

CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

(Microsoft Teams Electronic Meeting)

DRAFT--Minutes of the May 10, 2021 Meeting

REGULAR MEETING # 5

1. Call to Order: Ryan Yelle called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. Roll Call & Introductions:

Present: Jeff Bidinger, Lauren Boldrick, Rob Clark, Tyndall Ellis, Dave Hart, Trond Jensen, Haley Johnston, Claire LeClair, Charlotte Levy, Dorn Van Dommelen, Nicole Schmitt, Matt Worden, Ryan Yelle.

Excused: Fallon Connolly, Irene Turletes

Staff: Ben Corwin, Park Superintendent

Public: Lisa Petrescu, Carla SlatonBarker, Cathy Hammond, Denise Abel, Eric Stice, Erik Fredeen, Katy Versteeg, Adrienne Lindholm, Matt Little Dog, Mike Boylan, Steve Buchanan, Mary Lee Hayes, Nancy Pease, Dr. Suzanne Marcy, Liliya Vugmeyster.

3. Changes to Agenda & Approval: The agenda for the May 10 meeting was approved.

4. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: Minutes of the April 12, 2021, meeting were approved.

5. Public Comments:

- Lisa Petrescu-a resident of the South Fork Eagle River area does not support development of the Muktuk Marston trail due to inadequate parking and the design that is meant to accommodate horses. In addition, she is concerned about community input from South Fork area residents. She learned of the project recently when public notice was required due to a grant application.
- Carla SlatonBarker-a resident of the South Fork Eagle River area requested that the CAB vote to rescind their support for the Muktuk Marston trail. In addition, she commented that there is not adequate parking which she believes is a life/safety issue, she believes the Trail Management Plan is missing information from the public process carried out in 2009 and 2011, that the pack and saddle design is outdated and unsafe. She said there is a lack of evidence to inform a good decision and cited increase in public use and a bear den in the area since 2016 as examples. She believes that the process failed to communicate with South Fork residents and the local community council and that the process is very confusing. Requests that a management plan revision be started and that the South Fork community is actively engaged in that planning. A new trail should go somewhere else.
- Cathy Hammond, South Fork resident for 30 years, requested CAB to rescind their support for the Muktuk Marston trail. Doesn't believe CAB had all the information necessary to provide support for the project. She is concerned about the approval for pack and saddle in a wilderness area, does the park intend to build additional intensive trails in this area, suggest building a loop trail that begins/ends in Arctic Valley, why was this trail on the South Fork side planned for pack and saddle use. Fears this may be a backdoor way to allow for bicycle use. Would like to see data that suggests or proves that most people will use the Arctic Valley parking area and not the South Fork trailhead. Need new planning process to re-visit South Fork area trail designations in the TMP and that involves the South Fork community. Also need to address ongoing issues with parking and overcrowding at South Fork TH.
- Denise Abel, South Fork area resident, requests that the CAB re-consider their support for the Muktuk Marston trail project. She would like to see crowding/parking issues at South Fork TH resolved before new trail construction begins. There are lots of bear activity on the hillside where the trail is to be built. Please halt the project and consider community's input.
- Eric Stice, South Fork area resident since 1984, has a view from his home of the parking area and of the Hunter Pass trail. Observed that after the trail to Symphony Lake was modified, he has observed increases in use, erosion,

litter, waste. Concerned about the overcrowded parking on a narrow road. If intent is to access wilderness, he suggests developing something in the Ship Creek area where there are not homes and families. Requests that the CAB re-assess support for the two trail projects and that South Fork area residents be asked to be part of the process.

- Erik Fredeen, South Fork area resident, requests that the CAB reconsider its support for the Muktuk Marston trail, he has concerns about the project but focuses mainly on life/safety issues related to parking. He lives close to the South Fork trailhead and has to put a cone in his driveway so it won't be blocked; he picks up trash and waste in the trailhead area regularly. Only heard about the Muktuk Marston trail project in mid-April. Parking on the streets leading to the trailhead is illegal since those streets are not more than 20 feet wide. Does not believe that the Anchorage Police Department will support increased use in the area. Believes that the parking issue is out of control and that the CAB and state park staff should have worked with APD, AFD and State Forestry. Believes that CAB and staff only worked with the project's proponents and that this is a breach of the public's trust. South Fork Community Council has previously brought the parking issue to the attention of park staff. There needs to be an evidence-based approach to the project. Believes park staff and the CAB are being intentionally negligent and that legal remedy will be sought if someone is hurt or property damaged because hikers are parking on neighborhood roads when the trailhead parking is full.
- Katy Versteeg, South Fork area resident, lives near the South Fork trailhead. She is opposed to the new trail because of increase in traffic, increasing use on the trail is in conflict with the Trail Management Plan (cites passage in TMP that states as an objective to reduce pressure on the existing South Fork trailhead), lack of public process, damage to alpine habitat, increased threat of wild fire. Shared following points: 1) trail 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 overcrowded; 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. Suggests alternative is to construct Marston to Trail 403a. Supports reversal of the CAB's support for the project.
- Adrienne Lindholm-South Fork Resident, does not believe that the Muktuk Marston trail is consistent with the Chugach State Park Trail Management, Access and Management Plans. The project should be halted and redesigned to be consistent with these plans. Suggests it would have been a minimal gesture to reach out to the South Fork community. Gives examples of how the local residents volunteer to take care of the trail and other state park facilities in the area. She expresses community support for the Muktuk Marston Trail but not in its current design. Requests that the CAB withdraw its support for the project.
- Matt Little Dog, South Fork Resident, requests that the CAB rescind its letter of support for the project. Life and safety issues are the primary reason he requests the board to rescind its support.
- Mike Boylan, South Fork Resident, owns two lots and one house adjacent South Fork trailhead parking area. Lived in area for 24 years; about 5 months per year the parking is 'disastrous.' He is appalled by the antipathy of park management regarding parking and overcrowding issues. He is opposed to horse and bike use of trails in the South Fork valley. Requests CAB to rescind support for Muktuk Marston Trail.
- Steve Buchanan, South Fork Resident, lives at Mile 7 of Hiland Road, he is opposed to the Muktuk Marston trail and its extension to the existing Hunter Pass Trail. Even if technical requirements met for public involvement, feels that the community was left out of the decision and this is ethically and morally wrong. He is concerned about life and safety issues from increased use of the South Fork Trailhead. Requests that CAB dismiss their support for the project.

- Mary Lee Hayes, South Fork Resident, has lived in area for 24 years and likes the peace and quiet. Does not welcome bull dozers destroying the native vegetation. What is proposed will scar the hillside by carving in switchbacks. She is concerned about more traffic on the neighborhood roads. The parking situation is already compromised so does not want to see increase in use. Every year there are more cars. With more people visiting the valley there is a higher chance of wildfire. Keep the trails on the Arctic Valley side; our view on this side is important. Requests that the CAB re-do their support. Please consider the area residents before the hillside is scarred.
- Nancy Pease, encourages CAB to submit comments on the newest Windy Corner project design. Asks that the CAB request the design extend the project area to south of the Falls Creek trailhead which is only about 200 yards past where the project area currently extends.
- Dr. Suzanne Marcy, South Fork Resident, lives at mile 6.3 on Hiland Road, only learned of the Muktuk Marston trail project on April 14. Public outreach was inadequate, too much has changed since 2011 and a line on a map in the trail plan does not meet requirements for trail design. Project will increase conflicts, the Hunter Pass switchbacks will destroy vegetation and bear habitat and the Muktuk Marston trail is inconsistent with the wilderness zone designation. Need public input to get good outcomes, community most impacted was not invited to the table. The design for both trails is for Class 4, the trails will be unsightly and overbuilt. Would like to share scientific and technical information in order to improve project outcome. Requests CAB to rescind its support for the project.
- Liliya Vugmeyer, South Fork Resident, lives on Hiland Road. Would like to see the hills survive. Trails should be in good shape for years to come but current project has issues with access, visitors can't access Arctic Valley with rental cars. Trails should be designed to accommodate visitors from out of state and to not disturb residents.

6. **Old Business:**

- a. **Muktuk Marston/Hunter Pass Trail-** Timeline for RTP funding decision expected in August, 2021, if funding awarded, construction could begin in September, 2021. CAB's role is advisory only. One of the main questions for the CAB to consider in this and other trail projects is whether a project is providing relief from or increasing pressure to a trailhead. Nancy Pease (project leader) suggests that the Muktuk Marston/Hunter Pass trail project will relieve pressure by making better use of the Arctic Valley parking capacity while also addressing damage to alpine vegetation on the Hunter Pass trail which is a fall line route. Jack Mosby (project leader) comments that the four-foot width could only be reduced if state park management changed the designed use of the trail to not include horses. CAB comments included suggestion that the board as a whole have a bigger discussion about how best to balance the need for better parking with the complete lack of funding for any improvements to the park's infrastructure. Without reliable state funding, private groups will continue to bring ideas and funding to park management and these projects may or may not be the state's priorities for park improvements. There is an APU graduate student conducting research on trail use in the Anchorage area, this may be one way to get more data about where the best places may be to invest in better trailhead parking. Background on why the Muktuk Marston project includes Hunter Pass is due to request by park staff to address resource damage from the current Hunter Pass trail which is a fall line route. MOTION made and seconded for CAB to re-consider the board's letter of support of the Muktuk Marston/Hunter Pass trail project and delegate to the Access and Trails committees the task of reviewing and re-assessing the project with recommendations made to the CAB at the next meeting. Roll call vote made, motion passed unanimously.

7. **New Business:**

- a. **Trails Build Alaska Campaign-** Sophia Kaelke and Carolyn Aurwater with Trailmix, Inc., a trail maintenance organization in Juneau. Trails Build Alaska is a statewide initiative to use \$12 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds for a statewide trails workforce development program focused on trail maintenance and improvement. Trailmix ran such a program last summer using CARES Act funding allocated through the local city/borough government. Requests a letter of support from the CAB to legislators as soon as possible since House Finance committee will soon be taking up the state's capital budget. MOTION made and seconded for CAB to support the

Trails Build Alaska request for funding from the legislature and to delegate to the budget committee to write a letter of support. Motion passes unanimously.

b. Summer CAB Meeting Schedule-The CAB will not meet in July and August.

8. Staff Report: Ben Corwin

- April 19 snow machine areas all closed
- All day use facilities are now open
- Portion of Turnagain Arm trail closed for a week due to bear activity on a winter kill moose carcass
- Tom Crockett retired April 30; recruitment underway for two Park Ranger I's
- Ranger Pagni promoted to Park Ranger II
- Two summer ACCs hired
- McHugh and Bird Point hosts are in place
- Three SARs since last meeting:
 - Hiker on Flattop
 - Paraglider who made hard landing near FT, flown out via LifeMed
 - Pararescue personnel picked up two hikers near Rainbow Peak, one injured; LifeMed tried to retrieve them but was unsuccessful

9. Committee Reports:

- **Access (Trond):** N/A
- **Budget (Claire):** N/A
- **Nomination (Lauren):** N/A
- **Seward Highway Design (Dorn):** MOTION made and seconded for the Seward Highway Design committee to write a letter outlining key concerns that have already been expressed in past correspondence to DOT in response to request for scoping comments on the Windy Corner project. Motion passed unanimously. Deadline to submit comments is June 9.
- **Trails (Irene):** n/a
- **Chugach Park Fund (Haley and Claire):** No word yet on whether RTP grant will be awarded for Little O'Malley Peak trail project; working through prioritized list of brushing projects and then fundraise for that work this summer; APWA will be donating at least \$5,000 later this month.
- **Wildlife (Charlotte):** N/A
- **Planning (Jeff):** N/A
- **Outreach (Matt):** Matt plans to do some work with the committee on how to improve outreach in light of the concerns heard regarding outreach for the Muktuk Marston trail project.

10. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:40PM