

**WOOD-TIKCHIK STATE PARK
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING
Friday February 1, 2024 at 10:00 am
Dillingham, Alaska**



-Meeting Minutes-

I. Call to Order 10:00

II. Roll Call/Establish Quorum

Present-

Cody Larson - BBNA

Ali Eskelin - ADNR

Wassillie Andrews – New Stuyahok

Lee Borden – ADFG

Delores Larson – Koliganek

Absent –

Bruce Ilutsik – Aleknagik

Dillingham seat vacant

III. Introductions

Gayla Hoseth – BBNA Director of Natural Resources, 1st Chief Choggiung

Kassandra Johnson- BBNA, alternate

Kenton Moos – TNWR Refuge Manager

Scott Schumacher – Royal Coachmen Lodge

Robert Heyano- Dillingham

Alice Ruby – City of Dillingham

Anne Rittgers – Staff to Senator Click Bishop

Bryan Nass- BBSRI

Johnathan Cawfield – TNWR biologist

Dave Roseman - GCI

Ricky Gease – DPOR Director

Greta Hayden- Pless – ADFG Assistant Mgmt. biologist

Jeff Stuhan– Mission Lodge head guide

Maria Dosal – indigenous knowledge liaison USFWS- local resident, teacher

Mark Schwantes –

Wendy Sailors – State Parks community engagement director

Shelly Cotton – UTBB

Ben Shryock – Park Superintendent SW Region State Parks

Thatcher Brouwer – staff for Representative Rebecca Himschoot

Evertte Anderson– BBNC

Matt Wedeking – Ops Manager State Parks

Tim Troll – BBHLT

Frank Wood- (late arrival)

Alex Smith – Aleknagik (late arrival)

IV. Review and Adopt Agenda

Wassillie Andrews motion to adopt
Lee Borden - Second – adopted

V. Executive Order 126 (EO)

Ricky Gease - provided there is a hearing Monday Feb 5, 2024 at 3:30 in Senate Resources committee. They will be taking public testimony on this action. Similar meeting for Chilkat Bald Eagle advisory council Friday at 3:30 to move it out of statute.

Cody Larson – provided a review that legislature will be taking public testimony on Feb 5, 3:30 in Senate resources will be taking public testimony on this action. Provided synopsis of EO 126. On the first day of the session there is an announcement of these EOs. EO 126 provides for the elimination of Management Council in the best interest of efficient administration. Attempting to fulfill council responsibilities bringing this to public. This executive order is not effective until June 30 or July 1 and it will become effective if the legislature agrees and concurs termination of the management council is within the best interests of the state. The legislature has 60 days to take action to not concur with this EO a majority vote would annul this announcement. Ask for additional input from legislature or Park Staff.

Ricky Gease - EO 126 is one of a suite of EOs to streamline management within agencies and impact two of advisory and management councils: Bald Eagle Preserve and Wood Tikchik. Parks operates six regions across the state, each area has a management councils or citizen advisory boards (CAB). This would sunsets management council and stake holder input public would be received through traditional channels with Citizen Advisory Board. Creates efficiencies- one point of contact, eliminates duplication within state management, aligns management activities with other areas of the state. Now CAB- Superintendent works with CAB, 3 year term seats staggered, 9-15 citizens, agencies are ex-officio members, so it is getting input from a broad range of people. CAB bylaws are approved, standard bylaws, meeting held, how many, selection of officers, etc. As Director, I will approve appointments to CAB, recommendations come through CAB process. Typically, committee interviews candidates, those recommendations go to Superintendent and typically I sign off on those recommendations if they're coming from the CAB.

In the KRSMA Board is the only commissioner appointed board we have in the state. Recommendations come to me and I forward to Commissioner's Office (CO). Take time to go through the channels. WT/Chilkat, go to Director's office (DO), CO, GOV's office (boards and commissions) and then back down CO, DO and the out which takes times. It's quicker with CAB, without having to go through CO or GOV. Process quickly to get people assigned when a vacancy happens. State Parks depends on public process,

value public process, we don't function effectively without functional advisory boards whether it's on management, ops, infrastructure, safety, we depend on that in terms of operations.

Both Wood-Tikchik (WT) and Chilkat established in original statutory language. The state works through RADs section for Management Plans, (resource assessment development section)- do plans for DMLW, park management plans, consistent for 20-30 years. Main onus for council was to create management plan, which goes through public process. We will go through RADs for changes and updates to the management plan and that will not change in how we do business.

ADFG will remain involved for regulations that go through BOG/BOF processes. We already maintain contact with sister agencies for management plan activities, for instance with Nuyakuk Falls and looking at the hydro project, any changes we would have to management plans or regulations would go through RADS and DMWL, that involves a public meetings to find any statutory changes that would come down to us through the legislature. If this moves through and legislature does not make any changes to the EO, we will create a CAB for WT and Lake Aleknagik State Rec Site (LASRS), allows opportunity for special use areas created in the future in the BB region, this would be the sounding board to talk about any advice to talk about recommendations, improvements. In management plan there are properties are identified for additions. Are there other areas in BB region that would be great for recreation sites, areas or additions to the state park? Your advice as a local sounding board for adjustments to management plan will continue on. We have active boards in Chugach, Juneau, Kbay, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Matsu, Northern region, and Seward. 9-15 people on CABs, try to keep implements of 3 for consistent change over from year to year.

In statute seats are designated there are limits (for management council), on CABs can represent multiple users. With Teams we can have more meetings. Up to your discretion as to how many meetings, parks will continue to provide administrative support, public notices, and any other support needed. We record Teams meetings and just put the Teams meeting on a link for the CABs.

Cody Larson – Thanks for explanation. Questioned if CABs are advisory boards for all state lands? SW region CAB.

Ricky Gease - not for all state lands, but for areas state parks manage. There are different advisory boards for DMLW that are going through this. The Rec Rivers Management, more of an informal process allows DNR to standardize how we do management plans and gain public input, allows us to be more nimble when there are vacancies on boards. Filling vacancies takes less time

and more time not having vacancies on councils/boards not having to go to the Gov/CO for appointments. That's primary thing in terms of efficiencies.

Cody Larson – which additional lands does the division administer within BB, other than State Park?

Ricky Gease – currently now LASRS, which get majority of the use in the region.

Gayla Hoseth- question for Ricky, Has DNR consulted with the council, how was it broken, has there been any communication? We just received the EO of this change. What was not working? This council has been active for quite some time and what were the challenges appointing people to a council and the things you've outlined?

Ricky Gease - This is an EO from the Governor's office. The Gov's office reached out to the management council. We will respond if it moves through or not. This is attempt by Gov to streamline, how DNR interacts and receives public input for management plans and operations and for having public venues, not in statute, more informal process to receive public input and allow that to be consistent throughout the state.

Maria Dosal – A sked if CAB would only have the authority to advise and final decisions concerning the park are left to one person, would that be the commissioner or the Superintendent of DNR.

Ricky Gease - Management planning process is a public process robust public review. Go through DMLW planning process, it takes years. Chugach and K-bay plans took 10 and 4-5 years of public input. All public comments goes through RAD section I discussed earlier. Management plans get approved by Commissioner's office, goes through a standardized management plan adoption process similar to the rest of the state.

Cody Larson - asked who would be the single point of contact in other types of structures.

Ricky Gease – Typically park staff, in WT it would remain Ali. Superintendents may be at meetings for major issue that needs input such as infrastructure, etc. always happy to attend meetings. It's been a little different with COVID and restricted travel budgets. With Teams we can discuss something, staff and resources always available.

Robert Heyano - commented disbanding council is a bad idea. Streamlining and efficiencies, we should always look at that, but shouldn't include this management council. It's a good structure to get meaningful local input, it's largest park in the state of AK and has direct impact on users who reside here

and recreational users and it houses a huge run of sockeye salmon. We have an empty seat on this council that the Governor refuses to appoint. If it's the way the people are appointed that takes the time, maybe we should look at that and restructuring and look at how local regional advisory committees are created and how those designated seats are (filled). We should keep the management council intact and have some designated seats instead of and I don't know why they need to be appointed by the Gov or commissioner. We should look at that instead of eliminating it in its entirety because it's a very important tool to get local input to the park. Thank you.

Ricky Gease – I support that. We will not be good stewards of our management of the park if we don't have a venue to get robust public input. Moving it from statute and out of regulation into a more informal process, you can maintain designated seats from communities, , more seats we can put that in the bylaws. This is an effort to maintain consistency as how we do things.

Value all the CABs in the rest of the state. CABs create working committees throughout the year, other topics including fundraising, guiding issues, infrastructure improvements, etc. By no means are we moving away from local input. It's very valuable to us and we won't be able to manage well without local input.

Andy Angstman - questioned if Ricky has perspective of Governor. Curious what you think what was wrong with the existing structure with WTSPMC, whether or not the workload for DNR would be greater or less by dissolving this council and going to the CAB. Seems to me that having a no cost community run council, on location in Dillingham that costs the state essential nothing, no peridium costs would seem like a financial benefit for the state with local control take care of this park., rather than DNR having to do it , more paperwork, time, and employees working on it. Curious if you've looked at the cost benefit structure? What's wrong with it as it is now?

Ricky Gease– I don't think this will make a difference on fiscal impact. Ali responsive as she always is in attending meetings, Ben and I available, expanding network and ease of gathering public input. Don't think there will be an additional fiscal burden as an agency. In terms of local control and input, it empowers local community to focus on the issues you want to focus on. Currently now, one of the main responsibilities is the management plan, statutorily. Other CABs branched out into fundraising, advocacy, projects. We delegate to the community as to who wants to participate. 3-year terms, flexibility in appointments. Not a process of taking away local power. Not waiting on Governor's office to make an appointment and there are many boards throughout the state, the time and attention will come from you and that's what we will listen to. Appointments are quick, doesn't take months.

Tim Troll- I take exception to that. Doesn't a management council in our case actually have authority, when it comes particularly to management plan, if changed to an advisory council doesn't it become only advisory to the Department? In current structure the council has to approve the plan. Council was created largely in deference to a local population that was concerned about subsistence and whether they could continue to use the park for subsistence. The Management Council was created in some respects as a promise from the state to the local communities that they would have a role and that role would have some authority and that authority is the management plan. If you change the structure to an advisory board, isn't that role only advisory then? Do I have that correct?

Ricky Gease - Authority to approve the plan yes, that would not rest with WTSPMC it would rest with DNR and the CO signing off on the plan. Any changes to the management plan has to follow the statutes and regs in place, we're required statutorily to support and protect subsistence activities for fishing, hunting and trapping that are very important to the region and it's the reason the park was created. Unless the legislation would change the statutory structure and the reason for the park, that's not going to change. Management plan has to be consistent with the statutory for the park and that's not going to change. If the area thinks there needs to be update with management planning process, it will have to go through robust public process heavily depend on local area and public input. Currently we haven't had request to change the management plan. It would go through DMLW RADs process that is a public process aligned with all management plans that DNR manages in the state.

Tim Troll – but it would take local control away from the region, because the management council no longer has the right to approve or disapprove the plan, correct?

Ricky Gease – correct, but when you approve a plan it has to be consistent with the statutory authority and the purpose of the park.

Maria Dosal - As a resident here with this surprise of EO 126, I can't help but feel threatened as a lover and enjoyer of the park, who believes in co-stewardship and having checks and balances, transparency in place. What's the catch with this? Why is this all of a sudden being introduced. A simple google search with Ricky's name has already done shady things... Cody Interjected regarding decorum. Maria continued- It's proven in some citizen advisory boards regardless of advising they've done that things have gone behind the back. Dismantling the WTSPMC would be a very bad idea for the state park because of checks and balances co-stewardship and local representation. I've done some research and reached out to representative and our senators and I'm trying to figure out why was this introduced? It's surprising how this can be done to us. EPA doing the Pebble Mine, all these

D1 Land grabs, I feel there's more we're not seeing and we're always fighting to protect this place where we live, this land we cherish, these lands, our food in our freezers, that's what gives us our power and I feel this takes our power away.

Cody Larson- the council has been active and reactive to requests to hold meetings and situations that arise. I did receive notice of the EO, prior to being announced, notice was Jan 15, 6-7pm. Council had meeting three days prior on Jan 12 meeting, the Friday before the session the council held a public meeting, and undoubtedly, I would have had this as an agenda item. Contextualize the council being informed prior to this activity.

Andy Angstman- It's very unsettling this action was taken in the midst of a study and planning period for a project that would be potentially the biggest project ever to take place in WTSP, Nuyakuk Hydro, the most potential ecosystem changing, altering project of park and for this change to take place, it seems nefarious, the fact these happened concurrently. I'm not saying that why this took place but the fact that it did is unsettling, and that concerns me greatly and I guess it concerns others there in the room and on the phone and it doesn't seem right.

Scott Schumacher- I agree with Andy's comments, ready to say the same thing. I don't want the local perspective, comments and input taken away. If they did start a CAB, how long would that take, and would it be in place to still comment and make our opinions known about the Hydro project? This is a very big project, seems like real bad timing to lose our voice and some of the management perspectives of the park.

VI. Public Comments

Cody asked for comment on additional topics also. Additional meeting in early March for additional issues.

Kasandra Johnson- question about EO, It's 60 days from the 16th? Can someone tell me when that is if there is no action taken when will this management council be dissolved and starting of an advisory committee?

Cody Larson – 60 days is the time the legislature has to annul this EO. There will be a public hearing – Monday Feb 5, 3 pm. Senate resources committee.

Tim Troll - Understanding within Nuyakuk Hydro and those issues, how would the roll of the management council be different from and advisory council? The short notice, how would the role change if it were only an advisory with respect to the ultimate approval of that project? It is a concern and something we need to think about with the short timeframe to analyze this difference in structure.

Anne Rittgers – staff to Click Bishop, co-chair Senate Resources. Clarify Monday is invited testimony only, committee will not be taking public testimony on that date. We will be taking public testimony at a different time, but written comments can be sent to senateresources@akleg.gov

Cody Larson– Thank you for clarification. Invitation only to committee Senate Resources Committee on Monday at 3:30 Feb 5. Question for Anne, Is the council invited to that hearing?

Anne Rittgers - Senator Giessel is the other co-chair of that of Senate Resources and is chairing that meeting and I will direct that question to her and get back to you.

Robert Heyano- comment to the council. I would urge the council to strongly go on record opposing the dismantling WTSP management council and work with other organizations and agencies and see if we can get a legislative change on that.

Alex Smith- of Aleknagik – I'd like to thank the council for all the work they've done over the years, it's a commitment and sacrifice in all the work you do. I'd like to affirm you have done a public service and I hope it continues. Thank you.

Maria Dosal- Thank you to management council for all you do concerning the state park in regarding decision making. Very important to keep the management council for the purpose of co-stewardship and gain an invite to the hearing, rep testify on behalf of the council. Thank you for the meeting and the opportunity to be heard. I hope going forward we can protect our state park without outside hands coming in with people with dollar signs in their eyes for development of our lands to keep it pristine for generations to come and for our ancestors.

Cody Larson - legislature if additional public comments on this the next action on this discussion will be through the state legislature. Everyone should have those contacts.

VII. Board Comments

Cody Larson – rep for BBNA for 4-5 years. The history of the management council is housed in our organization. There are meeting minutes from Board of Directors from 1971 at least prior to park legislative designation. Lands were there long before this designation, have had traditional stewardship prior to statehood and the park. Now is not any different than the last 48 years I don't see a shift of anything that requires fixing or changing. It has been efficient and a single point of contact. With org history in supporting the formation of the council and having as a requisite of support with the local representation of entities listed in statute. That

statutory language is there for a reason and it wasn't haphazard, believe nothing has changed to renegotiate that language and certainly not through the process bypassing a typical bill through committees and the legislature. I believe our org is not in favor of this activity and certainly not how it has been presented. There are other avenues to go about this and those avenues have worked.

Delores Larson – Dept. Director of UTBB, also sit on the management council for Koliganek seat. I have a brief comment for the record. I echo Maria Dosal and others who oppose the elimination of the WTSPMC. Our local and tribal representation on the current council play a vital role in management of the park that reflect our local and traditional values and protection. Streamlining the process and removing it from the board would be a detriment to the park.

Wassillie Andrews – New Stuyahok seat. I wanted to be here with you for this meeting. Appreciate the council looking at this order. I'm a past representative to tribal council in New Stu, make sure the info is there as to what is in the future. Appreciate the forum and ability to participate. I was a translator for my elders and we understand what the elders knew. I was encouraged to take that step and appreciate looking at the Executive Order.

Cody Larson- open for additional council comments, council rep Bruce Ilutsik excused absence, Dillingham seat vacant. We do have a quorum for motions and now would be the time for that. Will leave it open for council members to consider motions or actions.

Maria Dosal – Is there anyway I can help with public comment, getting a rally together, making a news article. How can I help get the word out we are not in favor of this as a collective.

Cody Larson - lots of interest echoing support of maintaining the council, as has existed for 48 years. Appreciate you weighing in and encourage you to let the decision makers know your feelings and an outpouring of the same sentiment. No comments to me thus far that this change would be positive. Appreciate the public input for many decades, encourage all of you to look forward to the normally scheduled meeting in late Feb, early March. We will be taking up some of the items of concern regarding float plane safety in SRS and other items. If you do have topics you'd like to see on the agenda contact me or Ali and we will look forward to seeing you at the next biannual meeting. You can contact any council members we are always available to hear about issues in the nation's largest state park.

Frank Woods - citizen and user of the park. I attended the last meeting and was informed the Dillingham seat was open. Mismanagement of fed and state relationships for resources, as a native person and resident of BB and

the park, with the swipe of a hand an EO can take away 40 years of history and working relationships. I'd like to propose we keep opposing and that we take a stance and form a coalition outside the council and work with the reps audience in Juneau hear our voice. We have options. When this came out, my son was in Juneau, many reps didn't know what the park was and how it was formulated and what it did. That's where the education starts, it starts with us as the public and through the committee, organize thoughts and educate reps in Juneau.

Cody Larson – Appreciate everyone calling in. Look forward to seeing you at the normal scheduled meeting. Contact your reps to add items to the agenda.

VIII. Adjournment 11:24