**Meeting Minutes**

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March 8th, 2017

5:00 PM

USDA Service Center, 4014 Lake St Homer, AK

1. Call to order 5:33
2. Roll call: Jared Worthington, Devony Lehner, Catherine Knott, Otto Kilcher, Tim Alzeimer, Genarita Grobarek, Chris Rainwater
3. Approval of the Agenda - Unanimous approval.
4. Approval of the Minutes – Gena moved to approve, seconded by Catherine. Unanimous approval.
   1. Question regarding snow survey training…why did it get canceled? Jared reported that it was both budget and bad timing with planning.
   2. Chris reported that the Port Graham snow survey lead to a conversation about carbon sequestration. The locals are looking into making money on keeping their forest growing rather than making money by cutting it down.
5. NRCS Report – Jared Worthington
   1. Many less high tunnel contracts due to EQIP money going elsewhere in the state.
   2. Water rights: high tunnel applications will need to apply for water rights before.
   3. *Conservation Planning and Programs: Alaska NRCS received $6,844,373 for EQIP contracting. Field Offices processed EQIP applications that had participant and land eligibility by 11/18. Approximately 61 applications got ranked in Homer. Ranking was completed March 1st, State office is reviewing contracts that will go forward this year. 37 Contracts Tentatively state wide will go forward. 16 total contracts on the Kenai Peninsula will go forward, 14 total contracts from Homer, and 2 total from Kenai. $222,006 dollars tentative for the 14 apps going forward in Homer. Large projects in Western and Southeast Alaska took up, most of the EQIP money this year. Not sure if Alaska will get any more money for EQIP this year.*

Discussion was not pretty. This will affect many producers planning on these tunnels for expansion. The board was in general unpleased, but especially when the news that now applicants will need to apply for water rights as well. It was noted that the State is so understaffed at present in this department that applications are not processed more than to have the date noted so if someone else goes for the rights the first applicant will take precedent. How will this new requirement be helpful to anyone? And it will cost an extra $100 for the applicant. Gena questioned how the process works now (she had gone through it a few years ago) and will look into this further.

* 1. CSP sign-up 14 Nov – 3 Feb. Two forestry applications in Kodiak. Five ag applications up north.
  2. Conservation Client Gateway is available to entities and individuals. Participants can electronically view, sign and send documents and track payments. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/cgate/
  3. New Assistant State Conservationist for Programs coming from North Dakota, Amanda Crowe, is now working in the Palmer office.
  4. Training in 2017 Soil Health – August 28th is on Hold.
  5. Meg Out of Office: March-16-24th

1. Financial Report: Otto motioned to approve, Tim seconded
2. Manager’s Report
   1. CIRI/Watermelon Trail: We will be putting $10,000 towards the SCA (Student Conservation Assoc.) to help fund the workers who will be doing the revegetation and reroute project this summer. Fish and Wildlife and Fish and Game are putting in the remainder so it looks like this project is a go for this summer.
   2. School Yard Habitat: Homer Middle School is in the design stages and McNeil Canyon Elementary will be having a student council meeting on the 23rd to get student involvement to identify preferred action.
   3. Invasive Plant Program: Elodea has shown up in Sports Lake by Soldotna. A meeting was held this morning with the CWMA partners to identify the action needed to move forward. Also, there will be a weed-free gravel workshop in Kenai on the 22nd.
   4. Alaska Clean Water Action Grant: We applied for the ACWA grant to work on the stream bank restoration project in Anchor Point with the help of the Kenai Watershed Forum, Cook Inletkeeper, the Kenai River Center, State Parks and the Anchor Point Chamber of Commerce. Now we get to wait and see if EPA funds are ever released at the National level. We put in the grant the use of a drone, but we rented it from Cook Inletkeeper. *Board Comments: Catherine suggested the use of WWOOFers as volunteer labor.*
   5. Land Management on the Kenai Peninsula Forum: Yesterday in Soldotna about 70+ people attended a forum in Soldotna focusing on Land Management issues, possible collaborations, and all the different strategic plans being written now. Heidi and I presented about Soil and Water Districts, emphasizing the flexibility for collaborating. Matt presented on the CWMA. Put faces to the names of many folks from different agencies.
   6. AK Farmers Market Organizers Conference: Last week we collaborated with the Homer Farmers Market to put on a state-wide conference for Market Managers. A total success, the conference had attendees from Fairbanks to Kechikan, from the DEC and the Div of Ag, from the Alaska Farmland Trust and the Alaska Food Policy Council. Guest speakers from the Farmers Market Association of Minnesota and Washington also attended. Everyone is excited about (re)forming a farmers market association for Alaska. *Board Comments: the board showed reluctance to having an agency like Cook Inletkeeper (who doesn’t have agriculture in their mission) running the show for such an association. Conversation was postponed to take on under New Business.*
   7. Kachemak Bay Watershed Collaboration Working Group: The first meeting of a many of the user groups of the Fox River Flats area gathered at KBNERR last week to talk about the idea of forming a collaboration to ~~identify the best way to move forward with a plan for the area~~. *Board Comments: Devony, who was at the meeting, reported that there really isn’t a drive to create a Fox River Flats Assoc, mostly they just want to share studies and information, but it would be good to network and know what is going on. Another meeting will happen to look at the State Park area plan in the beginning of April. Chris says he heard Karin’s report isn’t getting printed anymore? Devony says we as a District could post it on the District website. Devony could do that as a project as part of her forage class.*
   8. *f.moved by otto to move toward emails on newsletter seconded by catherine*
   9. Newsletter: It’s time to put out a spring newsletter, and I would like this to be the last one on paper. I will be emailing the board our present Cooperators List. PLEASE GO THROUGH THE LIST AND ADD PHONE OR EMAIL INFO TO PEOPLE ON THE LIST THAT YOU KNOW. I plan to send out this newsletter on paper, notify folks that newsletters will be by email in the future, but many of the cooperators on the list have defunct contact info*. Board Comments: Otto made the motion to make the move to a digital format for newsletters. Seconded by Catherine.*
3. Old Business
   1. Employee Raises, tabled from last meeting (Gena moved and Cathy seconded to approve flexible rates) Discussion:
      1. Cathy suggested a cost of living increase we try to keep up with
      2. Chris suggested a rate step policy that the board would approve.
      3. Otto suggested that the board continue to have input on the wages in the grants
      4. As far as Brad, Otto amended the motion to approve a 2 dollar raise now. AND Kyra will write up a wage policy for both 1.) standard cost of living pay raises yearly and 2.) pay rates for contracted work; for next meeting. Accepted.
   2. Rhodiola Equipment
      1. Otto, asked for RFP for folks to manage the equip
      2. Gena agreed that Al should be included too
      3. Need an agreement for the equipment
      4. Side note: Wheeler weed sprayer in Otto’s barn
      5. Gena request to put on the agenda for next meeting
   3. Borough land leases/sales
      1. Otto moved to join in support of the Kenai SWCD letter to Gary Knopp, in the form of our own letter, Gena seconded. Kyra will draft letter next week.
4. New Business
   1. Agency comments on Homer Airport by April 3
      1. Suggested message: Note please address the noxious weeds you already have. Clean equipment before and after.
   2. Agency comments on Bradley Lake by March 15
      1. Suggested message: Please get rid of existing weeds and make sure that they clean up equipment
   3. Future Scenarios: Possible Funding
      1. FMPP/LFPP: Inletkeeper is controversial. Discussion of why we don’t just apply for the grant ourselves. Kyra stated that she didn’t feel comfortable doing that because of her lack of experience and because of the grant’s stated desire to see applicants collaborate with other agencies. Board pointed out that the grant could cover hiring personnel (such as a bookkeeper) who would be able to take on tasks Kyra didn’t feel confident in. This way the District could grow. Kyra pointed out that we don’t know where we are going to be in the next six months so growing our staff at this time might not be good. Otto suggested and others agreed that it would be good to meet the Cook Inletkeeper folks so that any misgivings could be resolved. So conversation was tabled until that time could be identified. For this Kyra is to:
         1. Set up a meeting with Inletkeeper
         2. Forward grant website and information to Board
   4. Water rights: table to next meeting Kyra will research what the agency requirements and costs are

**Adjourned at 9:30**

**Next Meeting April 12th, 2017**