS to include Tonsina watershed.

Carol: update with the kelp farm concern.

Discussion about the difference in mining operations on state land vs state parks. legality of mining on Parks or DNR land. Jack noted gold mining in state parks is more limited and extremely restrictive in terms of time, tools access, and power.

As time was running out, Carol suggested Board review goals and email comments to Board.

Didn't finish reviewing list. Carol encouraged us to review and comment via email.

VII. Public Comments: none

VIII. Adjournment

A. Board Comments: Nick, Mark, Paul, Tess: thank you!

B. Date/Location of next meeting: Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 5:30 pm. TBA

C. Motion to Adjourn: Cliff motioned, Tess seconded, unanimous at 6:59 pm.