

Copper Basin Managers Meeting

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

Present: Dennis Teitzel, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Mercedes Knighten, Ahtna Incorporated, Kevin Bartley, Prince William Sound College (PWSC), Robin Mayo-Underwood, Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE), Ruth McHenry, Cliff Eames, Copper River Alliance, Gary Mullens, Department of Natural Resources Forestry Division (DNR), Willard Hand, Tazlina Village, Katrina Church-Chimielowski, Prince William Sound College (PWSC), Judsi McDonald, Kate Morse, Copper River Watershed, Danielle Verna and Kathy, University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Mark Somerville, State of Alaska Fish and Game, Duane Hoskins, Department of Transportation(DOT), John Thomas.

BLM Items:

Dennis Teitzel:

Staffing:

New wildlife Biologist, Jesse Hankins, new Forester, Tim Skiba. Marcia Butoric retired. New Assistant Field Manager position being filled soon. Future positions: Recreation Planner, GIS, Realty Tech, career seasonal Outdoor Recreation Planner, mining and Hydrology positions are planned. Will bring BLM from 17 full time staff to 22.

Numerous seasonal staff this year mostly due to trail repair needs. A new agreement between the BLM and Prince William Sound College allows BLM to bring on college students into paid and credit earnings internships.

Subsistence:

Caribou season ended March 31st. Reports are due April 15th. Caribou harvest was larger this year, but within the ten year average.

BLM NEPA:

Sustina – Watana project involvement:

BLM staff attending field study presentations, commenting on them. AEA has requested renewal of minimum impact for studies.

Road work on the Richardson Highway, north:

AT & T fiber Optic Hogan Hill realignment, near Haggard Creek, will be conducted in June. ADOT Hogan Hill Material site EA.

Slana Land Sales:

Selling reversionary interest only. Land Patented, reversionary clause reverted is what is being sold. The structures were not included in the price, as SEND built structures, only raw land was taken in to consideration for pricing.

Lands and Realty:

Resolutions to unauthorized use of public lands, beyond casual use, structures, lean-to's, platforms, or staging of equipment vehicles, and/or supplies may be associated (mining, special recreation permits, land leases, recreation and public act lease, trapping).

Uses not permitted, or in cases where monitoring shows permitted use is no longer occurring, may be determined to be unauthorized use and occupancy of public lands.

There is no mechanism for BLM to permit private recreation structures on public lands. BLM will post a notice of unauthorized use on structures for up to one year and try to determine who the items belong to so they can be given adequate time to remove the items.

If you find structures or items on BLM public land, please contact the BLM office.

Recreation:

Numerous trail projects this summer, Tiekel, TLAD, Delta and along the Richardson Highway.

Trans-Alaska Trail: Idea is being proposed to run along TAPS. No application has been received yet, if one is received, it will be put out for public scoping and analysis of impacts.

Cultural Resources:

Cultural crew will continue surveys on BLM managed lands within the TLAD and Delta WSR this summer.

Partnerships:

Teamwork between NPS, BLM, and Ahtna to work the CB 300 Sourdough checkpoint.

Camp Frozen Chosen just finished, it was a huge success. Students from Kenny Lake, Glennallen, Slana, and Mentasta participated. Partners involved, NPS, WISE, Copper River School District and PWSC Outdoor leadership school.

Ice Fishing Day was also a success with close to 100 participants.

Upcoming BLM events:

Earth Discovery Day May 3, NPS

Youth Environmental Summit, May 31 – June 3

Project Healing Waters /Wounded Warriors, June 23-25

Copper River Stewardship Program- Copper River to Cordova, applicants due last week (early July event)

July 4th parade/float

July 9th Weed Smack Down with NPS, Copper River Watershed Project, WISE and community, tentative date July 11

BLM – WISE hikes, usually on Wednesdays throughout the summer. Look on WISE website for upcoming dates and places.

National Public Lands Day: Still looking for a project. Please let us know if you have a need or idea to consider. Call Marnie with suggestions.

Renovations:

BLM front office will be going through nationally required renovations this summer. The front entrance may be re-directed for a few weeks. We will provide signage to direct the public to the designated entrance as needed. Thank you for your patience at this time.

Prince William Sound College Items:

Katrina Church Chimielowski:

PWSC office is now in the School District office Glennallen. The Upstream Learning entrance should be used. The college is working to offer fire training. PWSC has provided interns for BLM. Enrollment has been good; they will be open next year according to the latest funding information.

Copper Country Alliance Items:

Ruth McHenry:

Susitina Project:

Power points for each of the recent field study reports are at the Alaska Energy Authority website. Considering the State's fiscal crisis, spending additional money on this project doesn't seem sensible. CCA favors energy projects in areas with the highest energy costs, like the Copper Basin, rather than projects that would benefit residents who already have significantly lower energy costs.

State Oil and Gas Division:

Notice of preliminary determination would open all state land in the Copper Basin for oil and gas licensing with tax incentives. We object to this.

Copper Basin Area Plan:

Approximately 4 million acres of transferred and selected state lands are within the planning boundary and will be affected by the plan. CCA would like the boundary to include both the portion of the Denali Highway that was in the original plan, all of Thompson Pass, and the lands up to the Mat-Su Borough boundary. The planners suggested that settlement will be a major emphasis in the plan. Not all former settlement areas were in suitable locations. Many people are concerned about losing important fish and wildlife habitat and subsistence hunting and fishing opportunities if such habitat is transferred into private hands, as well as the loss of recreational opportunities. Having adequate water in the area where most people don't have wells is also an issue with regard to both regular and agricultural land sales. Settlement should be minimized and need to be very carefully chosen; the most pressing need in the Basin is probably affordable raw land in or near communities for young people so they can remain in the Basin (land without structures would be less expensive). Firewood plots are very important. Before biomass projects are initiated the long term availability of fuels in the region needs to be demonstrated; the effects on valuable habitat need to be fully evaluated. There are almost no quiet recreational opportunities in the Copper River Basin; the plan should designate areas where only non-motorized recreation is permitted. The plan should recommend that the legislature create the proposed Tangle Lakes State Wildlife Refuge. Such a refuge would help to protect the Nelchina Caribou Herd, hunting of the herd, and a host of other subsistence and recreational uses in the area. Finally, the state should revert to the earlier practice of having not just the DNR commissioner, but also the ADF&G commissioner, sign the final plan.

Chickaloon Village Items:

Gary Hay:

Oppose coal development. The tribe is litigating the Moose Creek water reservation, State of Alaska seems to waive sovereignty. Trying to get Slipper Hill made in to a special management area due to partying and other recreational problems currently unregulated.

Opened up a Health Clinic, which is open to tribal members, the public and veterans.

DNR Forestry Items:

Gary Mullins:

Copper Basin and Tok area are combined in the DNR fire acreage making the area total approximately 30 million acres. They will have no increase in staffing. They are now a totally seasonal office. Many positions were lost.

They still have 12 personal use wood lots in Cordova. Cut 1 million board feet of lumber from Cordova run way per request from the FAA.

Fire season will be warmer and drier this spring, but no other predictions past that at this time. Permits are required for burning as of April 1st. Burn barrals now require a burn permit as well.

They will be offering a Red Card class May 7 & 8, and a refresher class every weekend in May.

Tazlina Village Items:

Willard Hand:

Now have an EPA tribal response program, they are assessing the hazardous sites and doing inventories. They do their own water sampling and soil sampling.

They will be doing a clean-up in the Dry Creek area to remove a large Department of Defense tank left on site, and hope to have a wood boiler system by this fall. They have an IGAP person with 5 environmental employees on staff. They plan to remove a large tank by the airport. Tazlina is also working on a Natural Resource Plan.

HAARP:

Marty Karjala:

The Air Force transferred high frequency antennas, transmitters, generators and other scientific equipment to UAF's Geophysical Institute through an Educational Partnership Agreement (EPA) in August 2015. HAARP property contains over 5000 acres of land, which the University is presently using through a two-year lease acquired through a Cooperative R & D Agreement between the Air Force and UAF, Legislative action is underway to convey the developed 1150 acres to the University using the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act as the vehicle.

There has been a great deal of interest and use of HAARP by academic institutions around the world, and the University has received worldwide interest in the science and continued use of the Ionospheric Research Instrument (HAARP High Frequency, Electronically Phase Controlled Planar Array).

Ruth asked about noise complaints. Marty stated that they were aware of that issue and would be willing to answer any questions, concerns or complaints. They will publicize any operational periods, site contact information and encourage community members to call if they have any concerns.

Robin stated that WISE will be doing its first lecture with HAARP this fall along with an Open House (details to follow in early summer). This will entail what HAARP is doing and allow full engagement with the community.

Prince William Sound College Valdez Items:

Kevin Bartley:

Received two grants from National Fish and Wildlife and BLM to increase Alaska Native and urban youth and veterans to careers in resource management. Marnie and Denton are both on board with two interns who start in May.

Kevin has been working with Kuskoquim Tribes for 1 ½ years and has realized that there is strength in differences.

Ahtna Items:

Mercedes Knighten:

Mercedes is continuing to assist with hiring and job acquisitions.

Tolsona Oil and Gas project is underway with the pad completion expected by Friday. The road was built with local hire people and shareholder hires.

Mercedes has made presentations to the High School students regarding careers in oil and gas industries, engineering and environmental programs. 18 youth will be taken to the drilling project when completed to see what that type of work involves.

There will be two land department interns working for a 2 week period. Would like to bring BLM and Fish and Game to teach them what land management issues we have such as ANILCA and ANCSA.

The number of jobs the Tolsona project would bring is not correct. The job figure was based on the fact that the local economy would grow and not the number of employees at the site. Jobs related to the Tolsona project will be posted in the local papers.

Ahtna's annual meeting will be held June 4th, with 9 am registration. Tables for organizations will be limited, so please let her know if you would like to have a table at the meeting.

Kevin asked about flagger training. Mercedes stated that CRNA usually funded that program. Kevin mentioned bringing in elders to work with youth to help retain Alaska Native youth in jobs.

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE):

Robin Underwood:

WISE received a ¼ acre parcel in Chitina. It was donated and is for sale. It has a great view if anyone knows of someone who would be interested in the parcel.

WISE has been partnering with BLM,NPS, and other non-profits.

Activities:

Wednesday, April 13, at 7pm, WISE will have a science lecture series featuring Derek Sikes, Curator for the University of Alaska Museum regarding “Alaska’s Charismatic Micro fauna: Our Mostly Six-Legged Neighbors. (Insects). It will be held at the Kenny lake Library.

May 1st: The Bird Rehabilitation folks from Palmer will be doing Bird Rescue Training. (Kenny Lake Community Hall)

May 2nd: Wrangell St. Elias Park (WRST) will have a Wild Bird presentation and the mobile planetarium at the park.

May 3rd: Earth Discovery Day at WRST, 4th, 5th and 6th graders will attend.

May 11, 12, & 13th: Janelle Eklund will be providing the Tour Guide Training in Chickaloon.

June 1-3rd: Youth Environmental Summit (YES)

July 9th: Copper River Stewardship Program begins and will last for 12 days, including a float from Chitina to Cordova.

July 9th: Weed Smack Down.

WISE will continue to have youth hikes throughout the summer. For information you can find the dates and times on the WISE website. WISE will also work with HAARP regarding science studies.

Pipeline Monitoring Branch BLM:

Kevin Kearney:

Mission:

Monitor pipeline for safety and security. They also regulate and monitor right of way agreements.

The pipeline checks for pipeline integrity using “pigs”. There are several types of pigs, some scrape any sludge that builds up in the pipeline. Other pigs detect any possible breaks, corrosion or other damage. The pipeline staff does periodic digs to make sure the pipeline has not corroded over time. If repairs are needed they place a sleeve over the area.

There are sensors in the ground that track seismic information and any movement in the ground.

Equipment has just been upgraded along the pipeline with a current production of approximately 550,000 barrels a day. Only 5 pump stations are used currently.

The pipeline office will be getting two interns this summer, one a minority and one an Alaska Native. They may get more in the future.

Will Hand asked about the integrity of the pipeline beneath the Tazlina River. Kevin stated that the pigs have not identified any problems in that area. He suggested that Will could contact him at any time in the Valdez office with questions. Jody (from the pipeline office) was asked if she had anything to add, she did not.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game:

Mark Somerville:

Post season report showed a strong Sockeye run, King Salmon remained low. This probably allows for more Sockeye to go up river. They recorded 1.3 million Sockeye, which is a record high. In 2015, 225,000 fish were taken by personal use permits. 7,800 fishermen. There is no proposal currently being discussed regarding a fee for personal permits.

They project no closures for King Salmon, 2015 escapement was met. 1,500 Kings were taken by personal use fishing, which is low.

Subsistence permits were 1,600 which is lower than usual, but Federal permit was up, not sure why. Current trend shows that more Kings are being taken by dipnetting than fishwheels. 108,000 Sockeye were reported taken in subsistence fisheries.

Commercial King Fisheries took between 22,000-23,000, which is the highest amount since 2007. 15% of the fish were not Copper River fish, but Columbia River fish.

The 2016 year forecast for Kings and Sockeye will remain the same as in 2015. The Sockeyes were noted as being about 1 pound smaller than normal. Robin asked what the cause was. Mark stated that it may be food issues and the warmth of the gulf, but most likely increased numbers causing less food amounts. They also have found that there is no known Fukushima radiation in the fish sampled by the Department of Environmental Quality.

Will Hand asked about the testing relate to the heads of the fish as the elders eat fish heads. There is no testing for fish heads at this time, but he would like to see this done.

Department of Transportation:

Duane Hoskins:

The DOT is looking at budget cuts. You will notice slow movement on clearing and patching due to costs.

Projects in the area: bike path in Cordova on the Whiteshed Road.

Shepard Road, based on Federal funds.

Valdez proper, MP 0-36 asphalt repairs, MP 2 Mineral Creek improvement.

River encroachment repairs on the Richardson MP 26-37 and 37-65. Tomsina- resurface and drainage.

Edgerton-Tonsina bridge replacement in 2019. Lakona Bridge will be done this year.

Tazlina Wayside, MP 110, fix bank erosion issue and riverbank stabilization. Tazlina Village bike pathway, which will connect to Glennallen.

Widening Richardson Highway projected for 2019, MP 115-148, 159-167, 167-173.

Paxson area is in design process and may take place after 2019. Denali Highway bridge at Rock Creek is scheduled to be replaced as needed. Bridge in design phase for MP 17. Swan River bridge in preliminary work, set for construction this year. MP 0-24, awaiting survey data. Call Duane if you have any concerns at 451-22382.

Copper River Stewardship Program:

Kate Morse:

Will be conducting habitat data on the Richardson Highway and Glenn Highway. Also Crystal Creek on the McCarthy Road, Goose Meadows on the Richardson MP 74, (also known as the Burma Road).

Salmon Blitz, help to identify salmon streams in the up river area.

Holding a free Story Event at the American Legion Hall with a film festival included, silent auction and door prizes. \$10.00 or donate food.

Danielle Verna:

Invasive weeds community weed pull July 9th, no location or time yet. Usually in Glennallen area. The project focuses on removal of white sweet clover.

Spring Meeting, May 4 @ 1-4pm at the Glennallen High School.

Annual management work continues to eradicate white sweet clover and vetch. They will be doing some herbicide in the area of the Nebesna Road, McCarthy Road, Gulkana River Bridge. For additional information you can contact Danielle at Danielle@copperriver.org.

Will Hand asked about the seed being sold at Walmart's. He stated that it contained invasives, but read "Alaska Wildflowers". Danielle will look in to this.

Alaska Department of Natural Resources:

John Thomas:

240 acre parcels of land were offered via sealed bids, ending date for bids is July 6 at 5pm. 36 parcels were in the Copper River Basin. No new ones at this time. May offer new parcels next year. For information on sales go to landsales@alaska.gov.

University of Fairbanks Alaska (UAF):

Kathy:

Will be working with HAARP and the Geophysical Institute. No updates other than that. Just want to reiterate the lack of public knowledge about HAARP and the UAF will work hard to fix that.

CLOSING:

Dennis Teitzel: BLM usually hosts these meetings every six months. The next meeting will be Wednesday October 5th. Please mark your calendars now.

