

Prince William Sound Marine Trail Community Meeting – Anchorage

Tuesday, June 9, 2009

Meeting Notes

Eight people attended the workshop held at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage. The workshop was facilitated by Chris Beck and Tanya Iden of Agnew::Beck Consulting, LLC, as part of the Prince William Sound Marine Trail Project.

Topic:

Introduction, Background + Overview – Why this Project?

- Chris Beck led a PowerPoint presentation describing the Project.
- PWS Marine Trail has the following goals:
 - Manage tourism (respond to the changing and increasing use of PWS)
 - Provide an infrastructure for sustainable tourism by creating a niche for smaller, locally-owned tourism businesses
 - Attract the small groups and independent travelers who spend the most money locally with the fewest impacts
 - Educate & increase awareness by visitors to protect Sound resources, promote safe use, address trespass issues

Group Discussion

The Meeting attendees sought clarification on the key partners involved, offered feedback on the Marine Trail concept and goals in general, discussed increased use and demand for recreation in the Sound, analyzed the feasibility of a Marine Trail in the context of global economic challenges, and talked about the Marine Trail as a management tool for use in the Sound.

Partners-

- Who is NWF? Traditional environmental organization? Hunters? Fishers? *(Response: NWF is an advocacy organization that works to conserve and protect the environment.)*
- What will Agnew::Beck develop – is there a final product? *(Response: A::B is facilitating the public process. Main deliverable is to conduct community meetings and develop a summary of recommendations heard from the public.)*
- Need USFS involved. Water can't be wilderness, but can manage the land. USFS is working towards setting use limits (e.g. Harriman) *(Response: USFS is a signatory on the MOU of this project and has had a representative at the meetings in Cordova, Valdez, Tatitlek, Chenega, and Whittier – they were unable to make tonight's meeting.)*
- Why is the National Park Service involved? *(Response: NPS has an arm –Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program that helps with community-initiated outdoor recreation and resource conservation projects. they are one of the 5 MOU partners on this project.)*

Marine Trail Concept – The meeting attendees discussed the merit of a Marine Trail. A wide range of ideas, concerns and questions were raised. In general folks favored the idea of creating a constituency of folks to support conservation of the Sound and felt that providing education and information to users is critical. Several people expressed significant doubts about the net benefits of a trail that could promote more use of the Sound. Specific comments included:

- Like the Trail idea as a means to building a constituency for conservation of the Sound
- To create a constituency, work with existing users, community guides

- Not a black and white issue. How will the Marine Trail create conservation constituency?
- Attendee mentioned that he looked at the Sea Trails website as an example and found that it links to chambers of commerce, AK airlines, etc – there was no link to conservation groups.
- Not interested in promoting community development at the expense of wilderness
- Have a low opinion of project – “the end of the end”. Wilderness gone, more and more hardening, can’t get away from it all, don’t want to advocate wilderness recreation anywhere
- But – where should recreation take place?
- Concern that more publicity and promotion of the Sound with a Marine Trail will bring uses that are not preferable – e.g. 2000 mile jet ski race
- Option – closer in loops?
- Need to be very careful about where, how to develop on-shore facilities, ok e.g. for bear containers
- Need to think about how to educate users about the Sound. For instance there is a point when folks are saturated by information – e.g. avalanche information
- Boating safety folks adamantly opposed to piggy backing kayaking information on motor boat program. Not an option

Use and Demand in Prince William Sound – Discussion focused around whether an increase in use in PWS is inevitable. There was consensus that demand for recreation in the Sound will likely increase in the future. Specific concerns and comments follow:

- More users = less wilderness
- Good and bad – increases use, changes character
- Question inevitably of growth – we have to maintain wilderness, a finite resource; likely requires setting limits on use
- Don’t accept growth as inevitable. If I was king of the world I would turn the clock back.
- Can’t “keep a lid on it”, passive users will be shunted aside
- Raising profile will increase use
- Estimate 30 to 1 – recreational power boats to kayaks
- Impact of commercial tour boats with a bunch of kayaks “mother ship” (Katmai example)
- 20’ – 30’ recreational boats – camp, take more stuff, more impacts
- Concentration in time: 80% of use in 60 days
- Harriman/Blackstone Bay – clearly impacted, overused
- If you don’t do anything, it gets worse

PWS and the Economy – The group discussed whether or not use will increase in the context of the global recession. People don’t have as much disposable income, fuel prices will likely increase; however, some folks thought that the recession might mean that folks stay closer to home and get back to the basics of being outdoors. The conversation included the following points:

- Tight pocket books mean use may take care of itself – i.e. - folks can’t afford to get out in the Sound.
- Maybe opposite – tough times lead to more use?
- States and feds don’t have the money to build and maintain facilities
- Need money to take care of what we already have
- How much would it cost?
- Trail could lead to more funding for management for State Parks. Not going to be a big overdeveloped trail. Need to get people involved in shaping project
- State parks rep noted that it takes about 100K to build a cabin

Management of the Sound – The meeting attendees generally agreed that managing users in the Sound is critical and the Marine Trail may be a method for management. Comments included:

- One of the benefits – guide the people to certain places that can support use and also away from wild areas
- Like to see a way to guide future use
- Might be able to steer motorized thru onshore facilities
- Local loops is a good response to the 90-95% of users who want some close in, easy
- Suggestions regarding amount of use, “self regulated quota”. On weekends certain times are busiest. Disperse use over time.
- Managing use – consider fees (problem – money to state general fund)
- Education – yes, but you need someone on the ground enforcing e.g.- “here’s a ticket by the way”

Next Steps + Wrap Up

- More work is needed with other user groups to understand concerns and to shape the project to respond to these concerns. The overall sense of the meeting is that this project could be net positive, *if it is done right.*

PWS Marine Trail Project Steering Committee

Tony Turrini	National Wildlife Federation
Jack Blackwell	Alaska State Parks
Heather Rice	National Park Service; Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program
Deborah Daisy	Chenega Corp.
Angeline Sawden	Chugach Alaska Corp.
John Johnson	Chugach Alaska Corp.
Kristin Smith	Copper River Watershed Project
Martin Moe	Cordova Chamber of Commerce
Harold Blehmh	Valdez
Dean Rand	Whittier
Ricky Kompkoff	Tatitlek
J. Wright	Tatitlek
T. Valsoff	Tatitlek
Sue Cogswell	PWS Economic Development District
Aaron Poe	USFS Chugach National Forest
Sara Boario	USFS Chugach National Forest
Heather Gott	USFS Chugach National Forest
Ann Mayo-Kiely	AK Geographic
Rebecca Talbott	Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
Vince Kelly	Valdez State Parks Citizen Advisory Board
Paul Twardock	APU