

Seward State Parks Citizen Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

January 17, 2024 5:30-7:30 pm

AVTEC Culinary Academy, 809 Third Ave, east entrance, third floor

I. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order: Chair Griswold
- B. Volunteer minutes-taker: Bob Barnwell
- C. Roll Call: Bob Barnwell, Carol Griswold, Nick Jordan, Tom Miller (phone), Cliff Reid (phone), Mica Van Buskirk
- D. Board members absent: Mark Luttrell
- E. State Park Staff: Superintendent Hans Rinke (phone), District Ranger Jack Ransom
- F. Public Present: Robin Collman
- G. Minutes Approval for November 15 work session notes. No meeting in December due to lack of quorum. Approved as is, unanimous.
- H. Agenda Changes and Approval: approved as is, unanimous.

II. Public Comments: none

III. Board Contact and Correspondence with Public: Bob: a friend recently stayed in Tonsina cabin; all is good there; they liked the tree mitigation.

IV. Reports:

A. Staff Report: Hans Rinke, Jack Ransom:

Hans: In contact with DPOR Shawna Popovici who has applied for the Fort McGilvray Historic Preservation grant with a 50/50 match. She will be in contact with the Board with updates.

Notice of Public Scoping for Personal Watercraft and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Regulation: DPOR is soliciting comments on the public interest in revisions, due February 1.

SB 127: Thanks for letter of support to Senator Matt Clamen of Anchorage who introduced the bill. The 7% Vehicle Rental Tax is split between DOT and state parks, an important operational funding source. This bill requires non-traditional rentals like Turo to pay the VRT too. Hans verified this is a state-wide VRT, but did not know how much income is lost from non-traditional rentals. **Carol:** Senator Clamen relayed that he thanked us for sending the letter and will keep us updated. Senate President Stevens' staff relayed he thanked us for including him.

SCORP is still under review by the National Park Service. The delay is routine.

Jack R: The Tonsina Bridge project was supposed to happen last fall but now might happen between March 15 and May 15. **Mica** suggested posting a notice on Tonsina Bridge the project dates are known. **Jack:** The other two big projects are moving Callisto Canyon out of the floodway, and Tonsina PUC back from the erosional slope. The contractors' options are limited by the funding. He and Mike inspected Callisto PUC and did not find any further damage Tonsina PUC: Mike felled one of the larger trees on the slope before it fell in hopes the roots would help slow down the erosion. Cabins are blocked out in late

March/April for spring maintenance, viewable on the reservation website.

Working on grants, including purchase of a skid steer and attachments for parking lot maintenance, potholes, signs, access to trailhead, kiosks, and trailhead, and lifting barrier rocks at beach property line by boat launch.

South Fork Tonsina Creek recreational gold miner Gerald Luck contacted Jack. He was unable to sell his permit and may resume gold mining. His Argo is still in the park, and is apparently not abandoned. Jack asked him to move it farther back, out of sight. Luck will need a new Land Access Permit for legal access across State Park land and a ADFG permit for Tonsina Creek access. **Mica** asked if he was in violation of his previous permit? **Jack:** it's on General State Land and out of State Park's authority (Cliff Larsen's domain). Lots of debris from previous work there. It seems someone is hauling garbage out; the old cabin is almost gone. Photos documenting the site conditions are helpful.

Cliff noted that the Mining Land and Water (MLW) site only shows one open claim: the original 40-acre site by Cathedral Fall, under permit to Luck, but this might not be accurate.

Sitka Black-tailed Deer: there are more and more sightings at Tonsina and in town. **Nick:** documented two deer on a game camera near the Tonsina Trail Head in the last two years; they seem to be reported all over. **Cliff** saw one in October by Cathedral Fall. ADFG Wildlife Biologist Nick Fowler is interested if anyone has information: 907-260-2950
nick.fowler@alaska.gov

Mica: upper parking lot only has about 5 spaces since the Metco grader can't remove snow berms; needs a loader. She noted the agreement between Borough and Lowell Point Community Council to keep the tsunami escape routes clear all year. **Jack:** will call Metco and ask that berms be pushed back.

Bob asked if our parks should be included in the Alaska Long Trail? **Carol** noted that we sent a Board-approved letter to Director Gease, he apparently hasn't advocated for inclusion of the CHSRA or Resurrection Bay Marine Trails into the Alaska Long Trail.

Bob: We need to continue to lobby with Alaska Long Trail and the SCORP plan to include our area and its concerns. As a small town we need to lobby for our needs.

Carol cautioned about exceeding our parks' carrying capacity and overloading our infrastructure without adequate funding to even maintain what we have now.

B. Committee Reports

1. Local issues (except parking) (Nick at LP/Tonsina, Tom at Marine Parks): none
2. Mining (Cliff, Bob, Carol): see above.
3. Legislative Committee (Bob, Mica) Budget and Friends of State Parks:

Discussion on Friends groups. The governor wants to attract private funding such as through "Friends" groups. **Bob** felt that private funding for parks is dangerous and can lead to inequality between the districts as the wealthy areas thrive, others don't. State has an obligation to fund adequately and fairly.

Management plan budget: \$16.3 million. Governor raised it to \$16.9 million. **Hans:** \$11 million for operational side of state parks from revenue generation including commercial permits, pay stations, car rental tax fees and vehicle rental tax. Fee revenue should match the cost. The additional money comes from federal grant funding. Parks need governor/ legislative approval to spend this money. SCORP is the federal authority and gatekeeper for these funds.

These are typically pass-throughs. Very little general funds to provide support. Funding is a three-legged stool: General Fund, Vehicle Rental Tax, and Commercial Fees. Parks is trying to increase revenue generation with commercial permitting fees, Luke stations to collect parking fees. Chugach State Park is self-supporting. 2015 was pivotal year with a large decrease in funding due to drop in oil prices. Many positions were cut as they were funded by the General Fund. The General Fund only funds the Director now. (Note: the new Willow oilfield is Federal.)

Jack: this district took 60% of the parks' \$350,000 cut in 2015 and lost a lot of staff here, in Valdez, and Cook Inlet.

Bob: state needs to fund these parks as valuable assets for quality of life for locals and tourism. **Hans:** state built nice infrastructure but now finds it hard to upkeep/replace. **Mica:** deferred maintenance of \$91M backlog and only \$1.7M actually funded in proposed 2024 budget. **Bob:** state has responsibility to fund Parks equitably; we can't compete.

Hans will email list of projects submitted and deferred maintenance list to Board.

4. Board Recruitment Committee (Mark): two vacancies for 9-member Board

Postponed until Mark is present.

V. New Business:

A. Discuss possible ribbon-cutting ceremony/presentation to celebrate Fort McGilvray Historic District. After discussion, **Hans** agreed to ask staff historians to work on a public presentation in Seward, possibly at Seward Community Library and Museum Community Room. Consensus that 2025 might be more feasible in consideration of everyone's workloads. **Jack** wondered when the Historic Register plaque is expected and where it will be located.

B. Discuss Board input on jet skis and drone regulations in area state parks.

Carol: Maps of Caines Head State Recreation, Lowell Point State Recreation Site, and marine parks show that the park includes portions of water that could allow park regulations of jet skis. People that want a natural experience shouldn't be harassed by drones and jet skis. We need a management plan. **Mica:** currently not regulated.

Carol: many national and state parks ban drones. If bans are not global, she would like to prohibit them here. **Robin:** does Kachemak Bay ban them? **Carol:** yes, they are disruptive. **Bob:** enforcement? **Carol:** tough, but worth it.

Jack: increasingly, jet skis are a topic, boundaries are a good point. Park has enforcement potential. Prince William Sound Management Plan: Does it include this language? Might be helpful to look this up online. (**Carol:** note, drones are relatively new and 1996 PWSSP is out of date.) **Tom:** I've seen some responsible use of these watercrafts. They are useful crafts. Drones are also in that category. Drones are used by people to promote beauty. Most of these people are capturing beauty- pigeonholes the responsible people- notice these too. **Mica:** I agree, not ready to ban these, I see lots of responsible use of these two user groups. **Nick:** saw drone fishing where drone takes lure way out there and drops it. **Robin:** drones may irritate others, but there's no privacy in public lands. Jet skis are different. They have their own slips and are used daily. I find these irritating. **Nick:** parts of Kenai Lake are off limits, but worries about enforcement here. **Robin:** education is important. **Carol:** advocated for no wake zones in marine parks and along shoreline; we need to reduce conflicts, maintain our park values. She will incorporate opinions into two letters and share by email to see if there

is consensus. Individuals can submit letters stating your opinion.

C. Discuss changing meeting calendar to meet September-November, and January-April, deleting December and May as members and staff are too busy. Consensus, but will wait to vote when full Board is present.

E. Discuss options for advertising meetings, now that the Journal is out of business.
Mica: city clerk might share this, as well as Chamber. KBBI and 91.7 FM might be an option.

VI. Old Business: postponed to next meeting due to lack of time

- a. Discuss minute-taker solutions from work session
- b. As time allows, discuss Goals

VII. Goals 2023-24 Updates and discussion

1. Continue to pursue and support Lowell Point Parking plan: 2023-2027 SCORP draft still awaiting final approval as of January 7, 2024:
<https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/scorp.htm>
2. Support funding for deferred maintenance of infrastructure including latrines at LPSRS, upper and lower parking lots, Fort McGilvray, trails, and PUCs. Letter approved and sent January 8, 2024.
3. Support additional funding to move the Callisto PUC.
4. Support additional funding for relocation of Tonsina PUC. Approved in July, may need more funding.
5. Support update of 1998 CHSRS Management Plan, especially with the addition of Fort McGilvray Historic District on December 22, 2022, and send letter of support. Draft letter by Chair 3-15-23, Chair emailed Board-approved letter to Director Gease on 3-17-23, no reply. 11-23, Rinke: provide more support for update. What has changed since 1997?
6. Support a Fort McGilvray Historic Preservation Master Plan and Interpretive Plan, and alternate funding opportunities as recommended by DPOR Shawna Popovici. Letter approved and sent January 5, 2024.
7. Continue to pursue resolution of Tonsina Creek mining issue: Case file so convoluted, may be best to start over.
8. Support annual lifting of protective barrier rocks at LPSRS by boat launch.
9. Support annual budget for METCO to plow and maintain lower parking lot at LPSRS.
10. Support Friends Group, whether locally or statewide: in 2023-2027 SCORP comments
11. Update Parks website: re high tides, stove fuel, slides, and other changes: Tonsina PUC section updates were moved and approved on 02-22-23, sent 3-2-23; in progress
12. Maintain laminated tide charts at both kiosks (Carol, Nick): continuing. Carol laminated and posted Jan-April tide charts and 2024 Seward tide charts on December 28.
13. Explore new public-use cabin locations: Board voted unanimously 2-22-23 not to support this; area has enough, locations are difficult, deferred maintenance and relocations of existing PUCs are expensive and difficult. Mica later proposed new locations at Thumb Cove north end, Fox Island Spit, South Beach CHSRA, North Beach south side, Tonsina Point between bridges or near the campground pavilion.
14. Support installation of tent platforms in park: determine locations and include in grants. 2-22-23 Board supported Eagle Scout project to provide tent platforms. 2023: two installed at

North Beach. Need more? Where?

15. Support ASLC meeting with all Resurrection Bay stakeholders: Nick, 2023 pending.

16. Support mooring buoys in the Park.

17. Discuss consolidation and/or relocation of LPBSRS beach fishing line collection station, trash can, no ground fires, no camping, and any other signs to reduce clutter.

VII. Informational Items:

Lawsuit decision reinstates jet ski ban in Kachemak Bay:

<https://alaskapublic.org/2023/11/30/lawsuit-decision-reinstates-jet-ski-ban-in-kachemak-bay/>

Alaska State Parks has rescinded planned fee increases for 2024, with a spokesperson saying the new fee schedule was published online before a “proper review and approval process” could be completed... The additional revenue was intended to help maintain facilities and support outdoor recreation, according to [a statement from the division at the time.](#)

<https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2023/12/29/alaska-state-parks-rescinds-2024-fee-increase-for-further-review/#:~:text=Alaska%20State%20Parks%20has%20rescinded,approval%20process%E2%80%9D%20could%20be%20completed.>

VIII. Public Comments:

IX. Adjournment

A. Board Comments: **Mica:** Eagle Scouts have two more presentations on the South Beach latrine and Kids Don't Float projects if time allows. She will ask Scouts when they are available. The Eagle Scout projects may be in the running for Eagle Scout Projects of the Year. **Nick:** the holiday decorations were removed from the two sites at LPSRS. **Carol** said she really appreciated seeing them, as did many other visitors.

B. Date/Location of next meeting: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 5:30 pm, AVTEC Culinary Academy.

C. Motion for adjournment: adjourned at 7:50 pm.