

**WOOD-TIKCHIK STATE PARK  
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
March 26, 2021 at 10:00 am  
Videoconference via Microsoft Teams  
Dillingham, Alaska**



**I. Call to Order 10:03**

**II. Roll Call/Establish Quorum**

Present: Bruce Ilutsik  
Cody Larson  
Lee Borden  
Delores Larson  
Ali Eskelin  
Paul Liedberg  
Absent: Peter Christopher

**III. Introductions**

Public: Mike Etukmelra Jr. (phone)  
Marion Olsen- Aleknagik Traditional Council  
Kay Andrews -City of Aleknagik  
David Schwantes  
Ben Corwin- Parks Superintendent  
Cory Warnock- McMillian Jacobs and Asst.  
Ramona Andrews- City of Aleknagik  
Bryan Reiley- ADFG Area Biologist  
Will Cheney- NETC  
Bob Himschoot- NETC  
Bryan Nass- BBSRI  
Dan Dunaway  
Sue Flensburg  
Luke Schwantes

**IV. Review and Adopt Agenda**

**Motion to Review and Adopt- Lee Borden, second- Ali Eskelin**

Amendments- Ali move ADFG Bryan Reiley forward on agenda

Paul Liedberg- insert ADFG after minutes

Approved by unanimous consent with amendments

Kay Andrews requested copies of presentations by email.

Unknown party statement about voting. Paul clarified only council voting.

- V. Approval of Meeting Minutes – November 26, 2020**  
**Motion to Approve- Cody Larson, Second- Ali Eskelin**  
Approved by unanimous consent.

**VI. Presentations – (moved up in agenda per request)**

**a. ADF&G Updates**

Bryan Reiley- ADFG Area game biologist, provided info moose and caribou populations in and around the park. Last survey in 2017- 1700 moose +293, trending up. 17B East pop. estimate from 2008, 1500 +/- 400.

Combining those two estimates, currently under populations objectives 4900-6000.

Working to increase populations through regulatory change or intensive management. 17C objective is 2800-3500, survey Dec 2020 pop. est. at 2800 +/- 400, on lower end of pop. obj., trending down. Collaring short yearlings to east of wood river up lowithla and other areas. GPS collar on a cow, constrained due to weather. Capturing in may and twinning surveys in B&C.

Mulchatna caribou – numbers are down, 13,500 estimate, well below lower end of objective 30,000-80,000- expecting no hunts for next few years through Game board or Emergency Orders. Bull to cow and Calf to cow ratios suggest population is looking good and has potential to increase, ongoing predator control efforts. Same day airborne has been effective, wolf numbers near calving ground is low. Will be collaring of yearlings and capturing neonates and in fall a photo census or another method for population estimate. Recent finding of brucellosis bacteria in blood samples from the fall. May be affecting herd, shows exposure not necessarily active infection. No symptoms, enlarged joints, aborted fetuses. Will continue to look at this, collect blood samples from wolves and moose also. No hunting season for Mulchatna caribou.

Kimberly Beckman who deals with pathology.

Lee Borden- ADFG fisheries biologist. Hiring an assistant. State budget is tight, funding based on tourism and license sales. Two projects on Togiak and Nushagak, not much near the park. Park Related info- effort on Wok and Pak, Aleknagik Lake, Muklung Wood River trending down- 389 angler days 2019, 599 in 2018, 1026 in 2017. Numbers will be down for 2020. Wok is trending down on 1600 angler days in 2017, 1200 in 2019. Expect large drop in 2020 also.

Lakes stable effort Muklung, Aleknagik Lake, Wood River all stable. Wood River is about 800 angler days per year. BOF met and decided to postpone all meetings and 2021-22 schedule back. 2022 will be in calendar year of 2022. April of 2022 deadline for proposals. BOF topics relating to the park: Using Wood River special harvest area (SHA) for a tool for conservation of king salmon. May influence all populations of salmon in the park. Contact Lee or Tim regarding SHA.

Last few years resident species flourishing, more and larger pike, char and rainbow trout in Wood system. All species seem to be having an upswing likely due to environmental factors, good survival and good growth.

Bruce Ilutsik– question for Bryan- In (GMU)17C Dec 2020 moose population was 2080. Any specific reasons why the population got so low?

Bryan – May be the liberal regulations in terms in harvest, predators. Many factors may be influencing population. Research shows very few young are surviving. Brown bear predation on neonates is a big factor, twinning rates seem to be good, habitat seems good.

Cody- Thanked ADFG for updates and look forward to commenting on proposals that may affect park users.

Public questions- none

## **VII. Management Plan Land Additions, Special Use Land Designations– DNR**

Paul- Discussed land addition recommendations in mgmt. plan- would take legislative input and action by DNR, opportunities to request areas identified as additions to the park be managed as park.

Monica Alvarez- Section chief for DNR Resource and Development, land use planning. Reviewed response letter- identified ways land can be managed as park. 1. Interagency land management agreement (ILMA)- limited to 640 acres. 2. Special Use designation (SUD) implemented by regulation, greater amount of acreage, restrictions promulgated through regulation. ie: require permit for activities they normally wouldn't need a permit for on general state lands.

Paul asked for examples of how SUD has been applied in similar situations.

Monica– Exit Glacier on Kenai Pen. Changes restriction to camping, shortens time limit on camping. SUD for lands identified as additions Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) for habitat. Requires permitting for certain types of ground disturbances. There are several others.

Cody- noted habitat values in those areas and questioned examples of types of ground disturbances.

Monica – In generally allowed uses, there is a limit to how much ground disturbance can occur before a permit is required. Requires a permit for any type of ground disturbance. Modify uses on general state lands.

Cody- noted lands set for addition to the park are larger than 640 acres. The vehicle that would move the plan forward is the SUD, may be why its written into the park plan.

Questioned steps for the regulation change, if similar to other reg changes.

Monica- Steps for regulation change, 1. Propose area as SUD 2. Take public comment 3. Decision made by commissioner to make SUD, 4. Propose types of restrictions wanted in that area. 5. Once SUD is designated and established, then the regulation change afterwards.

Ali – questioned if current mining claims in the area would hold up the process.

Monica – No. Claims may be grandfathered in, would depend on the restrictions and how they would affect the mining claims. There is a vehicle for mineral closing order, but cannot on lands for more than 640 acres, anything larger the legislature would have to approve. Mineral order wouldn't apply to current claims, anything that comes after would apply to those lands for the purpose of mining.

Paul – asked about the process of formally proposing SUD.

Monica- addressed writing a letter to the DNR formally asking for this. DNR would work with the council to establish the SUD. Indicate why you want SUD and what restrictions would be appropriate to help formulate SUD. 11 AAC 96.014- can view SUD areas around the state and get an idea of the types of restrictions that occur in these types of areas.

Cody- discussed significant planning that went into the (mgmt.) plan to identify lands specifically in the plan. Plan states plainly use restrictions would mimic current park regulations. Easy to use the language that regulates the park lands and is already identified in the plan.

Paul- Open to public questions

Sue Flensburg questioned if SUDs are similar to those in the Nushagak River system in Nushagak Rivers Recreation Management Plan. Identified the intent to preserve areas for public camping so not be dominated by commercial interest. Unsure of permit requirement by limited camping 7 day stay limit without structures, to preserve those spaces at confluences. Just rejoined the call.

Monica- Yes, similar to Nush and requires permitting for camping.

Kay Andrews requested materials referencing the lands discussed, noted public process for the park and SUD.

Paul- noted the lands are in the management plan depicted on maps and discussed in the plan. Suggested special meeting for public input.

Ricky Gease- Helpful for DPOR to know what the area (council and public) would like to see in regard to WTSP and Lake Aleknagik SRS – formally include SRS into the park through the legislature or SUD. Discussed hydro project feasibility and legislature may look to change the boundaries of the state park. Helpful to the overall process to spend time carefully if there are changes to the boundaries the legislature can adjust what your recommendations would be, with public comment.

Paul- discussed proposed land additions are recommended in the management plan. Suspect some or most would like to see that as the ultimate outcome, looking at the SUD as possibility for protections for the watersheds that drains into the park.

Cody- discussed the conversation stemmed from the plan and the recommendations that were made in the plan. Those who wrote 1987 and 2002 plan made these recommendations for a reason and seem straight forward.

Monica- clarify Director Gease suggestion would be the best in terms of protection. LASRS is an ILMA and as such park regulations can apply there because it is at 640 acres. SUD can't manage lands as part of the state park. Generally allowed uses on general state lands are modified for a specific purpose. Cannot use park regs in SUD. Discussed if the concern was the watershed, you may require permitting for certain activities.

Ricky – discussed recreational areas Kasilof, Knik Arm SUA, Jonesville, get a lot of public recreational use, they do not have park regulations. No park enforcement or powers, no fee collection powers. Acreage less than 640, discussed House Bill 10, Hunter Bay State Marine Park, cemetery part of State Marine Park, including cemetery in state park lands. ILMA can be undone, administratively, doesn't take legislative authority. DNR would like feedback as to what level of protection you wish these lands to have. LASRS, move LASRS from ILMA into formal inclusion into the park with land exchanges through DMLW and DPOR through legislative process.

Cody- discussed public interest in the topic and, specific meeting in the future for public input.

Ali- second Cody's statement, noted lands for addition in plan ~290,000 acres.

Paul- discussed some lands drain into Kuskokwim side, would take some addition regional coordination. Recommend a future specific meeting as to how to address this and what the goals are.

Kay Andrews asked about an ILMA and requested a copy of the ILMA documents. Ali will provide.

## **VIII. Presentations –**

### **a. Nushagak Cooperative**

Will Chaney- Thanked council for allowing presentation to provide update. Electric Ops manager since Dec 2020, born and raised in Dillingham, raising family to appreciate the park. Fortunate lifelong relationship with park and the region, discussed vast history recreating, subsistence use in the park. Stated Nushagak Electric Mission statement, discussed potential of less fuel transport through river corridor, project is in viability state, NETC goal is not necessarily to build the project but rather assess the potential impacts, positive and negative, to determine overall benefit to the region. Recent Meetings- ARWG, board, council, SWIM, will continue presentations in region when pandemic subsides.

Discussed project activity- since June 2020 project is in abeyance. Plan to re-enter FERC process this summer, working to complete 2 structures, latrine, floating docks above and below the falls and study facilities at the site to support stream gauge and geotech work,

may be used for agencies in the future. Invite anyone with comments, questions or concerns to discuss.

Cory Warnock- Consulting project manager for Nuyakuk project. Bryan Nass w/ BBSRI will provide info also. Described the process and focused on last year. Project is in abeyance. Feasibility assessment late 2017 early 2018, applied for and received preliminary permit FERC June 2018 to evaluate as a hydro project. Internal Study Plan Assessment Jan 2019-Feb 2020. SB91 allowed the assessment feasibility inside the park. Filed Notice of Intent/Pre-Application Doc. (NOI/PAD) in Oct 2019. Scoping effort by FERC Nov 2019-Feb 2020 for public input. NETC 90 meetings, 31 in region.

Filed Initial Proposed Study Plan (PSP) March 2020, filed revised study plan (RSP) April 2020. Project website developed nuyakukhydro.com. 3 Study plan meetings in April 2020, identified additional coordinating needed with BBSRI and other resource agencies. Issues weren't able to advance project within FERCs expectations. COVID issues, requested abeyance, put a hold on licensing process without abandoning it. Able to gather some baseline data during abeyance. Formed Aquatics Resource Working Group (ARWG). PSP/RSP to address Aquatic, Water Resources, Terrestrial, Cultural, Recreational/Visual. Continued refinement of conceptual project design- able to continue to revise infrastructural components of design. Baseline data collection during abeyance, formed and collaborating with ARWG.

Abeyance approved June 2020, until revised PSP filed, dependent on COVID, ARWG and study plan. Reinitiate ILP when we reach agreement on study plans, prelim permit has 4 year timeline, if there is substantive progress, can get 4-year extension. Multi-year study program- many technical documents to be developed.

Collected baseline data- topography bathymetry (topo below the water), aerial Green LiDAR (land contours and elevation underwater) and use the historical info from USGS stream flow data. Important data as bypass reach primary consideration is to make sure passage by fish is still possible with varying water levels. Flyovers at various water levels. Construct housing on site for biologists. Provided images from flyovers and LiDAR data. 1:24

Aquatic Resources Working Group –(ARWG) Provided a year to form ARWG to frame study program, will help through the entire project and duration of the license if project is built and will be a monitoring component post construction. Meetings in Oct, Jan, March ARWG meetings, more to come in April.

Bryan Nass– participating as a stakeholder will provide status update. Working on a conceptual framework to link fish and habitat to project operations and structure. Some technical concerns identified- temporal and spacial extents to assess potential impacts, relationships between fish in the project area to be compared pre and post project, how do we translate impacts to fish population level and how to assess for potential risk based on varying operational scenarios.

Working to develop a conceptual and analytical framework to state relationships between proposed project and fish and their habitat, described as primary relationships and processes that link fish and their habitat to project operations and structure. Discussed adult and juvenile fish passing upstream and downstream and the potential interactions that each

Analytical component is the mathematical equations, metrics and assumptions that quantitatively describe that conceptual framework.

Create a Lifecycle model- numerical tool allows us to test various scenarios to help us understand which relationships are most sensitive to changes and the factor that influence them. Currently, assessing applicability of such a model for assessing impacts on Nuyakuk. Planned Milestones – if lifecycle model is appropriate, can proceed to use it in conducting an integrated risk assessment- tying all these pieces together to help us evaluate risk, cost in various scenarios.

Example: What magnitude of effect would be necessary to cause a decline in productivity in fish population and how likely would that be.

Refine studies of PSP, to become RSP, guide baseline studies and data collection.

Technical workshop to advance progress on these topics.

We have action items and we are working on them.

Cory- updating FERC through the process and ARWG progress. Will reentering FERC ILP process by re-filing PSP. 2021- Formalize aquatic study program agreement, re-file PSP, comment period, the process re-initiates ILP timeline. Review/respond to PSP comments and develop RSP. Study Plan Determination from FERC will allow studies.

Schedule: 2021- Stream gage installation, complete temporary housing, Geotechnical analysis- confirm rock quality is what is expected, Initiate study permitting process for 2022 and 2023, permits with ADFG & DPOR

2022 and beyond- Ongoing consultation/meetings/project updates throughout, cooperative committed to a transparent process, focus on more cost-effective and renewable energy for the region. Timeline:

Comprehensive Study Seasons – 2022 and 2023

Study Reporting – 2022 and 2023

Study Reporting Meetings – 2022 and 2023

Ongoing Infrastructural and Site Analysis and Design – 2022-2024

Further Geotechnical Analysis – 2023

Preliminary Licensing Proposal – 2023

PLP Comment Period – 2023

Final License Application – 2024

Kay- requested a copy of the NETC presentation and project website information.

Paul discussed future opportunities to comments, appreciate the update on timeline and status.

Bob Himschoot- Thanked management council for the opportunity to present.

Will Chaney- thanked the council, provided website info for Kay.

**c. Dr. Daniel Schindler- UW/ Fisheries Research Institute**

Discussed FRI history, inception in 1946 to figure out how to manage salmon (especially sockeye) in western Alaska, comm fish industry concerned overharvesting fish. In 1946, establish long term monitoring studies, established ecosystem monitoring system. Now the longest scientific studies of salmon ecosystem/aquatic ecosystem globally. Mostly now monitoring of what was started in 40s.

Technical difficulties- email presentation.

Break 12:01 to 12:06

Paul verified council members still in attendance Bruce, Delores, Lee, Paul, Ali in attendance. (Cody off temporarily, in attendance and commented later)

**IX. Council Member Alternates**

Paul – opportunity to inform members they can select Alternates. No requirement, but opportunity for that. Question if alternates need to be identified prior to or if not able to attend a meeting.

Ali- read regulation 11 AAC 20.320- Designation of Alternates. Requested to designate alternates for the record- so the secretary can contact council member and alternate if unable to reach member.

Paul- see the benefit of identifying alternates and encourage members identify an alternate for the next meeting.

Delores- who makes the determination of who is qualifications to be an alternate?

Paul and Ali- no specifics, could request interpretation by the Dept. of Law.

Paul- No interpretation request by Dept. of Law. Trust the council member's discretion, can change determination in the future.

Delores- Yes, designees can be presented to council and council can decide if that person is suitable.

Paul no formal action. Identify the need to designate alternates by next fall meeting and council can take action to approve those. Delores- approved.

**X. Schedule for Spring and Fall meetings**

Paul and Ali discussed meeting minutes from November and set target date of late October early November for fall meeting. Set aside to more formally identify weeks, will put it on agenda for fall meeting.

**XI. Public Comments**

Rob Carpenter- discussed Lake Aleknagik SRS, request SUD land additions, can be up for review. Presented w/ Mike Megli 2 years ago about research residents have been done,

mainly the lack of public process, created SRS by admin order, land area larger than 640 acres. A letter from Aleknagik Traditional Council and city of Aleknagik submitted to DNR, Parks, Governor and Bryce Edgmon. There has been no feedback to the council regarding that resolution. Met with both directors and no comments from submission. Resolution from City council and traditional council would like it reversed and it go out to a public process. Happy to represent information at future meeting.

Paul- discussed the director did meet with part of the group 1-1.5 years ago.

Rob- Yes, we did meet, Ali was at that meeting. No follow up on the REC area being well over the 640 acres. Multiple meetings since 2017, no follow up.

Kay Andrews requested support from the council for trails funding trail improvements in the community on Marsh mountain and Tripod trails.

Paul inquired as to when support deadline is needed, would like to give the council opportunity to review the matter.

Kay Andrews- identified April 1 deadline. Seeking additional funding for trails from the federal highway funding.

Cody, Paul and Ali discussed potential to utilize new bylaws to meet, form a resolution and hold a vote via email or special meeting before April 1 deadline, subject to Open Meetings Act. Discussed

Paul resolution and take action request. The Wood-Tikchik State Park Management Council supports actions and proposals by the Aleknagik City Council in efforts to secure funding for trail improvements, establishment and maintenance.

Paul request a motion for resolution.

Delores- motion to support action. Ali- second

No discussion or opposition. Paul request secretary letter write up.

Kay Andrews- follow up for Mr. Carpenter. The City did pass a resolution in relation to Aleknagik SRS that was only partially supported, since the city council has rescinded that resolution.

Marion – Concerns by tribal members. Read Letters from Ben Tinker and Danny Togiak, residents of Aleknagik, which discussed his long history of trapping in the area. Complaint regarding Trooper Wittkop and her (Ranger Eskelin) traveling on trapline every day and WTSP and wildlife trooper are claiming our trap line as a public trail. Concern of marking trapline as a trail. Danny Togiak supports Ben Tinker’s letter. Helped Tinker make bridges on his trapline so he can have successful access to his trapline trail for subsistence uses and native handicraft. Concern that WTSP and Wildlife troopers claiming this trail as a public usage trail. If regulations change Aleknagik residents should be advised of new regulations.

Marion addressed her personal concern as to why people aren't able to cut down firewood in the state park anymore.

Paul – concerns noted by the council. Rely on staff person to meet with you and address how that would take place. Put that on the agenda for the next meeting.

Ali addressed firewood harvest concerns. Firewood harvest generally prohibited in state parks but is allowed by special use permit. The park boundary is near Jackknife Mountain and Lake Nerka so a significant distance away from Aleknagik, but people can get a permit to cut firewood in the park. Believe lands between Aleknagik and the park boundary are mostly Aleknagik Natives Limited lands. Inappropriate to address open case in a public meeting related to complaint letters.

## **VIII. Presentations Continued**

### **b. Daniel Schindler- FRI**

Recap, FRI- Based out of UW in Seattle. Started in 1946. Initial motivation was a request from commercial fishing industry to improve fisheries management. Concern of no local knowledge in managing runs, 1946 catches started to decline. Industry worried they were overharvesting fish. Studying ecosystem. Camp on Aleknagik and Nerka. Study Ice break and earlier breakup now about 2 weeks earlier is a fingerprint of global warming. Discussed juvenile sockeye studies and warm water is improving growth of salmon. Messages to Alaskan's is the whole system works because of the diversity, global adaptations of fish to the habitat translate to the biodiversity of salmon. Bears and gulls and juvenile salmon move throughout the system to feed depending on the spawn timing which is related to stream temperature. Habitat is gone in the lower 48, Bristol Bay we have the ability to study these things to advise and restore habitat.

Ali questioned FRI's plans for 2021.

2021 4-6 on Nerka and 10-15 in Aleknagik hope to get 3-4 grad students into the field this year, 2-3 at Aleknagik 1-2 Nerka. No additional projects just focused on long term monitoring.

Paul – Great points to protect the habitat. Asked about the size of juvenile salmon benefiting from warmer water and anecdotal info about catch of sockeye are smaller size each year. Is that true or correlation?

Daniel- working with ADFG to quantify that. Adults caught in fishery are smaller than they were 20 years ago. Fleet has move to smaller mesh, smaller mesh catching smaller fish. Last 6 years 50 million returning, when big run the fish are smaller, more competition. Small fish now because there are so many fish. Ocean has a finite ability to feed those fish. Many fish in the last couple years were 2-year ocean. Whether these things continue into the next decade, fish likely to be smaller with larger runs. Juvenile grow faster in the warmer lakes they are more likely to leave after one year, most growth put on as subadult in the ocean.

Paul – questioned how they measure bear activity? Thanks to Daniel.  
Daniel- Bear trail cam about a mile up or so, photos. Apologized for lousy band width

**XII. Management Council Bylaws update**

Paul defer bylaws to next meeting.  
Delores and Ali agree to defer bylaw to next meeting.

**XIII. Board Comments**

Bruce – letter from state of Alaska March 1, 2021 office of the Governor. Call in February last month appointed and renewed my seat to a three-year term. I accepted, Oath of Office. Look forward to serving on the council.

Lee- no comments

Delores, echo Bruce, appreciated updates from Nushagak Hydro Project as well as Dr. Daniel Schindler's presentation.

Cody thanked the public that attended the meeting. Bring up responsibilities of the council to advise legislative action, discussed SB97 that would change the way the state lands area lease and or sold for commercial development. Seemed broad enough to have implications to state park lands, repeal of recreational rivers corridors. BBNA staff put a lot of time into these plans. State park staff to notify the council of implications.

Ali discussed SB97 was sponsored by the Governor. Unsure of DNR/DPOR position. Use down in the park. 3700 in 2019 and 472 in 2020 commercial use.  
ANSCA public easement to provide access to the park, park is public land for everyone to use. Ben Corwin new Superintendent for Chugach/SW, hiring currently for supervisory PRII.

Paul – Thanked presenters, public for attendance.

**XIV. Date/Agenda of Next Meeting**

In the fall at the call of the chair.

**XV. Adjournment 13:30**