

Tanana Valley State Forest
Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting
January 31, 2013
6:00 – 9:00 pm
DNR Large Conference Room
3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, Alaska

Welcome and Introductions: Tom Malone, CAC Chair

CAC Members Present

Tom Malone, Chair, Forest Science
Brad Cox, Vice Chair, Value-Added Processing
Dan Rees, Vice Chair, Private Forest User
Paul Karczmarczyk, Fish and Wildlife Interests
Thomas Nerbonne, Regional Representative-Upper Tanana Valley
Al Pagh, Forest Industry
Jim Sackett, Regional Representative-Lower Tanana Valley
Chris Stark, Environmental Interests

CAC Members Absent

Jack DiMarchi, Mining Industry
Kathy Morgan, Native Community

Division of Forestry (DOF) Staff

Mark Eliot, Northern Regional Forester
Al Edgren, Delta Area Forester
Doug Hanson, Resource Forester
Jeff Hermanns, Tok Area Forester
Rick Jandreau, Palmer Area Forester
KT Pyne, Fairbanks Area Forester
Mike Reggear, Resource Management Forester
Jim Schwarber, Forest Planner
Julie Smith, DNR Staff, Scribe

Guests

Andrew Allaby, UAF
David Arnold, Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Lou Brown
Amanda Byrd
Henry Cole
Paul Costello, Fairbanks North Star Borough
Jerry Flodin
Glen Holt
David Light, UAF/ACEP
Kimberly Maher

Paul Maki
Jon Miller
Don Pendergrast
Joe Young, Young's Timber

NEW BUSINESS

Roads to Resources: access to lands across the Nenana River

Jim Sackett reported on the road construction near Nenana. He reported that Doyon is drilling exploratory wells. The road will run 29 miles west of Nenana. The highway will come almost to the edge of the Tanana State Forest. Doyon will be putting in culverts. The first 11 of 29 miles will hopefully be finished by the end of this summer. He lobbied to get funding to finish the road. The legislature was very receptive. The area has potential for agriculture, timber, and oil and gas resources. Road construction has started. The road will be gravel for the first 11 miles to 16' width. This part of the road will be done by April 1. Right now they are using an ice bridge across the Nenana River. Funding for bridge passed in the legislature. The bridge will be completed in 2014. From mile 5 to mile 11 the road runs through an area that burned. There is good timber by Kantishna. The City of Nenana owns the road right of way.

Roads to Resources: road from Elliott Highway to Tanana

Ryan Anderson and Paul Karczmarczyk requested that discussion of this topic be deferred to the next meeting.

Public Comment on Tok Area Best Interest Finding

Rick Jandreau said the purpose of this part of the meeting was to solicit comments on the Tok Area Best Interest Finding. He said the preliminary best interest finding was completed in Spring 2012. Due to the comments that were received and the interest in a competitive sale, the preliminary finding was rescinded and the current best interest finding was developed. This best interest finding incorporates comments from the original finding, and shifted the proposed sale to a competitive sale process. Public notice for both findings was included in newspapers in Fairbanks, Tok, and Anchorage; on the Division of Forestry website, the CAC website, and the DNR public notices page. Notices were also posted in post offices and libraries and were sent through the DNR mailing list that they maintain. The DOF also met with regional and Native organizations and the CAC. Jeff Hermanns said the comments will be published soon. The comment period ends February 4. To be considered in the final Best Interest Finding and to have standing for appeal, a person must submit comments by February 4.

Jim Schwarber said he will moderate the public comment section. He asked that comments be limited to 3 minutes and encouraged commenters also submit their comments in writing.

Don Pendergrast: Quite an interesting project. Biomass utilization is a very positive thing. Using a local resource, not fossil fuel, local jobs, helps manage the forest. But the devil is in the details, how it's done. First red flag: using the term sustainability – do the numbers – it's a harvest, will change the forest. That may be desirable but thinks we're kidding ourselves. Will change the forest quite a bit. That is the crux: what changes will occur, and what changes are acceptable. Identify the characteristics and values the forest has now, measure those over time, and figure out what changes are acceptable. What change do we tolerate? At what point do we put on the brakes? Will supply detailed comments in writing at the appropriate time.

Joe Young: president of Young's Timber Inc. Alaska Power and Telephone and Young's Timber have entered into a dialogue to collaborate together to move forward to see how this would all mesh together. The revised best interest finding is greatly improved. Appreciates Jeff Hermann's work. His efforts have helped the Tok area. Still has concerns about science and economics. Needs more research. Young's Timber hasn't determined if endorse the finding yet. Still have questions about forest nutrition, how will grass be controlled in case there is fire, is the stumpage price enough to cover the state's administrative costs? Will be submitting comments in writing later.

David Arnold: Executive Director of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center. Supports renewable energy projects. Also supports forestry projects that are economically and socially viable. Interested in supporting electrical generation from sources other than fossil fuels. Also concerned about Tanana Valley State Forest. Want to ensure method of selection provides biodiversity. Crucial that energy conservation is included. Adaptive management needed. Management plan must include contingencies for climate change, fire, and insect outbreaks. Would like more thought and planning related to biomass projects. The scale of harvest of the project should be designed for many successive harvests.

Jon Miller: Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Encouraged by the best interest finding. Lots to praise. Also has some concerns. Big picture concerns related to biomass. Should not conflate issues of fire protection and sustainable fuels. Plan needs more clarity. Would like to think more carefully about long-term sustainability and the size of the energy demand. Aggressive energy efficiency and conservation education is needed.

Lou Brown: Main concern is cost of road building. Hard to imagine that what the state will get will offset the cost of road building. Doesn't want to see the state lose money on this project. Concerned about cumulative effect and pressure for additional long-term contracts. Will DOF be prepared to turn down other sales? 25

year contract is a big precedent. Urges caution. Suggested that DOF might make this first sale a 10 year contract instead of 25. 25 years seems too long to allow potential negative impacts to continue without review.

Kimberly Maher: Looking through the reports, size and length are concerns. Best interest finding addresses berries, but not spring greens, people's customary uses of the forest. Make sure don't impact firewood harvest, recreation. After a harvest, consider what infrastructure is being left in place, and what is needed. After the Murphy Dome fire there was no place to park alongside the road near a popular berry picking location. Also maintain characteristics of the boreal forest. Consider what activities people are participating in and find ways to allow that to continue.

Jim Schwarber asked if anyone on the phone had comments.

Thomas Deerfield: Dalson Energy. Could just barely hear most of the speakers. Doing consulting work for Alaska Power and Telephone on biomass project. Requested this long-term contract. Understands questions he's heard, confident that all these issues have been discussed at length. Would love to talk with anyone concerned. Call him. Working through 2012 on feasibility study. That was finished in December 2012. Has been recommended for continued funding and development. Clare is leaving the team that is responding to the best interest finding. Alaska Power and Telephone is very interested in pursuing this contract and this process to get things worked out properly. Can be done sustainably, long term, and not interfere with other stakeholders and users.

Jim asked if any other comments on the phone or in the room. No other public testimony was offered. Jim thanked everyone for commenting.

Tom Malone asked for comments from the CAC on the best interest finding.

Jim Sackett: Will access be restricted to other users? Jeff Hermanns: DOF is not planning to restrict access to the area except in the vicinity of active harvesting. Areas will be opened immediately after harvesting. This will create a significant opportunity for people. So far have been able to strike a good balance.

Chris Stark: As far as the best interest finding goes, would like to go on record saying he supports it, but it is not thorough enough for him to agree with the director's decision. Concerned about biomass estimates being correct. Chris Maisch has said in the past that this will not be a cost negative thing. The pricing is off – cheaper for industry than for the schools, and perhaps others. Make sure firewood guys don't pay more. Greatly concerned that nothing is addressed in this plan for what happens after 25 years. Would like to see a peer reviewed paper by the department.

Al Pagh: Thought the best interest finding was well written. Pretty much everything covered. This kind of projects requires a huge amount of money for operator, they need a long time to make it work financially. 25 years is reasonable.

They have to put roads in and abide by regulations. Firewood cutters don't have to do all that, should pay a little more.

Thomas Nerbonne: The Tanana Valley State Forest is huge. Wind event blew 200,000 acres, and we don't even see it. There is a huge amount of resource. Are we doing what we could to utilize timber?

Brad Cox: We're all at a disadvantage in that we don't have any history doing what we're looking at doing. It may all work out, or we may learn some things we don't know now. Thinks DOF has done their homework, have done the best they can. Having worked with these guys for a long time, 20 years, has confidence they've done what can be done. Have public's interest in mind as their agenda. No personal agenda coming out of DOF for this. They would stand up against industry if against the public interest.

Dan Rees: Supports the best interest finding. Has concerns about the 25 year term. Concerned about value and the state not operating at a net loss. Relies on the planning process for each sale to address environmental concerns. Also wonders about later bids and increased costs as move farther in.

Tom Malone: In favor of this project and the best interest finding. The State has been selling timber for years. This is a series of sales. The allowable cut as calculated is 3,000 acres, this sale will be much less than half of the allowable cut.

Dan Rees made the following motion:

The Tanana Valley State Forest Citizens Advisory Committee supports the Preliminary Best Interest Finding for the biomass utilization project in Tok. Recognizing that we are a diverse group of individuals, there are concerns regarding biomass calculations, long-term site degradation, and the economic benefit to the citizens of Alaska.

The motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Review Minutes of December 5, 2012 Meeting

Minutes approved.

Vote on by-laws amendment

At the last meeting there was a discussion related to amending the bylaws to restrict the amount of time CAC members can discuss an item. Jim Sackett moved to adopt the proposed amendment.

Chris asked if someone's response to his question count as his two minutes. Jim said that is not the intent. A response to a question doesn't count as part of the time allotted.

Motion passed. 6 in favor, 2 against.

Response from DNR concerning CAC letter requesting funds for new imagery and for September wind storm damage support

The CAC wrote a letter to Commissioner Sullivan asking for additional funding to update aerial photograph in the Tanana Valley and to spend money and coordinate with the federal government to open trails and access to wind blown areas. Tom passed around copy of the response. The response basically states that when they get the funds they will consider using them for these purposes. As far as coordination with the federal government, the money that was in congress to fund some of the land clearing was taken out as pork related to Sandy relief.

Jeff Hermanns said there was up to a million acres of blow down. Al Edgren noted they provided the numbers a few meetings ago. There are 30,000 acres that can be moved on immediately. Chris Stark asked if DOF is planning on moving on that right away. Al said yes.

Delta Area Update

Delta Area Biomass Update. Al Edgren showed a picture of the school being heated at -50. Only steam coming out the top. He said the school is saving 85% of heating cost from a year ago and displacing 35,000 gallons of heating oil. With the savings the school has hired new teachers and done school remodeling. In addition, the revenue stream from the waste product for Brad Cox resulted in \$26,000 profit.

Delta River Firewood Lots. 243.6 cords were sold. How much money generated selling log decks? The log decks were laid out as the road right of way was cleared. The road access was built for \$25,000. Total revenue from selling timber the road clearing was \$7,013. Not bad. The road will open about 4,000 acres for timber harvesting. The wood sold for \$20/cord for black spruce and \$30/cord for birch and white spruce.

Fairbanks Area Update

Kathryn Pyne reported the Fairbanks area has 11 FLUPS under agency review. Public review will be next. DOF held a meeting for the Pete Simpson Memorial Road/Timber Salvage Meeting on January 22. There was good response with lots of comments. DOF will be sending meeting notes to those who attended. There are concerns because the road will go through a residential area. They are also working with DOT on a severe beetle outbreak in Manley. On Sunday there was an article by Tim Mowry on firewood theft. They're still trying to figure out a way to handle that.

They will be co-sponsoring a public workshop with the Cooperative Extension for firewood users. The workshop will be February 16 in Schaible Auditorium and will include information on where to get firewood, heating your home, and chainsaw safety.

Jeff Hermanns: Thank everyone for coming and sharing comments. Genuinely appreciate that. Struggles with getting enough eyes to get the feedback they want and need. Maybe didn't illustrate well enough all the research they've done. If any questions or concerns, feel free to call or set up a meeting. He'll drive to Fairbanks to talk with people. Has conceptual harvest design for area immediately around Tok related to fuel reduction. Can explain if anyone is interested.

Elections

Tom said the CAC Bylaws require elections during the first meeting of the year, so need elections. Tom is re-elected as Chair. Brad and Dan are re-elected as Vice Chairs.

Vacancies on CAC

Recreation
Tourism
Native community
Mining (Jack asked to be replaced)

There have been nominations for recreation and mining. 3 year terms. If interested or know someone interested, contact Mark Eliot. Chris Maisch appoints people to the committee. Would like to fill out the committee. Number of meetings per year is variable. Usually don't meet during the summer.

Chris clarified that recreation is anyone who uses the TVSF recreationally. Tourism is someone with a tourist business, usually someone who earns money in the tourism industry.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting was scheduled for April 25, 2013.

Meeting Adjourned.