

CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

(Hybrid-with in person at Potter Section House/Microsoft Teams Electronic Meeting)

DRAFT--Minutes of the October 14, 2024 Meeting

REGULAR MEETING # 8

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Haley Johnston called the meeting to order at 6:00PM

2. **Roll Call & Introductions:**

Present: Haley Johnston, Claire LeClair, Gus Gustafson, Mark Miner, Kyle Shedd, Tyndall Ellis, Rob Clark, Bill Britt, Irene Turletes, Gabby Jordan, Marcella Dent, Joe Hackenmueller, Ted Phelps

Excused: Dave Hart, Stephanie Rice

Absent:

Staff: Ben Corwin & Keith Wilson, Chugach State Park and Wendy Sailors, DPOR Director's Office

Public: Judy Caminer, Chris Hughes and Pearl-Grace Pantaleone (both with HDR-Safer Seward Highway project)

3. **Changes to Agenda & Approval:** Agenda was approved as written on motion made/seconded by Britt/Turletes. Comment made on review of CSP Management Plan and Trail Management Plan and how to add especially trails that are not recognized in the plan but are being used by the public.

4. **Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:** Minutes of the September 9, 2024 meeting were approved as written on motion made/seconded by Ellis/Britt.

5. **Public Comments:** None

6. **Old Business:**

- a. **CASA Project Discussion (Bill Britt)** – Because there is no process that's been established for selecting and approving bond projects under CASA Bill wanted to start the discussion at the CAB since many people have asked what does the park want in terms of projects to improve access to the park. For the time being likely to see only short-term and/or smaller projects. Some tension between downtown and hillside property tax payers; downtown wants to make sure that CASA projects don't turn out to be mainly road improvement projects for Hillside property owners. Haley will reach out to the muni to offer assistance from the CAB to develop a list of CASA projects that would mirror projects/access improvements that are included in the park's management plan, trail management plan and the access plan.
- b. **Safer Seward Highway Update (HDR Project Team)**- Chris Hughes gave an update on the project. Full access (right & left turn lane for in and out) is currently designed for Potter Valley Road, all the of the Turnagain Arm Trail trailheads (Potter, McHugh, Rainbow & Windy Corner), Beluga Point, Bird Creek scenic overlook & parking area and Bird Creek Campground. Right in/Right out (not full access) is currently designed for Bird Ridge Trailhead, Bird Creek Access, Falls Creek and Indianhouse. The project

currently includes a pedestrian pathway throughout the entire 20 mile corridor. At Potter Marsh the pathway will be on the mountain (or marsh) side, through the rest of the corridor, the location of the pedestrian path can be on either side and may move from side to side. Pedestrian path will be a 12 foot clearing with a 10' paved portion and one foot on either side that is gravel. A pedestrian overpass is planned above the railroad at Beluga Point and there is possibility of a fence along portions where pedestrian pathway and railroad are side-by-side. Location of the pedestrian pathway (mountain vs. Turnagain Arm side) will be better informed by establishing the purpose of the trail (Transit? Recreation? Both?). Chris mentioned public opinion survey conducted by Dittman, results are on the project website. One take home was that the paved pedestrian pathway was a lower priority than other purposes of the project and survey respondents rated recreation and a separated pathway lower than safety and reliability. Timeline: looking at completing the draft environmental assessment (EA) by December, 2024. Other activity coming up: Safety express Project 2024 to add signage by next July. Also trying to get a dedicated left turn lane at McHugh in 2025 and more rock catchment and slope stabilization at 113.2 (Ice Fall) in 2026. No plans to develop borrow pits/gravel sources within the park for any of these projects; any cuts within the park will be what is needed to build the road.

- c. **Canyon Road Project Updates (Rys Miranda, DPOR Design & Construction)**-Last time he updated CAB on this project was a year ago. Project gaining traction in the past 12 months; \$1.9 million secured for the project. Cultural resource survey was conducted this past summer; next task is the geotechnical investigation which will happen within the next few weeks. Once all that data is in place, then full design with construction happening in later 2025 through 2026. Some portions of the area will be closed Wednesday through Friday while geotechnical investigation happens. 12' x 25' parking stalls was initial concept, but UAA class worked on getting that down to 10' x 25' parking stalls so total number of parking spaces around 100. Current concept does not include a separated pedestrian path the length of the parking areas, but Rys stated that they have received numerous requests for that element and that the final design will likely include a pathway.
- d. **Eklutna Hydro (Ben Corwin)**-Governor approved final plan so that all but 11 miles of the river will be re-watered; \$10 million for further study and potential construction of the fixed wheel gate to replace the existing overflow spillway. Included \$240,000 for repairs on the Eklutna lakeside trail. CEA will hold those funds until DPOR provides specific project and recipient. Hoping that CEA will be able to hold on to the funds until work needed.
- e. **Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants**-Two RTP grant applications being submitted by park staff. One for a tracked skid-steer with mulching attachment to clear alder tunnels and snow blower attachment for widening access roads during the winter; also includes a heavy-equipment trailer. (\$242,000) and one for a UTV (e.g., Polaris Ranger quad cab) to support trail crew work throughout the park and funds to repair snowmachine trailers (\$65,000). Motion approved on one made/seconded (Shedd/Britt) to approve and send letters of support for both applications.

7. New Business:

Homicide Peak Renaming-Shawna Popovici (DPOR Interpretation & Education) asked Ben to broach this topic with the CAB because she is working on an Interpretive sign for the Canyon Road trailhead project which will include text on the recently re-named North and South Yuyanq' Ch'ex, formally North and South Suicide Peaks. There is no known historical Dena'ina name. Name change requests for geographic features are submitted to the Alaska Historical Commission (AHC), which is currently reviewing rename proposals. Discussion about pros and cons for advocating for a name change. Motion approved on one made/seconded (Turletes/LeClair) to establish an ad-hoc committee, Irene will send out email to get volunteers to serve.

8. Staff Report: Ben Corwin & Keith Wilson

Updates:

- Eklutna ATV expansion project is almost complete.
- Bird Valley parking lot is still in progress.
- The new PUCs are still under constructions and close to being dried in.
- CSP trail crew finished the 4-mile bridge and reroute out in Peters Creek and it looks fantastic.
- The crew went out and repaired the Raven Gorge bridge railing on Crow Pass Trail.
- Interior Trails has been in the field assessing Crow Pass. They will have the first phase of deliverable ready by the end of October – a trail prescription and costing. They will be invited to the November meeting.
- Collaborating with Anchorage Park Foundation and Huddle on the Indigenous Place Names wayfinding markers. Recommend to the CAB that they are invited to the November meeting to brief the group on the selected sites within the park and plan for maintenance.

Staff:

- Interviews last week for the Natural Resource Specialist II position. The selected candidate has been passed to HR for approval.
- Interviews for the vacant Park Specialist I position will be towards the end of the month. Good applicant pool to select from.

LE:

Park Rangers

Field time limited past four weeks due to training and scheduled leave:

- Ranger Kellan Ford was on USCG military orders for the month of September in PWS;
- Ranger Tim Gurnett on leave a week and then Woofer recert training for one week;
- Last week Tim and Kellan both in a 40hr Training in Palmer-Assisting Individuals and Groups in Crisis;
- Ben and myself in Cooper Landing for firearms training last Friday.

Hunting

- Bowhunters in Eklutna were successful; RM 445 registration moose hunt closed early by emergency order Sept 21st (vs Oct 20th); harvest quota of bulls for that hunt met.
- General season/harvest ticket moose hunt; received a report of a sublegal bull taken in Peters Creek. Ranger Gurnett investigated, issued violator a summons, seized 330lbs of meat and antlers. Defendant is insisting it was a legal bull and has retained an attorney, will have their say in Court next week.
- Ship Creek moose hunt opens 10/25;
- Registration black (3 permits) and brown bear (1 permit) in McHugh open now (weekday only, shotgun and/or muzzle loader), all close at end of October.

Incidents:

- Hanglider seriously injured in the Park Sept 21st, Lifemed and ANG Rescue 210th treated and evacuated;
- Vandalism discovered, and/or illegal dumps cleaned up **at** several locations: Bird Point, North Fork trailhead, Basher Trailhead, Ptarmigan Valley trailhead, and Briggs Bridge trailhead;

- Reports of dirtbikes and ATV's where prohibited on Anchorage Hillside; Ranger Ford contacted a group of seven at Glen Alps trailhead in early October, learned they were all contractors working for Enstar in Powerline Pass area for three days and who'd failed to advise Park or get permission;
- Following up on all ATV use in closed areas when reported;
- Also on Hillside, several game cameras and salt licks discovered. Likely a case of intentional feeding of wildlife for photos. Investigation ongoing and in the process of looking for more cameras and salt licks; in contact with citizens who have reported more.
- Outside the Park, Kellan assisted APD – gunshots in the area of Cheney Lake, individuals shooting at ducks who fled when APD/Park Ranger arrived;
- AST assists – fail to yield motorcyclist in Eagle River
- Keith and Kellen participated in AMRG/SAR scenario training this past Saturday at Eagle River Nature Center

9. Committee Reports:

- **Access (Dave):** N/A
- **Budget (Tyndal):** CSP revenue highest ever at \$1.75 million, mainly parking fees, PUCs (\$25.0 each annually) and commercial use fees.
- **Nomination (Dave):** Committee has received more applications so there are currently about five applications, encourages everyone to help recruit.
- **Seward Highway Design (Stephanie):** N/A
- **Trails (Irene):** Alaska Trails had a fall fundraiser, had a good turnout and made about \$19,000. Irene would like the committee to review the park's trail management plan and compile possible projects for CASA and other funding sources.
- **Chugach Park Fund (Haley/Claire):** Storytellers needed for January 21 Trail Tales. Letter of support (LOS) for Rasmuson grant; motion made/seconded (Britt/Clark) for CAB to approve the LOS drafted by Haley and sent to the CAB by email on October 14; approved with no objection.
- **Wildlife (Gus):** Good opportunities for viewing beavers at the ERNC.
- **Planning (Rob):** Would like committee to review the Chugach Access Plan to add to the list of possible projects for CASA and other funding sources and also look at the potential for opening the planning process to add trails that are not in the plan but are used by the public regularly.
- **Outreach (Rob):** N/A
- **Ram Valley (Haley):** Outreach to surveyors to determine where the park boundaries are in relation to the proposed alignments.

Next CAB meeting November 11.

10. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn made/seconded (Ellis/Turletes) and approved with no objection 8:00PM.