

February 11, 2004

TWG Minutes

Attending: Paul Zahasky Bob Janes, Alice Rarig, Merrill Sanford, Larry Johansen, Sandy Warner, Carla Hart, Cathy Hocker, Kim Kiefer, Richard Carstensen

Alice Rarig- Approval of the agenda

Sandy-Minutes corrections Treadwell- Monday through Friday

Minutes approved

Alice Rarig wrote back to Denise Mcpherson hasn't been able to revise it yet – will do it and pass it around
Some concern was expressed that we weren't meeting in evenings and no psa's – making an effort to do more- need to clarify through news paper what the twg is and that there will be public meetings in the end about the recommendations

Kim Kiefer: - include when the public meeting will be in the letter to news

Make sure thanks are given to proper folks

James intro to discussion- request for wildlife viewing around the borough (started with birds expanded to wildlife)
richard, cathy and carla will share thoughts on possibilities for such a project - thoughts from commercial users on what they would like – have a discussion on what is feasible then decide where

Larry – Have been doing hikes at outer point and we attract a well educated group who come to alaska to learn
Looking for opportunities to maximize those opportunities- in a way that is protective of the resource- can see a lot from the boat but would like to get up close to the environment itself – explore ecosystems and the creatures that inhabit them

Birding is a growing interest – look at areas that can be used for birding that would be the best , self sustaining, can eliminate impacts as a commercial group to define boundaries of participation, how to put together a program to best protect the resource (educate the public on low impact use) – group size is at most 12 and only 2 times a day (usually only have 1 - 12 passenger tour that wants that experience out of 100

Bob- in agreement with most of what larry said- envision a couple different opportunities for educational commercial wildlife viewing—get a lot of requests for bird watching tours – haven't responded because we don't have ideas on what we can do and impacts and such—need to develop “rules of conduct for wildlife viewing and bird watching” would like to focus on particular areas for birding

Richard- request for birding tours come from who? Novice or life listers

Bob- I think most of them are from passionate birders

Larry- we have a lot of people interested in very basic things - would address all levels – aboard vessels would make a more structured birding program

Richard what is the season – the best opportunity for birds is early

Larry beginning of may

Carla shoulder season(may) is a good time to market this sort of thing

Developed a birding program wings over alaska to get people interested in birds to get people interested in bird conservation - Juneau doesn't have the specialty species that people are looking for -- adds value to common species trying to enhance birding tourism Most of us is involved in birding tourism (towers blinds..) ted eubanks will come to Juneau if there is interest (expert on bird viewing) he will be in Sitka – he may come here – consultant can probably spend a couple of days here

Bob will be in sitka for it

Richard- viewing is hard here because its dense - can bird by ear? mid may the migration is tapering off early may is spectacular- the dike trail is the best place with shore birds on one side and song birds on the other - would be a great place must have some kind of dog restrictions -a place like this would be great to study the effects of dogs on birds -I have had experiences where dog free places have incredible wildlife viewing

Kim Kiefer: - what about auke lake trail is there good birding there

Carla nature of the water and the highway makes it feel like you are real close to the highway

Rich- still a good place to see beaver and otter activity

Carla – fish creek delta- important to many shore birds looking at maybe trying to protect it but hunting may interfere though they (hunters) do have a history of conservation(ducks unlimited)

Richard—should keep looking at closing it to hunting – made this recommendation in the eightys- could help do a lot of things- would be a great place

Cathy- seconds that – it also has a good stand of deciduous alder thickets for land birds –

Kim Kiefer: - the one side does get hammered with summer use -can we separate the sides somehow?

Alice Rarig- one of the discussions we've had was a discussion to make a master plan for north douglas trail system

Kim Kiefer: - fish creek master plan is already done- maybe seasonal restrictions can be a possibility

Merrill – there are viewing areas there that are available

Alice Rarig- wasn't much in the way of defined use there - is there potential for defining use there?

Kim Kiefer: trying to work with trail mix to focus trail use - there is a lot of impact there- have talked about having a blind there right off of the parking lot it's a place where they rest but don't feed

James – could we do wetlands mitigation there to deepen the edges to create more grasses around the edges for feed habitat

Carla – viewing blinds can work up to twelve people just have to keep them quiet

Richard- should be able to get ditch grass to grow-- fish creek is inside of the 2 mile radius of the airport which may limit what you can do to enhance wildlife

Merrill – the birds are already there

Carla- some other spots—incorporating citizen science- put a blind at the mouth of sheep creek incorporate observations explaining behaviors and stuff to make watching seagull more interesting adding value to experience and take an easy accessed spot and turn it into something interesting

Rich- mary has learned a lot of interesting stuff – specific feeding habits for different gulls – people are bored by gulls but watching these specific behaviors is extremely interesting

Carla—the road up to sheep creek access to good song birds marmots porcupine and mt goats, not very heavily used by hikers and dogs –with commercial birding tours you don't spend to much time in each ecosystem-

Larry- Time of year – we need a lot of different options for time of year and whatnot

State parks has the trail brushed

Paul- the road would be the best access to get up in there

The trail is “up” and maybe dangerous

Would need permission of the land owner

Kim Kiefer: What about eaglecrest?

Cathy there may be a few good spots

Bob- it makes sense to have a few areas in the borough dedicated to bird watching- commercially there will never be big numbers of people who will want to do this so maybe we can fit it in sort of as a multiuse? (different days of the week or something) like the idea of small use spread out over a number of places in pockets of dog free areas possibly near places that are still legal

Alice Rarig what types of facilities could accommodate birding groups?

Carla- Thursday march 4th meet with ted eubanks

Richard most wildlife viewing is for bears

Carla – hoonah built a bird viewing place

James- barth hamberg- stargavin trail is a success –(trail is in edge of woods making a natural blind – railings keep dogs and people on the trail barth would visit with us to advise

Sandy-beyond the pond at fish creek is great place for different types of birds that doesn't get impacted to badly
Carla- dredge lakes gets a lot of nesting water fowl and has the beaver ponds quite divers and there is potential

James- dog task force agreed to a no dog area in northern dredge lakes—a year ago we had forest service get a whole bunch of people together to figure out what was up with dredge and northern half was agreed to keep wild
A challenge is that it is on forest service land and they may not be into it

Barth designed the two viewing places in hoonah for fish and wildlife

Blind slough in petersburg

Carla - the hawk migration goes over point bridget- something to look into

Alice Rarig- what about viewing from the deck on roberts

Bob- birds are big part of the tour on roberts now--- confident that we can give a great experience for tourists on birding vacations—steady flow of bird activity on roberts

Alice Rarig – what about boyscout camp old tonsgaard place)?

Kim Kiefer: - looked at it but concern is to not bring new trails there and then bringing in groups of people may not be looked at very well its different because there is a conservation easement

Sandy- if we are going to recommend these areas then we must give assurances that these will only be open to birding and not to more guided hikes and what not

Alice Rarig- ernest gruening has a lot of birds

Alice Rarig build blinds mostly for locals and designate some of them for tourism

Carla- must keep in mind upkeep and maintenance and may attract undesirable activity and we must be prepared

Kim Kiefer: - can they be removable for non season

Commercial use would be a good way to police the blinds

Larry- that is something that is usually written into their contract – that they must report activities

Rich- eagle river would be great for birds and animals alike- some commercial use fits well with wildlife better than dogs- very worried about plans for dispersed camping in eagle area where bears can be viewed (good place for a barth trail) apparently the confluence of herbert and eagle is a good place

Paul- no commercial use in this area

Sandy- there are definitely bears in fish creek area

Kim Kiefer: - bears are in dredge

James- what about moraine ecology trail – lot of good bird diversity

Larry- notice that after all the tourists are gone all the animals come out—needs to be some kind of signage that provides protection for habitat and wildlife especially in more developed areas-

Cathy- amalga also has opportunity to look at marine life

Paul logical place for elevated walkway to stay in timber and be protected

Cathy – concern about limited habitat for wildlife there

James if it were done hamberg style it would limit impact on wildlife keeps people contained

Rich like the idea of the spur to viewing area that is well defined the whole meadow at saga lodge is great bear viewing for some time of year

Carla- at a distance through a spotting scope really need to stretch to keep interest

Larry -excitement of looking for them can be rewarding

Alice Rarig –other viewing opportunities? What about the cop shop trail?

James – has seen a lot of good birds there

Alice Rarig what about developing the rest of that area

James- frank rue Jim K and Dave hannah have been talking about trying to buy it and filling the pond to turn it into a wetland, but it would be very long term (ten years to fill the pond) going to be hard to convince snyder to sell it.

Rich – cop pond would be best as far as not affecting the airport

Carla- alaska disco has been doing a lot of enhancement on meadows across from western auto -could be a good place for wildlife viewing its up for sale right now

Larry- out the road whale watching from the road side maybe a place with a scope or good road side facility, parking

Paul -now is good time to mention to dot because of the road work they will be doing out there

Alice Rarig what do we say to dot?

Design the pullouts better, signage

Larry- long range recommendations for keeping habitat healthy

Cathy- the older outer point trail is actually more sensitive with the marsh and stuff it would be better to make that one no dogs

Richard -juneau is best overall stop for getting southeast birds on your list if people came particularly early you could get a lot in a few days

Carla having bird watching facil. On private property would probably be more palatable for public -fish and game applies for scenic byways grant (looking at designating viewing points system)

James- summarize

Key spots (for consideration) some for local use and only some for commercial -dike trail creating a blind and separating dogs fish creek salmon creek, road to sheep creek sheep creek delta, eaglecrest area and earnest gruening

Next time Gary Mendivil: will do a presentation on what eaglecrest has planned and then if there's time pers and roberts

Bob-public meeting would be a good place to throw out some ideas on where to do it

Even if eagle is non commercial it would be nice to develop it for wildlife viewing for locals

Bob- been talking to larry west about having an alpine reveg study near the trail

Alice Rarig stewards would be supportive