

Seward State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2023 5:30-7:30 pm

AVTEC Culinary Academy, 809 Second Ave, east entrance, third floor and TEAMS

I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order: 5:35 pm by Chair Griswold
- B. Minutes taker: Mica Van Buskirk
- C. Roll Call: Carol Griswold, Nick Jordan, Mica Van Buskirk, Tom Miller, Cliff Reid on phone, Kat Sorensen on phone, Tess Tulley on phone,
- D. Board members absent (excused): Bob Barnwell, Mark Luttrell
- E. State Park Staff: Superintendent Jack Blackwell, District Ranger Jack Ransom
- F. Public Present: John Van Buskirk
- G. Minutes Approval for November 16, 2022 Motion made by Mica and seconded by Nick, unanimous
- H. Agenda Approval – Motion made by Mica and seconded by Cliff, unanimous

II. Public Comments:

Public presentation by John Van Buskirk on his Eagle Scout Project proposal for Mooring Buoys. Discussion followed about feasibility of the project. His proposal was to install 2-3 mooring buoys, using the Manta Ray system, in Thumb Cove for park users. This would preserve the ocean floor ecosystem and allow for easier and safer access to the park, campground and cabins. The Board was very supportive of the project but administration was concerned that State Parks did not have funds to pay for maintenance after the buoys were installed.

III. Board Contact and Correspondence with Public: Facebook comments about Tonsina PUC stove needing more than expected fuel, possibly due to cold temperatures. December high tides made Tonsina North Fork Bridge inaccessible and PUC difficult. Perhaps these items could be noted on DNR PUC website. Trail is icy but in great condition. Nick spoke with ASLC Science and Education Officer Wei Ying Wong about coordinating a community meeting to discuss impacts on the Resurrection Bay watershed and carrying capacity, including issues of tourism, access to Parks, parking, and high use rates.

IV. Reports:

- A. Staff Report:
 - Jack Blackwell – Jack shared that the Governor’s budget for FY24 has been released, but not yet approved. This budget includes \$2.4 million to build 16 new public-use cabins, including one at Johnson Lake in Kenai Peninsula area. There is \$2.8 million In next year’s budget for more cabins and/or maintenance of existing cabins; suggested a letter of support to Director in mid-May. Also included is \$2 million for sanitation and emergency repair which would include Tonsina Cabin relocation for \$50k. Boating safety is to receive \$300k. Administration will be posting a media release for recruitment of new CAB members in March until June. Paul’s position is vacant and Mark’s and Nick’s will expire in June 2023. SCORP plan will be posted soon; it is being reviewed.
 - Jack Ransom – Fix to Tonsina bridge armament has funding. They have approval to hire an Alaska Conservation Corp employee through August. RTP grant submitted last fall

for the Alpine and Rainforest Trails is in review and we should know in March. Metco is still plowing upper and lower parking lots with credit balance parks had.

B. Committee Reports

1. Local issues (except parking): Two black bears reported at Lowell Point, very skinny.

Staff: Update on Lowell Point Parking issue progress: there is no capital money or funding in the Governor's budget for this project. Potential federal earmark for Peninsula-wide recreation access projects might be coming available. This could be used for our parking issues and possibly mooring buoys, which are considered access.

2. Mining (Cliff, Bob, Carol): Tonsina Special Use Designation update: Jack Blackwell met with Shawana Guzensky, DNR, Division of Mining, Land, and Water (DMLW) Natural Resource Manager II, about options to resolve continuing concerns about gold mining and enforcement.

a. Mineral closure is limited to a maximum of 640 acres and requires Legislative action. This would stop future permits from being issued. However, this would not address existing claims as they would be allowed to continue and additional claims could be staked during the 30-day public notice period. There is no cap on claims.

b. Special Use Designation (SUD) is an administrative process that could be implemented. Regulations could be developed to restrict/limit operations. However, DLMW has no ability to do enforcement and State Parks cannot enforce outside state park land. Jack B advised that this would not resolve the issues.

c. State park units are created by two methods: management agreements called Interagency Land Management Agreements (ILMAs), and state legislation called Legislatively Designated Areas (LDAs). Either would allow State parks to enforce regulations and have citation authority.

ILMAs without a mineral closure are an administrative process; the Commissioner delegates management to State Parks, for example, of an area to a maximum of 640 acres. The case file on CHSRA ILMAs is vague and unclear as to existing acreage. There are two ILMAs in the Tonsina area and ILMAs can no longer be stacked. It may be possible to expand an existing ILMA to 640 acres to include the Tonsina drainage. Jack will look into this.

LDAs are a Legislative designation, and can be larger than 640 acres. Creating an LDA is a big job as it withdraws land from the public domain, and the process is not quick. It is unknown if it would be possible to designate an LDA over existing mining permits; it depends how the Bill is crafted, likely they would be honored until sunset. Jack will look into this too. The Kenai Area Management Plan supports the inclusion of the Tonsina watershed and anadromous stream into State Parks with good reasons for the recommendation. Jack B will send a copy of the Kenai Area Management Plan to CAB (also available on-line.) DEC may be interested in pursuing violations in the cataloged portion of the anadromous stream. The status of the current permit holder is of interest; apparently the current owner of the six claims hasn't done anything.

3. Legislative Committee Budget: Mica brought copies of the Governor's Budget and read informational items including the core services of Alaska State Parks:

- Ensure that all state park facilities are clean, safe and well-maintained
- Serve as statewide resource for technical expertise on outdoor recreation
- Provide programs that raise public awareness of boating risks and

encourage improvements in recreational boating safety.

However, the state is not funding maintenance and their #1 core service is being drastically neglected. Deferred maintenance in state parks has not been funded and is now up to \$86 million. The State is failing in their #1 core service. We need to reach out to legislative representatives: Senate President Gary Stevens and House Representative Louise Stutes. Mica has emailed them both and will continue to stay in contact with them. We want to request funding for our parking lot expansion, regular maintenance and deferred maintenance.

V. New Business:

1. Goals for 2023: This was discussed and amended as below
 - a. Continue to pursue Lowell Point Parking plan
 - b. Continue to pursue resolution of Tonsina Creek mining issue
 - c. Support funding for deferred maintenance
 - d. Support funding for relocation of Tonsina PUC; in budget but not yet approved
 - e. Support Friends Group, whether locally or statewide
 - f. Update Parks website: re high tides, stove fuel, slides, and other changes
 - g. Maintain tide laminated tide charts at kiosks: Carol and Nick
 - h. Support Mooring Buoy Plan
 - i. Request FY25 funding for deferred maintenance of existing public-use cabins
 - j. Explore new public-use cabin locations
 - k. Support installation of tent platforms in park
 - l. Support meeting with all Resurrection Bay stakeholders.

VI. Old Business: Postponed from May 18, 2022 meeting

1. Explore creation of Friends of Seward Area State Parks (Bob, Tess)
Briefly, Board is still interested in pursuing this, either locally or state-wide.
These items were once again postponed to next meeting:
2. Tidepool and collecting permit clarification (Carol): see May 2022 minutes
3. Clarification on permits for collecting animals and seaweed (Carol, Jack R)

VII. Informational Items:

1. Chair wrote and mailed Board-approved letter to Governor Dunleavy, cc Director Gease about budget priorities.
2. Chair wrote and emailed Board-approved letter to KPB Emergency Management in support of FEMA emergency evacuation shelter study.
3. Chair wrote and emailed Board-approved letter summarizing Board concerns and goals for SCORP.
4. Nick will install first quarter laminated tide tables and 2023 Seward tide tables at LPSRS kiosks.

VIII. Public Comments: none

IX. Adjournment

- A. Board Comments: Mica will email FY 24 Governor's Budget documents to Board. Jack R will get Board binders to Board members who don't have one yet.
- B. Date/Location of next meeting: Wednesday, February 15 at 5:30 pm, in person
- C. Nick moved for adjournment, Tom seconded, unanimous. Adjourned at 7:34 pm