

CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

(Microsoft Teams Electronic Meeting)

DRAFT--Minutes of the April 12, 2021 Meeting

REGULAR MEETING # 4

1. Call to Order: Vice Chair Haley Johnston called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.
2. **Roll Call & Introductions:**

Present: Jeff Bidinger, Rob Clark, Fallon Connolly, Tyndall Ellis, Dave Hart, Trond Jensen, Haley Johnston, Dorn Van Dommelen, Nicole Schmitt, Irene Turletes.

Excused: Ryan Yelle, Matthew Worden, Lauren Boldrick, Charlotte Levy

Absent:

Staff: Ben Corwin, Park Superintendent, Judy Bittner and Cory Glover with the Office of History and Archaeology

Public: Carla SlatonBarker, Erik Freeden, Sharon Cissna.
3. Changes to Agenda & Approval: The agenda for the April 12 meeting was approved.
4. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: Minutes of the March 8, 2021 meeting were approved.
5. **Public Comments:**
 - Carla SlatonBarker-a resident of the South Fork Eagle River area, has concerns about the proposed new Muktuk Marston-Hunter Pass trail project: 1) does not meet one of the project's purposes which is to divert public use from existing trails to new ones. By making a connection between the Arctic Valley parking area and the South Fork trailhead there may be increased use and pressure on the South Fork TH which is already over crowded; 2) if another purpose of this project is to provide access to alpine areas there is conflict between this goal and the footprint of a 4 mile long, 3-4 foot wide trail in an alpine environment; 3) the existing trail classification of pack and saddle should be re-visited and revised down to hiker before any construction occurs; this classification is unsafe on the current fall line trail, if there is increase in horse use from a gentler grade trail up to Hunter Pass and beyond this increased use would exacerbate the current crowding and over use on the South Fork trail now 4) hope that CARES Act funding does not rush a decision on the trail before these concerns are addressed and questions are answered regarding whether it would be better to keep the new trail development completely within the Arctic Valley area and not make the connection to the South Fork and; 5) more time should be spent engaging with the South Fork Valley Community Council before the project is started.
 - Erik Fredeen-Concerned about the proposed Muktuk Marston-Hunter Pass trail; he lives near the South Fork trailhead. He quoted from a 2017 resolution passed the South Fork Community Council "Whereas illegal overflow parking on West River and South Creek Drives has created a significant life/safety hazard." It's a life safety hazard because there is not enough space for legal parking on the roads adjacent to the South Fork TH. Problems with illegal parking have been getting worse at the South Fork TH. He has tried working with the Muni and with state park management. It just doesn't make sense to increase use on a trail that does not have enough capacity for parking for the current use. Until the hazard of illegal parking is mitigated he cannot support development of the Muktuk Marston trail.

- Sharon Cissna-Chugach State Park created 50 years ago; specifically she wants to note that there are big changes occurring in the park, including the weather. She hopes we make time to look back and make sure we are learning from past mistakes and that we don't make the same ones again in the future.

6. Old Business:

- a. **North and South Suicide Peaks Re-Naming to North and South Yuyanq'Ch'ex**-Judy Bittner reviewed the process for re-naming geographic features within Chugach State Park: The Alaska Historical Commission is the official review board for proposals to name or re-name geographic features in Alaska on federal maps; the federal review board makes the final determination using the recommendation and public comments provided by the Alaska Historical Commission. Dave Hart chaired an ad-hoc committee of six CAB members who met to discuss the proposed name change for North and South Suicide Peaks. All on the committee have empathy for Alaskans who have suffered from the impacts of suicide and in addition they share a desire to return geographic names to historic native Alaskan names. There was general consensus that the request to rename North and South Suicide Peaks did not meet the AHC criteria for a change to an established place name because the request did not demonstrate extensive local support. Dorn commented that the CAB's role should not be to adjudicate the application; instead the CAB should gather input and then make a recommendation on whether to support or not support the name change. Trond reached out to at least 10 contacts and did not find anyone supportive; he does not think that the proposed new name is one that is in common use and it is unclear if the new name was used historically. Dave noted that the people who submitted comments in support of the name change were not a representative sample of Alaskans; he reached out to many of his contacts and none of them knew of the proposal, so he does not believe we have enough data in the form of public outreach/comment to support the name change. MOTION made and seconded to not recommend approval of the proposal to change the names of North and Suicide Peaks, to encourage the withdrawal of the proposal and to note that the CAB would welcome consideration of a future name change proposal after adequate community consultation and the opportunity for a range of groups to propose alternatives to the current names of the peaks. Votes were tallied by roll call; the motion passed unanimously. Dave will provide a draft letter to the board prior to sending it in.

7. New Business:

8. Staff Report: Ben Corwin

- Areas of the park where regulations allow snow machine use are all open now due to adequate snowfall to protect vegetation; that will likely change as temperatures continue to warm;
- Hillside snow machine area opened this year on March 13;
- Fat bike access closed by regulation as of March 15 but those areas open to snow machine are also open to bicycle use including fat bikes;
- As of April 1, ATV areas are open (Bird and Eklutna);
- The Anchorage Bear Committee meeting and Spring Wildlife Law Enforcement meeting were both held this past week to discuss wildlife issues in the Anchorage bowl; this past year included a higher than average harvest of black bear in 14C (80 vs. typical annual take of 60);
- New muni ordinance regarding negligent feeding of bears has been adopted;
- Park Rangers are in a hybrid In-Service training that includes Division of Forestry commission which is new for park rangers and will allow them to cite people for Division of Forestry regulations; Taser training (new defensive equipment for park rangers) and weapons qualifications;
- Staffing: Natalia is new admin for the park, she transferred from Public Safety, Michelle is new ACC working on front country facility maintenance and a new PR II will be hired in next couple days;
- Tom Crockett retiring at end of the month after 25 years of service;

- Alaska Trails is hosting a statewide trails conference, Chugach Park Specialist Tim Gurnett will be presenting;
- Ben has asked that the CAB be included in outreach for comment on development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP);
- Followup question regarding black bear harvest: what is overall population? Ben does not have that information though he did note that the new drawing hunt for black bear did not result in any takes; the estimated 80 black bears taken were in areas/hunts that do not require a permit;

9. Committee Reports:

- **Access (Trond):** N/A
- **Budget (Claire):** N/A
- **Nomination (Lauren):** N/A
- **Seward Highway Design (Dorn):** Regarding the request for reconsideration on the Commissioner's decision regarding a rock quarry at MP 109 for the Windy Corner project; would the CAB get notification if legislation was introduced to resolve the issues raised in the request for reconsideration? Ben responded that there is currently no proposed legislation to give DOT legal authorization for the quarry and that if legislation was introduced that he would notify the CAB.
- **Trails (Irene):** Irene will follow up with public comment regarding the Muktuk Marston trail regarding trailhead parking at either end; she will contact the project's sponsors to find out what kind of outreach they have done with neighborhood groups in the South Fork area. Haley noted that since the CAB has already voted to support the project with stipulations regarding parking issues and equestrian use if a different position was to be made by the CAB a 2/3 majority would have to vote to rescind that support before a different position was taken by the CAB.
- **Chugach Park Fund (Haley and Claire):** CPF planning to provide funding for Little O'Malley, Middle Fork and to get some brushing done on trails identified as high priority by park staff. Also, the Anchorage Petroleum Women's Association raised funds over the past year specifically for the CPF and they will be notifying us what the total donation amount will be in mid-May.
- **Wildlife (Charlotte):** N/A
- **Planning (Jeff):** N/A
- **Outreach (Matt):** CAB's social media pages continue to see increases in use.

10. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:21PM