



## Meeting Minutes

August 15th, 2017, 5:00 PM

USDA Service Center, 432 E, Pioneer Ave Homer, AK

- A. Call to order: 5:35
- B. Roll call: Chris Rainwater, Otto Kilcher, Tim Alzheimer, Jared Worthington, Gena Grobarek, Kyra Wagner
- C. Approval of the Agenda: approved
- D. Approval of the Minutes: motion to approve by Tim, and seconded by Gena.
- E. Visitors
  - a. NRCS Report: Jared Worthington

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### **Conservation Planning and Programs:**

**EQIP** - Approving and obligating last of last batch of 2018 applications right now. Fiscal Year 2019 application dates not yet released – the roll-out of a new farm bill will dictate FY19 funding cycles. Amanda (ASTC-P) is looking at multiple batching dates for 2019. AND, in the spirit of putting planning first, a conservation plan will be required in order to meet eligibility. This includes NEPA considerations - the CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation will have to be completed. Meaning – get apps in ASAP so planners have a good amount of field season. Alaska NRCS is looking at reinstating a screening tool in FY19 that puts poor contract performers at a Low priority.

**NEW!** - Welcome to NRCS packet for inquirers are in field offices – gets prospective clients on the planning track. The goal is for more considered, thorough conservation plans. NOT and application.

**EQIP** is available for agricultural and subsistence remediation of resource concerns. Projects that are strictly wildlife habitat related will be referred to USFWS – that is their mandate. Ours is to fix problems on agricultural land. Ponds, for instance, will only be considered where the use is for livestock or irrigation. Other pond and wetland enhancement activity clients will be referred to Kenai USFWS field office or ADF&G, or some other wildlife centered agency. This is both a function of agency mandate and priority of engineer workload.

### **Working Lands for Wildlife**

Funding a culvert replacement cooperatively with USFWS with FY18 EQIP. Will survey another for FY19 WLFW funding.

**Homer/Hub Staffing** – Two vacancies flown recently for Homer – Supervisory GS-11 Soil Conservationist and GS-09 Soil Conservationist. Both closed Monday, 8/6. One GS-09 Soil Conservationist in Kenai, closed the same day. A Biologist position in Fairbanks is currently open.

Statewide NRCS Engineer shortage. Delta Clearwater and Mekoryuk EWP projects are underway and requires constant inspection. Alicia will also have three fish passages to survey and design, a myriad of irrigation projects, plus various project installations that require oversight visits, often with little notice.

**Meg Out of Office:** 10-17 August. A few Fridays for CC meets...

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- b. Others: Lincoln Russell. Reedsport :Umpqua Basin Water Association. Bought land out at Fox River Flats
  - F. Financial Report: Motion to approve by Gena, seconded by Tim
  - G. Manager's Report

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### **A. Land Use: Trails**

- a. **Watermelon Trail:** Trip on 31<sup>st</sup> was a success. 4 Snomads members, 3 ADF&G reps, Kyra and Bill Hague. Went all the way to the end, discussed how the winter trail wouldn't have to necessarily follow old trail through the Beaver Flats/Critical Habitat Area. Discussed key areas in need of repair for 4-wheelers. ADF&G to look into methods of getting funds to HSWCD for the work.
- b. **Fox River Flats Trail:** Trip on 1<sup>st</sup> was impromptu, Kyra's first solo 4-wheeler drive, with 3 ADF&G folks. Even with the best conditions imaginable (very dry), we all got stuck at some point on the bluff trail.

Terrible condition for driving, no reasonable route around Nassarian's property identified. Trip back on the Flats in ¼ the time. Discussed the possibility of just making a geoblock road through the Flats. Identified methods of repair for the approaches to the bridges. Kyra to write up a budget for this work and the Watermelon work for ADF&G.

- c. **Homer Demonstration Forest:** Dave Brann is working miracles again. HSWCD gave him \$256 to buy discount lumber to do repairs on the boardwalk, While doing those repairs, a trail user was so impressed that she came into the office and gave us \$200 more to support his work. He found more discount lumber at SBS yesterday to continue his work.

## B. Water Quality

- a. **Anchor River:** Comments regarding culverts at Ruby Creek submitted.

## C. Agriculture/Soil

- a. **Farmers Market Promotion grant (FMPP):** Kyra doing her typical farmers market promotion (writing articles for newspaper) and produce surveys at Farmers Market.
- b. **BLM:** Brad is out on the Dalton Hwy somewhere doing soil surveys.
- c. **Borough Ag Plan:** Marcus Mueller has shared his preliminary draft of an ag plan for he Borough. Looking for feedback.

## D. Invasive Weed Program

- a. **Bradley Lake:** One successful weed pull and one planned spray coming up.
- b. **Nanwalek/Port Graham:** Jen went over for 4 days and met with community members
- c. **Extra money from RAC:** A recent call from the Forest Service indicates that we are going to have funding to continue our work with them next year. One new focus is orange hawkweed on bike trails in Girdwood.
- d. **New Invasive Plant Program Coordinator:** We have some great candidates! Interviews are next Monday, please participate if you have time. Hoping to have them hired/ working by the end of the month.

## E. Education

- a. **Enviro Ed through EPA:** Still waiting to hear from Ag in the Classroom to know if we have funding to work in the schools this fall, but several teachers have gotten back to us indicating their enthusiasm for an indoor growing project.

## F. Administration

- a. **New office space agreement:** We still have not started the discussion yet with the State Office about renewing our agreement. Meg has asked Cassie...but have heard nothing.
- b. **Future Federal Agreements:** With new Federal system requirements, we will not be having agreements like we have in the past. With our Federal Partners like NRCS and BLM, work partnerships will have to be outlined either in a competitive grant or a competitive contract. It looks like NRCS will be using grants, BLM will try contracts. We shall see what works best.
- c. **Future State Agreements:** In the process of trying to figure out how to get the funds from ADF&G to us (supposedly both State agencies), it was discovered that when the funding was cut for the NRCDB in the 2016 state budget, the entire NRCDB account was obliterated. There simply is no way to get funds from the state at this time. Grr. So ADF&G is going to try to set up a sole source contract with us. We shall see how that works.

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## H. Old Business

- a. Employee evaluation, board evaluation
- b. Leasing equipment: committee update
- c. Beaver ponds: Has been side tabled until next meeting, or Van Oss takes further steps to submission.

## I. New Business

- a. Borough Ag Plan: Taken home to go over and comment for next meeting.
- b. New hire: Interviews next week
- c. Fox River Flats and the Beaver Flats Trails - new project possibility with ADF&G

**Next Meeting September 12, 2018, 5pm**