

# Seward State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

## Minutes

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 5:30-7:00 pm

### I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order by Chair Griswold: 5:32 pm
- B. Minutes taker: Kat Sorensen
- C. Roll Call: Bob Barnwell Carol Griswold, Nick Jordan, Cliff Reid, Kat Sorensen, (joined 5:44 pm), Paul Paquette (joined 6:05 pm)
- D. Board members excused: Mark Luttrell, Tess Tulley
- E. State Park Staff: District Ranger Jack Ransom
- F. Public Present: none
- G. Minutes Approval for March 17, 2021: Cliff motioned, Nick seconded. Unanimous
- H. Agenda Changes and Approval: Carol added an introduction to new board member Kat Sorensen to New Business #3.

### II. Public Comments: None

**III. Board Contact and Correspondence:** Carol shared a comment that Alaska State Park Passes are unavailable locally until too late. Kat responded that 2021 passes have been available at the Seward Chamber of Commerce since December 2020.

### IV. Reports:

- A. Staff Report: Jack welcomed Kat to the Board. He noted our Board is known within the agency and in the Anchorage office as active and heavily involved with state park issues; he highlighted our good numbers, a strong board that has stuck together and kept involved since the start. Due to COVID, upper management contact has been limited, but hopefully that situation is improving.
  - 1. Tonsina Mining Permit: Park permitting officer is drafting a preliminary mining permit to address the primary concerns in our control such as cleaning up the messy camp site, the removal of equipment and gas cans annually, and the aesthetic questions about the ATV in the park. The permit is specifically geared towards the individual and this type of activity, with the intent to tighten up the operation, set ground rules for a long-term operation, eliminate future issues, and get the permit on file. Jack will share the draft permit with the board via email for review and requests board members comments. Mining Land and Water has another set of issues outside park boundaries.
  - 2. Tonsina North Fork Bridge Abatement Project: The project has been cancelled because the engineering department found that the original request of \$150,000 is not enough to complete the project and that \$220,000 is more realistic. The letter written by the Board, as well as other community organizations, are greatly appreciated and important; they will be kept on file to go with future requests for funding, such as FEMA and FLAP (Federal land Access Program) funds. The engineers recommended not fighting the erosion in the flood zone but use a piling concept to connect the bridge to the trail. The Anchorage office is fully aware of the importance of the project as the North Fork bridge and bank continue to erode, but abatement won't happen this year.

3. Recreational Trail Program grant: Still waiting to hear back about funding from the RTP application submitted by Mike for the maintenance and restoration of remote trails at Caines Head including the Alpine Trail. The application requested about \$50,000 for a three-person crew this summer with helicopter assistance. Jack noted Mike is a great writer and did a great job on the grant; he is optimistic.
4. There are still three feet of snow at the North Beach which needs to melt off before work can be done to clear dozens of large downed spruce and alders. It will require a lot of work. Bob asked when this happened as he visited in February and few trees were down. Jack noted it happened before the April high winds. The trees are shallow-rooted on loose shale over bedrock, and a freeze-thaw cycle with heavy snow and rain loosened their roots. Carol suggested reaching out to the Spring Creek Correction Center to work with prisoners on clearing the downed trees at North Beach. Jack said there would be issues with felons on a boat, but perhaps they could help clear trails on the road system.
5. Both parking lots Lowell Point SRS were full on Monday, which is unusual so early in the season. Jack is expecting a busy summer similar to last year with hundreds of people per day on the Tonsina Trail and LP Beach Trail. The Seward Chamber also expects a busier summer with more Alaskan visitors. This reflects a drastic increase in park use nationwide. The concentrated visitation puts a lot of pressure on the park and resources. He is considering hiring another set of volunteers to act as maintenance hosts to assist the current hosts. Jack is concerned about garbage, abuse of new trash cans, parking issues, congestion, and emergency access. The parking lots were designed in the 80s and not for this much use. He is brainstorming different ways to mitigate these issues as we face another busy summer season.
6. Received a new interpretative panel for the Fort.
7. The boating safety van coordinator has been at the lower parking lot with handouts, etc to promote water safety. Carol asked if it would be appropriate to install a life jacket station at Lowell Point Beach. Jack agreed, especially with the increased use and incidents. Carol moved that the Board support a Kids Don't Float station at Lowell Point Beach. Bob seconded the motion. Unanimous approval from the Board in support.
8. Jack hopes to fill the Alaska Conservation Corp (ACC) position soon; it is still open.
9. Bad news: a lot of tools were stolen from the Conex at the upper parking lot, with at least \$5,000 in damages. There is an ongoing investigation. Paul noted no thefts in the Lowell Point community; the Park was the target.
10. Good news: the Park has received stimulus funding from the government and will be able to replace the stolen tools, implement a legitimate security system, lease a shop in town for the landing craft and storage, and replace the motors on the landing craft. This is the first capital improvement project in nearly five years and is good news for the Park. The security cameras will be accessible on-line to monitor suspicious activity but will also be useful for the public to view the parking lot and check the weather.

Paul asked if the park would be participating in this year's Mermaid Festival at the Harbor Opening weekend, which raised a larger question about local festivals and activities. Kat relayed the information that the Mermaid Festival, the 4th of July festivities, and Seward Music and Arts Festival are all being planned for 2021 with Covid-19 protocols in place.

Jack said he would be excited to join the Coast Guard Auxiliary's booth at the Mermaid Festival and interact with and do drills with kids.

Cliff asked about installing a public mooring buoy at North Beach. Jack noted they've tried in the past with the Recreational Trail Program for the Marine Trail, but haven't tried in two years. Jack said that the idea is a statewide "no go" because of liability concerns, costs of annual inspections and maintenance, breakaway boats, etc. He noted the liability would still be a concern, but it's worth talking about. Carol asked about working with the Coast Guard buoy tender Spar when it's in town for its annual maintenance to offset inspection costs. Jack noted the Coast Guard has been very supportive and helpful in the past, including trail projects. Jack and Mike will set up a temporary mooring buoy for state park use only. Carol also commented that a public mooring buoy might attract even more visitors to the North Beach and further stress the carrying capacity; maybe it would be better not to have one.

#### B. Committee Reports

##### 1. Tonsina Mining Issue: (Mark, Chair, Cliff, Tess):

- Bob will forward the summary of the early April committee meeting

##### 2. Local issues (Nick, liaison with Lowell Point Community Council):

- The Lowell Point Community Council meeting was cancelled and the next meeting will be after the board's next meeting. Nick will email if there is anything of note that comes up.

##### 3. Kelp Farm Committee (Bob, Tess, Cliff)

- Breana has expressed excitement about the new location and is involved with the hatchery project. She will let us know of any news.

#### V. Old Business:

##### 1. Review Goals and update

- Board action item continuing: review and provide comments

#### VI. New Business:

##### 1. Approval of Tonsina Bridge letter of support - Carol appreciated unanimous consent and will save for when it's needed in the future

##### 2. Jack said that the board review of draft mining permit will happen soon

##### 3. Kat introduced herself to the Board as a local recreator and communications director at the Seward Chamber of Commerce.

#### VII. Public Comments: none

#### VII. Adjournment

##### A. Board Comments: Thank you and good news on the stimulus funding (Cliff, Paul, Bob).

Carol welcomed Kat to the Board; she will be an excellent liaison with the Chamber. Be sure that ALL members are included in emails (sorry Nick!)

Cliff shared the WWII Sea Coast Defense System site link: <http://www.sdphotos.org/>

##### B. Date/Location of last meeting until September: Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 5:30pm. TBA

##### C. Motion to Adjourn: Cliff motioned, Nick seconded. Unanimous approval to adjourn at 7:02 pm