



October 28, 2019

The Honorable Senator Stedman
The Honorable Representative Kreiss-Tomkins

Re: Ernie Haugen Public Use Area

Dear Senator Stedman and Representative Kreiss-Tomkins,

The Petersburg Borough Assembly requests your assistance in working with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources regarding some popular outdoor recreation sites located in the Ernie Haugen Public Use Area which is inside Petersburg Borough boundaries on Mitkof Island.

The Ernie Haugen Public Use Area (EHPU) is a recreational area designated by the Alaska Legislature in 1988. It is 935 acres in size and is situated along the southern shore of Mitkof Island, on the beach side of Mitkof Highway next to Sumner Straight (map attached for reference). There are numerous access roads within the EHPU that lead from Mitkof Highway to the beach. Many of these sites are not catalogued, however there are 3 managed recreation sites within the EHPU that are higher traffic areas and have been actively managed for many years:

- **Greens Camp** (26 mile Mitkof Highway), which was originally a logging/road building camp during the construction of Mitkof Highway, is now maintained and managed as a campground and subsistence area. Facilities at Greens Camp include 1.4 miles of gravel access road, over 20 campsites, one large picnic area, 3 outhouses and 3 public use garbage cans.
- **Wilson Creek Access Site** (approx. 28 mile Mitkof Highway) is a campground and sportfishing site. It consists of approximately 1 acre of developed uplands including 5 campsites, parking area, an outhouse and a public use trash can.
- **Banana Point Boat Launch** (approx. 29 mile Mitkof Highway) is the primary boat launch site on South Mitkof Island. It is heavily used for recreational and commercial purposes and is one of the primary transportation links between Petersburg and Wrangell. Facilities at Banana Point include a 215' concrete boat ramp, floating pipe boom breakwater, ½ acre parking area, an outhouse and a public use trash can.

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Although the facilities above are owned by the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), they have been cooperatively managed for many years via maintenance agreements between DNR and Petersburg Borough, going back to at least 1993. Since 2008, the arrangement has consisted of a master agreement (Cooperative Resources Management Agreement ADL 105894 – attached for reference) which authorizes the Borough to provide maintenance services at the sites, and annual maintenance funding agreements which provide the Borough with the monetary resources to undertake the maintenance.

Agreement ADL 105894 expired at the end of 2017 and has not been renewed, although the Borough has requested a renewal multiple times. DNR has provided annual funding to the Borough for periodic trash pickup, pumping of the outhouses, and other minor maintenance as needed, including in 2018 after the master agreement had expired. For several years the amount of this funding has been \$6,200 annually. Maintenance work has been carried out mainly via Borough personnel but also using a contractor for some of the outhouse pumping.

Major maintenance at the sites (grading, ditching & brushing, campsite rehab, etc.) has been implemented mostly through the use of funding provided by other agencies including the United States Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee (RAC), Petersburg Indian Association (PIA), and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). The RAC has funded major maintenance at all three sites, while PIA has contributed significant money and labor to improvements at Greens Camp. ADF&G has been involved with Banana Point Boat Launch in the past, but not in recent years. Most major maintenance projects have been facilitated and managed by the Petersburg Borough using Borough personnel. All sites are currently in need of major maintenance work, notably including the floating breakwater at the Banana Point Boat Launch, which has fallen into disrepair.

Although no major maintenance projects have taken place in the past few years, the Borough has continued to provide periodic minor upkeep of the sites using the maintenance funding provided by DNR on an annual basis. This funding has been provided each spring via the annual maintenance agreements, which expire every year on December 31. Although maintenance funding has been uncertain for the past few years, it was provided by DNR each year up through 2018. However, when the Borough requested funding for 2019, DNR at first said none was available, then reconsidered and said ½ funding (\$3100) would be provided for calendar year 2019, and none for calendar year 2020. The 2019 funding has not yet been provided, and we have exhausted the 2018 funding. The Borough is now at a decision point regarding what to do with the properties within the EHPU if no further assistance from the State is forthcoming.

The Borough has not received any guidance from DNR on how to proceed with future maintenance at the EHPU once funding from the State has permanently discontinued. Because these sites are not owned by the Borough but are of vital importance to the community, we would like to know if the State has any future plans to support the EHPU with maintenance funding and a renewal of the Cooperative Resources Management

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Agreement. Otherwise, sanitation services at the sites may need to be discontinued, or the sites closed altogether if they are not going to be maintained. These types of actions would be most unfortunate and hopefully we can find a way to keep such closures from becoming necessary.

Please reach out to your contacts at the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Governor Dunleavy, and any other parties who may be able to provide the Borough with assistance in this matter. We would very much like to have a conversation about options for the future of the Ernie Haugen Public Use Area, especially Greens Camp, Wilson Creek Access Site, and the Banana Point Boat Launch.

Sincerely,



Mark Jensen
Mayor

cc: Lee Cole, Regional Manager, Southeast Region Land Office, ADNR

Attachments: Map of Ernie Haugen Public Use Area
Cooperative Resources Management Agreement ADL 105984