

Meeting Minutes - June 12th, 2023 - Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Trond Jensen called the meeting to order at 6:10PM

2. **Roll Call and Introduction:**

- a. Present: Dave Hart, Trond Jensen, Lauren Boldrick, Kyle Shedd, Haley Johnston, Jeff Bidinger, Kate Happala, Irene Turlletes, Rob Clark, Ted Phelps
- b. Excused: Claire LeClair, Tyndall Ellis, Charlotte Levy
- c. Absent: Matt Worden, Mark Miner
- d. Staff: Keith Wilson
- e. Public in attendance: Katie Conner, Casey Durand, Shaun Sexton (virtual)

3. **Changes to the Agenda and Approval:** The agenda for the June 12, 2023 meeting was approved by Hart/Shedd

4. **Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:** The minutes from the May 8, 2023 meeting were approved with no changes by Boldrick/Shedd

5. **Public Comments:**

- a. Shaun Sexton - Wondering why the board is so heavily weighted towards Anchorage folks with one person from Girdwood and Eagle River. Lauren responded (chair of the nominations committee) acknowledging that she canvassed fairly aggressively in Chugiak, Peters Creek, and across the Anchorage bowl, in an effort to get more motorized users and hunters on the board. Applications are online and solicitations will begin in August. Applications are due in late-October, early-November and new members join the board at the beginning of the year. Lauren suggested that applicants write as much as possible on the application so that professional and personal interests might be highlighted that may fill gaps in the geographic areas, areas of interest or expertise. Jeff Bidigner mentioned that he lives in Eagle River and has been working to bring some representation to Chugiak/Eagle River

6. **Old Business:**

- a. **Alaska Glamping** - the Access committee met and voted to approve the parking lot adjacent portion of the proposal. This includes five glamping tents, a common cooking area, and a contained trash area. Staffing, general policies and gate options were discussed. Length of the permit would be 1 year to operate only at that site. 7 of 8 access committee members voted to approve 1 year operations. Concerns were voiced in committee about waste management, appearance of the structure, public perception, and the business plan. The Committee voted to proceed with the one year permit with the stipulation that we receive a review at the end of the operating season before approval of future operation or expansion into the backcountry portion of the proposal.
 - i. Stipulation that guests *are* allowed to carry their own bear spray, prior proposal said that only staff would be allowed to carry.

- ii. Proposal said “no pets”, but the state park does allow pets. Glamping operation said that service animals would be required to show documentation, but that is not legal per ADA requirements.
- iii. Water quality was signed off on by park - no issue there
- iv. Concern of the access committee: no fresh, gray or backwater discharged to the site.
- v. Trash and food management plans - outlined in the operations plan provided to Ben. The cooking area will be monitored. There are only certain times that the area is available for guests. Trash cans to be checked every two hours by staff. Board doesn't care *what* the management plan is as long as a plan is in place and approved by the park
- vi. Concern about amplified sounds - this is a stipulation of campsites already
- vii. Required reporting interval? End of season report will be given by Casey Durand and Katie Conner at the November meeting, after the reporting deadline of October 15th.
- viii. “As per the draft + the following stipulations in a support letter” - will consolidate any new stipulation by next Monday, June 19th - Board will vote by email.
- ix. Plan to set up over the 4th of July weekend if they get approval/permit from Ben.

b. Eklutna Hydro Alternatives update (Keith Wilson) - Keith attended the “alternative analysis” meeting in mid-May. Details are available at eklutnahydro.com. Had a quarterly update meeting on Friday past. Background:

- i. Owners are MEA, Chugach Electric and Muni.
- ii. The dam was created in the 50s and was under federal control, then changed hands to the Muni in 1991
- iii. Part of that 1991 deal was how to reestablish fish spawning habitat.
- iv. Lower dam removal involved the following stakeholders: ADF&G, Eklutna, Chugach Electric, AWWU, MEA, AK State Parks, NOAA, the conservation fund, trout unlimited, others.
- v. The utilities (obviously) have an interest in maintaining hydro energy, maintaining drinking water
- vi. Over 30 comprehensive alternatives identified through this process
- vii. Mitigation of damage to the lakeside trail due to wave action - how best to maintain the height of the lake that allows for recreation and reduces damage to the outdoor recreation assets.
- viii. Timeline:

1. 2023-2024 develop draft fish and wildlife program - analysis through summer 2023
 2. January 2024 public meetings
 3. April 2024 submit final proposal to Governor
 4. October 2024 governor signs/approves final fish and wildlife program
- ix. Upcoming meeting from 9am-1pm on Wednesday, June 14th
- x. The CAB would like to ask Ben for an update in September. Carve out a plan for cab involvement and engagement at that point.
- c. **Staff Updates** (Keith Wilson) - It's summer. The park is busy, campgrounds are busy and overflowing, cabins are fairly well booked all summer. Park volunteers are in place at Eklutna, Bird Creek, Glen Alps and McHugh. Some animal issues:
- i. Bear issues
 1. Eagle River Nature Center and South Fork Eagle River Trail - brown bears with cubs, surprise defensive charges.
 2. McHugh, Rainbow, Trunagain Arm - 2 bears euthanized in separate instances of following hikers, difficulty deterring.
 - ii. Muktuk Marston Trail dedication
 - iii. Ben is still enjoying his paternity leave. Ranger Jarrett Walter may have to resign some family considerations. Leave right now for 6 weeks. Ranger Positions are still posted for a few days longer. Statewide park ranger recruitment is ongoing.
 - iv. Search and Rescue - brief rescue at McHugh Peak; Death and missing hiker search out of Basher
 - v. Law Enforcement - Keith and Levi - arrested a warrant arrest at South Fork, someone landed with tundra tires on Eklutna lake (twice!!!) and was cited. Trail guys have their crew together working on Peters Creek and Bird Creek for RTP projects; AK Trails working on SF
 - vi. Matt Wedeking wants to get rid of all iron rangers if possible, looking for a non-cash option, LUC station; new LUC station at Sunny side of Flat top. Will remove any iron rangers that are adjacent to LUC stations.
 - vii. Upper Huffman - will be paved June 12-26, no parking in that lot during that time, but it can still be accessed by parking outside of the gate.
- d. **Announcements/Events:**
- i. Chugach Fest June 23-24 at Arctic Valley - info at arcticvalley.org
 - ii. Alaska Trails volunteer events

e. Committee Reports:

- i. Access - nothing additional following Glamping report
- ii. Budget (Tyndall absent, Haley chimed in) - Haley will email out information about the Capital and Operating Budgets at the end of June to let folks know what happens
- iii. Nomination (Lauren) - Lauren said she's already asking folks to apply. Again, it is hard to get folks to apply from north of Anchorage. She would like to see applications hunters, snowmachiners, and northern folks. Haley will ask Red Saddler and Senator Merrick to include a link in their newsletters.
- iv. Seward Highway Design (Irene) - Committee met after our last meeting in May to discuss with Ben what the park's hopes are for the project. The project design team has not yet scheduled their agency or stakeholder meetings - but will likely schedule this summer. No new information about the McHugh reroute.
- v. Trails (Irene) - We have not officially voted on our letter of support for the CMBR lower eagle river trails - some votes in support were received via email, but not a quorum. Lower Eagle River trails in the greenbelt pathway. Supporting the design, planning and fundraising for that with the stipulation that the CAB would like continued documentation and coordination as they move forward. CMBR will check in with the CAB before any construction begins. Irene read the letter into the record. Motion to support Hart/Bidinger with friendly amendments to spell correctly and remove the possessive. Motion passed unanimously.
- vi. Chugach Park Fund (Haley) - Project is underway at South Fork.
- vii. Wildlife (Charlotte) - Charlotte out, and no additional input from committee members. Dave had questions about the amount of bear issues - wondering if that is normal. Ranger Keith said that this is on par with normal amounts.
- viii. Planning Committee (Jeff) - no updates
- ix. Outreach (Matt) - Matt absent and no additional input from committee
- x. Ram Valley (Haley) - Convo with John Wolfe, waiting on funding information, but probably ready to have another meeting soon to discuss: outreach to neighbors, use of the state funds, etc.

Additional Questions from Shaun Sexton after committee reports: Mile 5, 5.5 crew was out this winter reestablishing access. Continuing working on Peters Creek this summer for an RTP.

Next Meeting: September 11th

Motion to adjourn: Hart/Boldrick at 7:36pm