

Trails Working Group
January 14, 2004 12:05- 2:00
Downtown Public Library

In Attendance:

Alice Rarig, Chair	Bob Grochow	Bob Janes
James King	Larry Johansen	3 Visitors: 1 unidentified
Merrill Sanford	Paul Zahasky	Ron Berg
Gary Mendivil	Cindi Lagoudakis (left early)	Marty Messick,
Kim Kiefer	Ron Schonenbach	Dog walkers group

Review of December 17 and January 4 minutes

Small corrections, as to spelling and on Page 2, to make it “state lands use”, not ‘state forest’.

Consensus was reached on the following recommendations:

- **Public process for this round of Trails Working Group recommendations:** The group will continue with noon meetings on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month. The meetings will be open to the public and will be advertised with public service announcements in the paper and on the radio. Meeting schedules, agendas and minutes will be posted on the CBJ Parks and Recreation web page. Once the group reaches consensus on possible changes to the existing commercial use of trails recommendations the group will hold one evening public meeting. Input from the public meeting will be used to refine recommendations and then they will be forwarded to the PRAC. At a regularly scheduled meeting open to the public and public comment the PRAC will review the recommendations. Finally the recommendations will be forwarded to the Assembly for potential adoption.
- **Any new recommendations will be Implemented in 2005**
- **Outer Point/Rainforest Trails:** The existing recommendations should be updated to reflect current use. Outer Point Trail – Closed to commercial use. Rainforest Trail – **Group Size:** up to 15, **# of Groups Per Day:** no restriction, **Spacing:** 10 minutes between groups, **Hours of Operation:** off trail by 7:00 p.m., **Weekend Use:** no restriction, **Notes:** groups should travel in a counter clockwise direction. It was agreed that these recommendations should be used through 2004. During the winter of 2004/2005 a comprehensive trail planning effort should be undertaken for all trails in this area and possibly including the whole north end of Douglas Island including Eaglecrest. This effort should address creating a more interconnected system of trails, better trail surfacing on some trails, accessible trails, commercial use, dog use and other issues. This summer trail use numbers should be counted in various different ways and possibly user surveys should be taken.
- **Amalga Meadows Beach Access:** Leave existing recommendations the same.
- **New Amalga Meadows Trails:** The group agreed to present alternatives for commercial use of this area at the public meeting.
- **Ernest Gruening State Historical Site:** Add a note that as the park is improved to accommodate more use it is anticipated that allowable commercial use levels will increase.

Alice opened meeting.

Non-agenda items:

- Alice read aloud the TWG Mission Statement, which, citing “increased use is diminishing the experience” upon the trails and specifies that its reason for being is to examine conditions and recommend improvements. TWG started examining the trails issues about 4 years ago and gave the Assembly recommendations about two years ago.
- Trail Mix invited representatives of the public and of the guiding groups and the agencies of land use management as part of the group. Can only recommend, cannot force action or changes.
- Currently reviewing the results to see if there are any major changes in commercial use with problems for the guiding groups or any problems on the trails that should be addressed.
- The Trails Working Group is going through the process again, going down the list, and making tentative decisions.
- Not likely to do an area-wide survey again, but there may be a couple of trails that need further discussion.

** Parks and Rec received an e-mail regarding the proposed change of Monday through Friday from the current Monday through Thursday designation for commercial use trails.

The writer, Denise McPherson, also requested an evening meeting to accommodate members of the public who cannot attend at noon.

There was consensus that an evening meeting will be scheduled but not until more facts are finalized.

- Alice will send a letter for publication to the Capital City Weekly, giving dates and items for discussion and invite the public to attend. It will also advise the public to check the web page for changes and up to date information.
- Kim will post the same information in PSAs and on the website.
- It was agreed that the recommendations for Outer Point Trail and the Rain Forest Trail will be presented separately from the other trails. They need to be implemented earlier but the others could wait until next year.
- There was the suggestion that the public has the sense that the TWG is underway and moving fast and there is the perception that the public has not been kept apprised. Publicity will help.
- People need some sense of the time frame. Spring is the logical time to publish more information. It was noted that the answers need to make it clear as to whether the recommendations include this coming summer season.
- There will be two major opportunities for public input.

A visitor noted that the people are “leery of city government”, suspicious of what is going on. All three of the visitors said they had not read in the Empire of TWG meetings that were being held, but that they had been called by other people. Visitor said that having the information in the city website is not enough, but that a letter to CCW would be helpful. One visitor said she had heard about the Dog Committee meeting but not of any TWG meetings, either in PSAs or in the daily newspaper.

Outer Point/Rainforest Trail:

Kim: Current plan focuses on different uses on parkland, especially commercial uses. Last year commercial use was on Rain Forest trail only. Various options were discussed but it was left as

commercial use. Number of users has gone down by almost 1100 people. Maybe they could use Outer Pt. instead of Rain Forest. Rain Forest Trail was built with passenger fee money.

Bob J: When we put in a request to Parks and Rec, our employees asked if we'd ever be able to go back to the old trail, I said that it could happen if we went month by month or year by year. Most of the guides like the interpretative facets of the old trail better than the new. We're open to using either but we're ambivalent. The old trail is beautiful but it is slippery so there are trade offs. Head tax money built it, and we're ok with that. Cruise ship industry is ok with moving back and forth between the two trails if that is what is decided upon.

Now there are complications on dog issues. We're getting the information to talk about it but it will possibly take more time than one meeting will allow for. The whole area should be looked at as a system, the area deserves more attention than one or two meeting. We should come up with a master plan to look at the area as a whole. Better for the area overall. Maybe we could talk about providing possible handicapped access. We would love to be on the old trail but we can carry on well on the new trail. There are a couple of months still available yet for discussion and decisions.

Larry: We use the Rainforest Trail. As Bob said, for interpretive purposes it's better on the old trail. But I think it's more detrimental to surprise people about it being used for commercial purposes. I'm satisfied to stay with Rain Forest. I'm in favor of making the process very deliberate.

Gary: There is some concern about pulling a switch on the marine passenger fee: I'm not sure how they'll look at it. Burning bridges there could impact our finances.

Bob G: I would like to get community input. Rain Forest is the better trail. I would like to see a decision delayed perhaps a year. We have talked about enlarging the parking lot at Outer Pt. I hoped that we could finish the project last year. I would like to see it rebuilt as well as signage; Another year would allow for that.

Paul Z: It is State Park's view that the area will evolve into one system. Juneau users already use it as one system. The plan is to include commercial use in a way that is acceptable to the Juneau public. We'll take the time for public and commercial use comment. Juneau users will be the first group to be heard from.

Ron: Public and commercial use comment will be very important.

James: I agree with the importance of the public and commercial use comment. According to Bob Janes, there are usually more non-commercial cars in the parking lot than there are commercial use vehicles. I'd like to know why tours requests have gone down. Is it a factor of the trail or that they have more options or truly whether the old trail had more to offer.

Bob J: Probably all of it. We get lots of commercial use comments. I would like to compare the current comments with those of the past. I'll do it if I can dig it up.

James: There is an issue of safety on the trail. People have slipped.

Bob J: On the last day of the season a woman slipped and broke her ankle. The new trail is definitely safer, it's very well designed, easier to walk, takes less maintenance.

James: We're grateful for the fee money for the trails. We're talking about the possibility of having handicap accessible trail.

Bob J: It would be kind of nice to have designated for camping use although it would probably be calling in the hordes.

Kim: Camping is allowed there now

We need input from the dog walker committee about commercial use. The trail is heavily used. We are looking at creating walks to the beach and getting away from planks, as we have done at Rain Forest.

Cindi: One thing, a couple of years ago I didn't realize there was commercial use out there. I never met them. I'm wondering if there is less conflict than some think. If so, maybe there could be some side trails?

Alice: Has anyone heard about conflicts?

Bob J: There were issues on the old trails as tourism grew; there were no permitting processes at the time. There was no loop and so everybody met. People were concerned about commercial use groups. We paid use fees to build the loop. It's been better every year since the loop was built.

Gary: The (area-wide) survey pushed us to building the Rain Forest trail, is that correct? There was some conflict.

James: We heard from the public that they didn't want much expansion over current use, and instead wanted increased use on new trails. Bob Grochow and I looked at lots of potential places to build new trails. Most people's comments objected to commercial use on Outer Pt. trail.

Bob G: Outer Pt. use had exploded; we thought that if we built another trail, it would spread out the use. It has done that.

Merrill: Like the Amalga Trail master plan- it would be nice to pick up something like that for the north Douglas trails. And the public has input in making the document.

Kim: Parks and Rec will work on it.

James: I recommend that we stick with the existing recommendations until next winter, and then pick up the trails plan.

Gary: In the meantime, there should be an effort to ascertain the level of use

Bob G: We need an idea of current numbers.

Cindi: There are some trail counters out there. There is some trouble with it in wintertime but that is not when there is commercial use.

Alice: If we had a group of folks who are willing to adopt parts of the Outer Pt. Trail, something like 'Friends of Outer Point', they could assist with numbers in trail use. Mt. Robert Stewards is still working up there.

Bob G: Would we need to ascertain the numbers broken down by times of day or days of week?

Alice: Maybe they could do a short interview with each one who comes along.

I think it's a good idea to wait another year and recommend looking at the area and coming up with a master plan.

It was proposed to keep permitting at the same level as last summer.

While compiling the list of trails to discuss, work on a master plan for north Douglas.

Keep Outer Pt. and Rain Forest discussions separate from next year.

Paul Z: In the commercial use comment that only one trail will be for commercial use at any one time, we might reword that, because the guidelines may change after developing the master plan.

Gary: But we cannot put it as that we are waiting on the master plan.

Kim: Page 21; Outer Pt. guidelines will get shifted up as for Rain Forest. Outer Pt. at this point would not be commercial use.

James asked whether TWG had held a meeting to discuss the Rain Forest Trail when it was finished and consensus was that discussion had been only by telephone and that discussion at that time was to not restrict weekend use.

(Cindi, saying that she was in agreement with everything that had been specified and going on record as being in favor of holding an evening meeting, left the meeting at 1:05).

Larry will provide information packet as to why commercial use operators request changes; he will draft a statement for Parks and Rec.

Kim: At the Monday night meeting the Dog Task Force sub committee met. They recommend Outer Pt. Trail to have off-leash trail year round, and Rain Forest Trail to have on-leash trail seasonally from April –September, and then off-leash in the off season.

James asked if dog trail use has an impact on tourism that he understands that one person was bitten

Bob J: Maybe nipped. There is a new awareness so there are fewer issues. There have been conflicts, have sent reports to Kim in the past.

James: On that narrow of trail, does a leash help? Or might a dog wrap it around legs?

Alice: Control is more important, so a leash (helps).

Kim: Trail etiquette education is essential. There will need to be signage.

Visitor: If one trail is off- leash and one on-leash with options for commercial use, how will people know?

Visitor recommended that the Trails group go after all the tourism dollars as they can to make Outer Pt.Trail as good as Rain Forest trail, in one great trail system. Put in for it before other users get it.

Alice: Industry could feel they paid for the trail and can't use it.

Bob J suggested that they come back with a plan for a needed parking lot to be used on random days. Suggested they could devise a form for groups and individuals to fill out for that particular tour, that particular day. Forms will give a certain level of information to the city. Let PRAC know.

Marty noted that counting cars in the parking lot is not accurate because the other trail doesn't have parking.

Kim suggested that cross-referencing would give answers to the level of use.

New Amalga Meadows Trail

Kim passed around a map, with color-coded lines denoting various trails, existing and proposed. The comment was made that the map is not ready for public perusal

The main spine trail from the SAGA Lodge to the Boy Scout Trail is a route now. This summer Trail Mix will work on improving this trail but there is not enough money to finish the whole thing. There is commercial use in the area already. There is potential commercial use at Amalga harbor once it's improved.

Ron: Is the Red Trail suitable for skiing?

Answer: No. It's not that wide. There are trees too. But the trail could be improved with brushing.

It was noted that with the meadow there, skiers can already go wherever they want.

James noted that the dilemma was to get around the river, that the current roads don't tie in. How to do it is matter of debating how to cross. Lot of question marks

Yellow requires more public debate, crossing at salt chuck.

This summer trail improvements will be done with Prop 3 money, \$100,000 plus available. Commercial use from the SAGA Lodge to the Ropes Course ant to the beach.

Merrill said that Amalga Harbor will build new kayak launch.

Kim said that at the old site they were allowed to store the kayaks right there. At the new one they will have to move them.

Red trail will be hardened trail but wider. Some turnpike, not planked. Two people will be able to travel side by side; it will be 5 or 6 feet wide.

Amalga Trail will be a designated Sensitive Area. Urged for on-leash dogs only.

New parking site is at the old fire hall site. Gives storage space.

Ron: If the trail is built, given its distance from town, will it offer commercial use?

Larry: Would like to bring people into the old growth areas with their temple trees. Possible to work it out.

It was noted that Richard Carstensten reported that there was a significant area of blowdown, so there is virtually no original growth, but there is 100 hundred-year-old growth.

Larry: Kayak area has the best potential. The trail to the beach is very short; they have to come back by the same route.

The Boy Scout trail length, including all legs, is a 3½ mile trip.

Bob J suggested that public hearings should identify **low, medium, high, no-use areas, and** get comments on commercial use. It should also define possible use and restrictions.

On the Red trail and Spine Trail the public needs realistic expectations as to commercial use, especially if any commercial use or head tax money goes into it.

Kim noted that she will get a map that will show just the Green trail.

Ernest Gruening State Historical Site and other state facilities

Paul Z noted that Parks has the intention of putting a large parking lot there. There will be some interpretation in cabin. The cabin is currently a rental. Eventually there will be interpretation showing Gruening's role in statehood.

Would like to make recommendations as to changing, or reworking, some of these numbers, in case we get some federal money.

Bob J: It would be wonderful to go from Saga Lodge to the Gruening Cabin. These would be mostly independent travelers.

Alice questioned whether this needs to be looked at so early in the process.

Gary suggested that it: can be put in the report that in the next round, State Parks has a long range plan.

James noted that as the park is improved it is anticipated that commercial use will increase.

Gary: Is commercial use allowed on Boy Scout trail? Not currently. But depends on definition of commercial use. Some talk of whether facility should be rented out when not in use. Would that be commercial use? Land ownership and right of way issues complicated. Bandit operations. Potential for groups to come from down south and open what we would call commercial use.

Kim suggested that a matrix should be published for the public to review ahead of public meeting.

It was agreed that the noon meetings could be considered work sessions versus public evening sessions. They will try for regular cycle.

It was decided that TWG meetings will be held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. It is anticipated that not many more meetings will be necessary.

Next meeting: Wednesday January 28th, 2004 at 12:05 PM.

Meeting Notes by Elva Bontrager 586-9001
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