

Copper Basin Land and Resource Managers Meeting

October 3, 2018

Next Meeting: April 3, 2018

State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Candice Snow, Natural Resource Specialist

- There is a new trail within the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District Special Use Area that connects the Maclaren Summit trail to the Glacier Gap trail. See attached map for reference.

Native Village of Tazlina – Heide Lingenfelter, Tribal Administrator

- Tazlina Hill: Winding up planning phase for bike path, 98% complete. Negotiating with Ahtna for right-of-way around Simpson Hill over look. One private parcel they are sending out request to purchase for bike path to go through. Funded under the Tribal Transportation Program.
- Got above ground storage tank at Dry Creek. Been demolished and recovered. Funding to address additional spill sites. Next summer, cleaning out barrel dump. Estimated 11 hundred barrels and 5 jeep bodies but site visit show many more (this side of airport). Did site visit with Army Corps of Engineers. Putting hold on other airport sites that need to be cleaned up. Clean up may go for another 2-3 years. Soil testing shows mercury from some cleanup sites.
- Signed sale contract with the Archdiocese of Anchorage for purchase of 462 acres of catholic school lands. Actively moving into fundraising portion which will include things such as dinners, etc.

Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment (WISE) – Robin Mayo, Executive Director

- Awesome summer partners with BLM, NPS and others
 - Geology Camp in McCarthy in partnership with BLM and Wrangell Mt. Center continues to be a big hit. This year we were joined by Danny Rosenkrans, a retired NPS Geologist who was OUTSTANDING.
 - WISE/BLM weekly hikes had 165 different individuals which made it a record year! The record day was 65 people who hiked to the mud volcanoes.
 - Inaugurated new program called Outdoor Wilderness Leadership Skills (OWLS). Was a very successful pilot year with two participants who did an awesome job of stepping forward as leaders. WISE is excited to continue to grow this program in the upcoming years.
 - First science lecture is on Friday, Oct 15. Other lectures are in the works. If there is anyone in your agency or organization who would like to present a lecture, let Robin know. Finding lectures is the hardest part.
 - WISE will be doing more school programming this winter and are trying to afford another AmeriCorps Volunteer to help with planning for next summer.

Ahtna Incorporated – Bruce Cain, Special Project Manager

- Ahtna is helping the Native Village of Tazlina with fundraising for the purchase of the catholic school property.
- Worked with the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) to finish a 28 million acre landscape assessment and inventory of traditionally used Ahtna lands. This was a three year project that took all publically available GIS data and synthesized it into one database. It includes all land ownership within the traditional use inventory and could be a very valuable resource for land managers. It is available internally at Ahtna and we are working to develop the capability to be viewed upon request to AITRC.

Greater Copper Valley Chamber – Bruce Cain, President

- Annual meeting will be held October 25th at Ernesto’s Grill.
- The Chamber will be holding dinner meetings through the winter on the last Thursday of each month. November and December’s dinners will be combined as a holiday dinner on December 6, 2018.

Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) – Joshua Scott, Chief of Lands and Planning

- Visitation at WRST was up 2-3% this year.
- Lots of uptake in international visitors. Currently exploring potential sister park relations with either Chile or Poland.
- WRST had 7 Search and Rescues (SARs) this year which is higher than normal. WRST is working on expanding internal capabilities by sending more staff to trainings beginning today.
- Brad Honerlaw is continuing to act as Chief Ranger until the positions can be filled.
- Listening seasons went well. Reached nine communities and will release summary soon. Many comments were centered on more walking trails and the universal theme was encouraging NPS to engage in communities. WRST is listening to that input and working on being more transparent.
- New project submissions need to be submitted before January.
- SIC meeting (25-26)
- WRST opened new exhibits in Kennicott this year.
- Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plan Update: Received a lot of comments and dialed back the scope of the project based on those comments received in the listening seasons.

Ahtna Incorporated – John Leonhart, Land and Resource Department Manager

- Working with National Resource Conservation Service – Environmental Quality Incentives Program
 - Wildlife habitat improvements – knocking back trees to help increase willows.
 - Working on fire prevention- fuel breaks at each village
 - Wild land urban interface, working on this in villages
 - Access controls for trespass issues
 - Bridge construction – engineering plans for Kotsina bridge for access across Copper River for shareholders.
- Carnivore Stewardship Program

- Placed bear bait stations out to collect DNA samples from hair and sent to lab. Waiting for analysis pilot program that will eventually expand. Will roll into moose population studies in near future. Maybe collaborate in the future with NPS. Goal for bear project is to understand the population/ estimate density on Ahtna lands. This has been done in Tazlina and will move to Mentatsta next year.
- Working with ANTRC and CRWP for Chitina clean up to get the RVs out of the river.
- Working with the Native Village of Gakona to get a brown field site clean-up completed.
- Issue with DOT spraying herbicides. Trying to get protocols changed or completely ceased in the region. Ahtna filed a complaint and they ceased operation in entire state when they received it.
- Permitting was down significantly from last year
- Hired NRT – calling forester. Technical service provider here in next couple months. Can write forest improvement plans, fuel reduction plans, etc. can sign off on forestry plans for private land owners and they will be approved by NRTS.
- Carbon program is continuing – little over 500,000 and is the largest carbon program in the US and one of the largest in the world.

Native Village of Kluhti-Kaah – Willard Hand, Tribal Administrator

- Had 15 employees this summer (more than the past) and will continue with 5 full time employees through winter.
- Tried to get fuel reduction program this spring but did not get funding so got CRNA to host a workforce development camp and sent those people down to help with fuel reduction around 9 homes, harvesting wood, and helped other villages do projects as well.
 - Moved 100+ appliances from village and recycled through Anchorage
 - Will be submitting new plans to try to get this going
- Looking for partners to help finish multi use building. Looking at CRNA work force development and or the military to help complete that project.
- Looking for tutors for afterschool programs.
- Harvested greenhouse and held canning/preserving classes and will use that food to feed afterschool program.
- Erosion control is a big deal to tribal members. Lost a lot of bank this year and lost all of the fish wheel sites due to erosion.
- Contemplating applying for funding for tribal response program for next year.

Copper Country Alliance – Ruth McHenry, Executive Director and Cliff Eames, Board of Directors

- *Invasive Plants*: The white sweet clover at the mile 5 Edgerton gravel pit has spread, despite CCA's hours of pulling over something like five years. White sweet clover seeds can persist for decades, and we are not prepared to do perpetual remediation. We will probably (a) abandon work on this pit; (b) try to keep the mile 19 pit from getting infested with white sweet clover; (c) stay alert for fresh infestations along the Edgerton; (d) inform property owners next summer of how to recognize it and prevent infestations on their land.

- *Herbicide Spraying by DOT:* We have received complaints about DOT's spraying of herbicides on regional highways. We have begun the process of gathering information about the herbicides involved in order to discuss the issue with DOT.
- *WRST Backcountry and Wilderness Stewardship Plan:* The Park initiated a series of "listening sessions" for use in future planning, if any. We will continue to follow this issue and provide our perspectives.
- *Tangle Lakes:* We produced a new Tangle Lakes brochure in time for the Kenny Lake Fair. A donation from the Fairbanks Paddlers was used for funding. Paddlers are some of the most avid users of the Tangle Lakes and Delta River, and we appreciate their support. Our fair booth is always a fun way for us to meet and talk with new and old community members and to educate the public about natural history and our issues. We are also running a series of colorful mini-ads in the local paper in order to educate the public about the proposed refuge and the value of its living resources.
- *Maclaren Exploration:* Millrock, a Vancouver, B.C.-based mineral exploration company, had a very large support camp near the Maclaren River bridge this summer. They have been conducting exploration for copper, gold, and silver on the old Zackly prospect. It is outside the proposed refuge, but we will be monitoring its activities.
- *Richardson Re-Route:* In addition to the natural environment, CCA stands up for the rural lifestyle, and that includes supporting locally-owned businesses like farms, stores, and roadhouses. For that reason, CCA strongly supported a business loop to Meiers Lake roadhouse rather than an off-ramp when DOT widens and straightens the Richardson Highway. DOT initially favored the off-ramp, but DOT has (at least for now) chosen the business loop option, which would result in less loss of business to the roadhouse.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Branch of Pipeline Monitoring (BPM) – Rhonda Williams and Loch Anderson

- High water is causing erosion at low water crossings (LWC). BPM is overseeing them putting things back where it belongs or changing design issues.
- Noticing increase in beavers.
- Working on ROW/subsistence issues with the BLM Glennallen Field Office

Native Village of Chickaloon – Jessica Winstaffer

- Chickaloon will be offering a handful of trainings (NEPA, 106, etc) over next three years and will let other groups know of openings in these trainings.
- Did a month of Archaeology trail work near Matanuska Glacier. Hoping to get permits to do work around Lake Louise and Tyone Lake. Been having tribal citizens participate in that process. Been very informative. Putting out request to DNR and other agencies to make sure cultural resources are avoided and not destroyed and involve tribal citizens in the process in order to learn some more knowledge that elder and other tribal members may have.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Glennallen Field Office – Marnie Graham, Field Manager

- BLM National Priorities:
 - Making America Safe Through Energy Independence
 - Encouraging environmentally responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands.
 - Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship
 - Working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands
 - Getting America Back to Work
 - Promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes
 - Serving the American Family
 - Being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.
 - One emphasis is reorganization. Ways to be more efficient across different agencies. Consolidate some similar functions. Alaska is a pilot project because we are our own region and we don't have multi state boundaries. GFO has some opportunities to look at work we are already doing with WRST and continue to work together for joint projects such as building new seasonal housing.
- Staffing:
 - Down 60 positions in Alaska. Hiring freeze was lifted but we are behind the curve in hiring because of it. Our HR is down 50% in their positions which means we are behind in our hiring process.
 - Seasonal Hires:
 - GFO had 13 Seasonal Hires/Volunteer Campground Hosts this past summer which were made up of a combination of local hires, returning hires, Interns GS and Wage Grade hires.
 - Other Position Update
 - Environmental Protection Specialist – mining compliance, mining program, and hazmat program. Did interviews. Offer has been made. Waiting to hear if they will accept
 - Recreation Planner (Campgrounds/Facilities) – filling duties currently internally, position will eventually be announced.
 - Assistant Field Manager – working to fill within BLM. GIS Position will be open soon, will work on filling
 - Public Outreach Coordinator position will be vacant soon, looking at a short-term and long-term plan to address this vacancy.
- Subsistence: (As reported 11/6).
 - Moose
 - Season closed September 20th, reports were due by October 5th
 - Currently, 89% have reported
 - 1354 permits issued – 40 less than last year
 - 60 harvested – 25 less than last year
 - Caribou
 - Season closed September 30th and re-opened October 21st-March 31st
 - Currently issued 2,988 permits
 - 226 harvested (compared to 268 last year)
 - 160 males
 - 66 females
- BLM NEPA Actions:

- Haines Amendment Update – Plan to release a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) in mid-November that will include all the new info and looking into adaptive management strategies.
- Signed 23 NEPA documents and have 9 projects pending/in the works
- Due to large workloads, BLM is requesting that potential applicants talk to our office early in their project, during concept design. BLM can help the applicant understand the various levels of review that may be required for each alternative an applicant is considering as well as the associated timeframes an applicant could anticipate.
- Lands and Reality
 - Completed compliance checks on 24 permitted actions.
 - Currently have around 300 active permitted actions.
 - Realty Action Compliance check schedules are based on guidance by FLPMA and depending on the permitted action, must be checked for compliance every 5-10 years.
 - GFO will be conducting overflights of Chickaloon and Alphabet Hills to survey state selected lands and check on unauthorized use in support of state conveyances.
- Recreation:
 - Had approximately 200,000 visits this year
 - Signed trail heads to better distinguish parking areas.
 - Looking at Federal Hwy funding to help improve trailhead issues. Trying to do proactive work with Meiers Lake realignment to see what Trailheads could be improved in that area.
 - Celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic River Act. With National Public Lands Day and a video created by one of our interns from Prince William Sound College that highlighted the Gulkana Wild and Scenic River.
 - Completed an audit of all Special Recreation Permitees and as a result, we will be holding some workshops in various locations to help them understand some of the changes that have occurred or will occur in the permitting program and understanding what's required.
- Resources:
 - Fisheries/Hydrology:
 - We are continuing to work with the State on our Gulkana Water Rights Applications. BLM manages the uplands of the Gulkana WSR corridor and the State manages the waterway. We partner with ADF&G on fisheries. They have a Special Use Land Designation, and jointly we have an MOU. The water rights program, in this case, is a State process. They have notified the BLM that they are ready to adjudicate water rights for the Gulkana. We have 11 applications for different sections of the river.
 - BLM will be conducting AIM inventory in the summer of 2019 off the Denali Hwy. These are being done across the state of Alaska to get baseline data on water/river systems. They also help develop a better understanding of stream baseline references, which will help improve stream reclamation projects in the future.
 - Mining: Continuing to monitor mining operations and to work with operators in Valdez Creek where they are wanting to help with a large stream reclamation project for the area that was used by previous mining operations.

- Forestry had 5 commercial operators this winter and over 70 active Personal Use Wood Cutting Permits.
- Cultural
 - Most work was completed in Haines/South East Alaska this past field season.
 - Possibility of a TLAD trails project depending on funding. Continue to look at trail proliferation and learning better public wants for travel management and how to protect cultural resources. Depending on funding, may work towards tying some current trails together without affecting resources.
- Law Enforcement:
 - Brought on 2 Law Enforcement detailers but it was a relatively slow year.
 - Signage and educating the public was a large effort this year.
 - Collaborated with ADFG to sign the Sourdough Controlled Use Area
 - Worked with the BLM rec crew to continue to improve signs for the TLAD and to educate the public on OHV use.
- Partnerships:
 - CB300:
 - Checkpoint at Sourdough – hoping to partner again this year to run a checkpoint.
 - Agreements
 - Went through a major department wide review of all agreements which meant that some agreements were not able to be funded this fiscal year. We hope to start the process early this upcoming year in order to get some of the funds into these agreements.
 - Summer Youth Hikes
 - Great partnerships within the Copper Basin continue. Thank you to everyone for partnering with us at some point
 - With WISE we held 8 single day youth hikes and 2 overnight camps.
 - Other Successful Events
 - Project Healing Waters was held at Tangle Lakes – check out the new video online
 - Copper River Stewardship Program with CRWP, WISE, NPS, and Prince William Sound Science Center.
 - National Public Lands Day – 40 volunteers at Paxson Lake Campground.