

MSB FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
Special Meeting: May 7, 2020 – Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL; ESTABLISH QUORUM

2:02 PM Call to order

Present: Mike Wood MW, Andy Couch AC, Howard Delo HD, Larry Engel LE, Tam Boeve TB, Robert Chlupach RC.

Absent: Dan Mayfield DM, Amber Allen AA, Bruce Knowles BK.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

LE moved to approve, HD second. Passed unanimously.

MW moved to allow public questions during business items; second by LE: Passed unanimously.

III. AUDIENCE INTRODUCTIONS & PARTICIPATION (3 min./person, chair's discretion)

1. Ken FEDERICLO– SC Dip Netters.

2. Lynn Fuller

3. Troy Sayer - affiliation??

4. Andrea Jacuk – TIRI

5. Melissa Heuer – Susitna River Coalition

Opposes SB204; Still learning about the WSAR, but concerned about changes and transparency.

6. Kiegheiy Jacobson – Cabin owner in WSAR area.

7. Mike Overcast – Tordrillo Mtn. Lodge

Own a Judd Lake lodge that the proposed road will come near to. In business in 15 years in W. Susitna; concerned about road in the terrain in the area; worried about Talachulitna River and King Salmon habitat/ up to several crossings required; feasibility in terms of number of bridges and expense; wants to learn more about this – EIS, etc.

8. John Gaedeke – Fairbanks

Has a wilderness lodge in the Brooks Range, recreates in Talkeetna area; Say no to MOU because of experiences with AIDEA and the Ambler Road project in Brooks Range – his experience is that AIDEA is too pro-development, even for high risk, low tax industries/empty promises tear communities apart; AIDEA board structure is irresponsible.

9. Kim Sollien – MSB staff

10. Becky Long – Talkeetna

Hope FWC oppose SB204; also oppose WSAR MOU and access road; originally commented on the 2014 road plan; suggest MSB take no action on the MOU until the public has additional information; see her comments in her email; there should be no unmitigated wetland destruction as happened in the Donlin pipeline impacts; Port Mac route could parallel Donlin and the INHT; need more public input.

11. Zoe Fuller – Palmer

Concerned about myriad of impacts of the WSAR mine road; fast-tracked; concerned; this road would impact 1/3 of the land in the MSB; huge decision that warrants public involvement; impacts of mining road; concerned about impacts to cultural heritage sites; concerned that access via a remote road will lead to vandalism and crime; concerned about impact to rec rivers Dec.

12. Neil Dewitt: May 21 Federal Subsistence Bd, to close unit 13 to some users; 888 566 1030, 334 4290 code; will take public comment; news release on May 6 on Fed.

13. Lynn Fuller – AIDEA comment from FBX; Assembly needs to ask basic questions – do we want to mine, and do we want a private, publically funded road to a mine?; do we need what this mine is proposing? C/B analysis needed.

IV. STAFF/AGENCY REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS

a. Staff report

i. BOF

1. Story Map
2. Presentations about results if possible
3. Message: *the fish you see now came from efforts at BOF earlier in 2020; think now about 2023...*

ii. Wetlands Ordinance – expect to see more details this summer with a FWC resolution for fall consideration.

iii. SHP

1. Science Summaries coming.
 - a. Wetlands
 - b. Invasive Species.
 - c. Riparian buffers
2. Summer Site Tour? Unsure given COVID-19.

V. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- a. AK Senate Bill 204, State Land Surface Disposal background -- FWC position.

Mike Wood: Reviewed background; eliminating rec rivers mgmt. plan impacts the MSB; involves 6 MSB rivers; related to MOU?; Nova Minerals related to other entities;

HD: looking for a FWC action? **MW:** try to not be political, but advisory – maybe we can develop some points where we can develop a resolution;

HD: Didn't know much about this, but thinks that the MSB letter sent to MatSu delegation was good; sees legislation as power grab by the state; opposed elimination of rec rivers program;

LE: Supports what Howard said; bill was unacceptable as written; thinks that FWC should take a position on this; suggested we stay on top of this; be ready to deal with this if needed; worked on Susitna River rec plan – had lots of public involvement and occurred when MSB was selecting its land; this bill removes benefit from MSB citizens; need to support a resolution of support for MSB letter to Assembly; maybe form a subcommittee;

AC: Moved to draft a resolution to the Assembly in supporting the MSB letter position opposing SB 204, noting the public comments of concern at this meeting, the importance of the recreational rivers plan, **with a committee of FWC members to develop, approve, and submit a draft resolution on behalf of the FWC;** **LE seconded.**

Discussion:

AC: MSB should not lose authority; the costs of this bill to the MSB is not desirable for MSB citizens;

MW: Little Su, Talkeetna, Lake Creek, Tal, Alexander, ____ (5 of the 6 rivers are in the Nova Minerals mine area).

HD: Haven't heard any public supporting SB 204 – this could be in the resolution; there's been no public vetting;

LE: form a working group on this issue.

HD: Sees no discussion how this would interface with the MSB's wetland mitigation bank.

RC: Has history with the rec river program.

Committee review of draft: MW, LE, RC

Motion passed Unanimously.

Additional Public Comment: None

- b. West Susitna Access Road proposed MOU background – FWC position.

MW: provided some background; comments from FWC?

LE: There would be a lot of bridges/culverts in this project; 20 conventional bridges plus 4 long span bridges, 440 culverts... lots of stream crossings and major impacts on fish habitat;

MW: is it worth speaking about how fish are impacted? Lots of attention on critical fisheries here.

HD: wasn't aware of how big this project was; would be nice to have an EIS; project is very much in the early planning stages; how would this impact wetlands and wetland mitigation?; that said, having a road into undeveloped area could be nice for people like me with some limited mobility for hunting/fishing, but not if it is at the expense of fish/wildlife habitat; opposes this Phase II proposal; feels NOVA Minerals should be paying all planning costs, and then present the data – like Pebble Mine is doing;

MW: AIDEA would say that by signing the MOU that would start the public process and EIS if needed;

HD: AIDEA could add funds to the \$100K Nova Minerals has committed; need more info before a nonbinding MOU was signed.

AC: Public has asked, how does this road benefit the public? There is also significant private land inholdings that would be impacted; there is already a significant off road trail in the area, and a road could take that route; the original talk about a WSAR was about accessing other resources for the public, but now the talk is for a private road to benefit a mine with less benefit for the public in general;

LE: Need more information on this issue; there are several reports we could gather to help us; a suggestion is the FWC request all studies and information on various access routes; we could also make this an issue for updates at each of our meetings;

TB: I expect this to come before the Assembly in June, and I anticipate that the MOU will pass; I think we need to consider whether we sign it, or to suggest additional language.

MW: It is critical that the public in this area be more engaged, need more information.

AC: Regarding TB comment, we were just looking at the logging access off of Susitna – the reason the FWC considered that was all the dead spruce trees in the area – little economic value; at the very least an access road might benefit fire suppression regarding the dead spruce.

HD: If MOU is signed, that will create more pressure to getting rid of the Recreational Rivers Act; I would like to know more about this project before I can support this MOU; original work was for a public road, but the new information seems to show an intentional change to a private, industrial road.

MW: LE said we have this MOU as a point of discussion at every FWC meeting; Would TB have any advice?; MW would like to hear from public on this.

TB: My concern is that the MOU will be passed despite problems with the MOU; I would be open to making amendments if they were proposed.

HD: Maybe the FWC should write a letter about some of the concerns, and that we agree with the Mayor's decision to postpone consideration.

TB: the Mayor's intention was to avoid work until budget was done, and expects this to be dealt with in June.

PUBLIC Comment:

1. Neil Dewitt: Ambler Road is trying to do the same thing as here; issue arose with Oil Well Road;

2. Melissa Heuer: What happens if MOU isn't approved? Can FWC request clarification?

3. Lynn Fuller: MOU comment, FWC should at a minimum insist that the MOU wording be changed so it doesn't seem like a "done deal" – change 2-C to "being committed to look at the information"; Concerned about the confidentiality clause as a transparency clause; as written, this undercuts confidence see 6;

4. Mike Overcast: a tactic that the mining companies do is to use the MOU to generate investments; not supporting this MOU will undercut this investment tactic; thinks that the \$100K investment from Nova would give much information.

5. Becky Long: Mike Overcast above is correct; mining company will use this to show public support; need the MOU to demand 1:1 wetland mitigation; 8 in MOU.

MW: 3-D: portion is the only part on fish.

6. Zoe Fuller: want to remind you that there are significant cultural heritage sites in area, which would trigger federal requirements;

RC: At a loss of what to say and where to direct comments; the MOU is predicated on SB 204 in my mind; I think SB 204 and this MOU seem interrelated; even private road will be accessed by Alaskans and will cause problems – Alaskans have a way of accessing off limit areas; SB 204 is such a shotgun of issues, covering a lot.

LE: wetland mitigation, strengthen fish habitat; do we want another committee?

MW: HD thought about writing a letter... What if we don't accept the MOU, or change some of the language in the MOU like having Nova add more money on the table, and how much will some aspects cost?

HD: Raising some of those concerns would shed light on why we might oppose this; if Ted's submission was rejected for the MOU that speaks volumes; could write a letter to Manager, Mayor, and assembly, that points out problems as we see it, and suggests MOU be delayed until there is more info;

HD: Moved to form a committee to write a letter concerning the MOU concerns to Assembly and Borough Officers (Manager, Mayor) with the authority to send this letter on behalf of the FWC. Second by LE. Committee to be: MW, HD, and TB.

Motion passed unanimously

TB: we might want to reference the success we had at BOF and how this MOU could threaten that.

AC: referenced Becky Long's comments; these are public resources, and the public should know what's happening, including study results, etc.

MW: requested we keep track of SB 204 and the MOU as a standard agenda item.

Additional Public Comment:

Lynn Fuller... Could the public forward comments to the FWC committees? [Yes, but send to Ted/Karol for routing.]

c. COVID-19 impacts on sport fishing and guiding, Andy Couch's work – report.

AC: gave a report on his involvement with this and some of the details of the plan

- *Clear as mud* at times.
- KRSA contributed ideas.
- Templates for business action plans.
- 14 day quarantine requirement impacting sport fish guiding industry.
- More remote guides. who typically use lots of nonresidents, probably won't open.
- Andy's business showing impacts. Only has 10-15 fishing groups, with all being nonresidents except for one resident; has to tell clients that situation is fluid and trips may not happen; an opportunity for AK residents to get out with less competition, especially later in the summer.

HD: State parks has info for state park camps; some of the private managers running these might not open until later; can I walk in past a closed gate;

AC: Ricky Gease said some parks might not be open, and that outhouses would not be disinfected per guidelines;

MW: who's on this task force? **AC:** 29 people on the list, like Crum, Vincent-Lang, etc..

VI. MEMBER COMMENTS

HD: This meeting was smoother and better than I thought it would be; appreciate Ted and Karol getting the background information together; got lot of good public comments; although I think when I chaired a meeting it was shorter than MW's 2:20 meeting.

AC: I would like to compliment how MW ran the meeting; AA missed the meeting probably because she recently had a baby boy.

LE: Thank the FWC for the nomination for Conservationist of the Year and HD's role; I think this reflects well on the FWC.

RC: Congrats to LE many times over.

TB: Thanked MW for calling this meeting; thanks to Ted for organization; thanks to the public involved.

MW: Glad we had this opportunity to meet again since BOF; glad this telephonic meeting worked; disappointed in how the state government is working to overthrow all the good work we've done here in the MSB;

VII. NEXT REGULAR MEETING – DATE AND AGENDA ITEMS?

May 21 – Cancelled

September 17 – next regular FWC meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by LE: Second by HD. Passed unanimously at 4:28 PM. Meeting stands adjourned.

Howard Seb for
Mike Wood, Chair

Sept. 17, 2020
Dated

ATTEST:

Ted J. Eischeid
Ted Eischeid, Planner II Staff

9/17/2020
Dated