

## Fish and Numbered Lakes Management Plans

Update and Summary of Public Comments on “Issues and Preliminary Recommendations”  
(March 2006 draft)

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### Purpose of This Document

This short document presents the information below:

- Project update and schedule for moving ahead with the plan
- Record of public comments to date and where they can be found
  - Community Workshop #1 notes
  - Table with an abbreviated listing of public comments on the March 2006 draft
  - Hardcopy of the full set of public comments
- Continuing opportunities to comment on the Plan
- Short summary of public comments

### Project Overview

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is preparing management plans for two parcels of land (one near Fish Lake, one surrounding the Numbered Lakes) off the Spur Road, south of Talkeetna. An initial Issues and Preliminary Recommendations document was prepared and released for public review in March. Copies of that document are available online at [www.agnewbeck.com](http://www.agnewbeck.com).

### Project Update and Schedule – Work to Date and What’s Coming Next

| Date                         | Action   |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1998                         | The Talkeetna Comprehensive Plan recommends portions of MSB land around Fish and Numbered Lakes be reserved for “park and preservation.”               |
| October 2005                 | The Talkeetna Community Council requests the MSB reclassify the land as “Park and Preserve,” and develop a park and preserve master plan for the area. |
| February 2006                | Agnew::Beck was awarded contract to prepare a recreation management plan.  |
| February                     | Publicity of the project began with flyer posted around community; informational ‘postcards’ were sent to over 200 adjacent landowners.                |
| March 8                      | Initial site visit and scoping meeting with the local Parks Advisory Committee and interested community members.                                       |
| March                        | Distribute Issues and Preliminary Recommendations for community review   |
| April 5                      | Community Workshop #1, to review <i>Issues and Preliminary Recommendations</i> report  |
| <b>Next Steps</b>            |  |
| May 4                        | Distribute Summary of Comments (this document)   |
| May 10                       | Distribute Round 2 Revisions and New Options   |
| May 24                       | Community Workshop #2  |
| May-June 16                  | Comment period on Round 2: Revisions and New Options   |
| July-September               | Conduct additional research, distribute Round 2 Summary of Comments, prepare Final Plan  |
| <b>Plan Approval Process</b> |  |
| September                    | Distribute Final Plan  |
| Early Fall                   | Public hearing – Community Council   |
| TBA                          | Public hearing – Matanuska-Susitna Borough Advisory Boards<br>Public hearing – Borough Planning Commission<br>Public hearing – Borough Assembly        |

## **Records of Public Comments to Date – Where they can be found**

Comments on the March 2006 draft came in many forms. Approximately 45 people attended the first community workshop, held at Talkeetna Elementary School on April 5, 2006. A wide range of comments were compiled from the 3 hours of discussion at the workshop. Notes from the workshop can be found online at [www.agnewbeck.com](http://www.agnewbeck.com).

Over 120 individual comments were submitted after the workshop. These comments have been abbreviated and inserted into a table which includes the names of all those who commented, positions on key issues, and quotes or summaries of important specific points. This table is also available online at [www.agnewbeck.com](http://www.agnewbeck.com).

The full compilation of public comments submitted after the meeting has been printed for public reading and will be distributed at the Talkeetna Library, MSB office in Palmer and Agnew::Beck office in Anchorage.

Included on the following page is a brief summary of the comments.

## **How Will These Comments be Used?**

Every comment is read, considered on its merits, and used to help craft a revised plan. Supporting information is given careful consideration. This is not a vote – it's a process of analysis and response. The comments are used to refine or change the recommendations for management.

## **Continuing Opportunities to Comment on the Plan**

As outlined in the schedule above, there are several additional chances to comment, extending through summer and fall 2006.

1. Community Workshop #2 – May 24<sup>th</sup>  
The workshop will be used to discuss recommended revisions to the plan. Recommended revisions will be circulated in the community and posted online at [www.agnewbeck.com](http://www.agnewbeck.com) on May 10, and available at the Talkeetna Library. If you can't make the workshop, please submit your thoughts by phone, fax, letter or email, by June 16<sup>th</sup>.
2. Further research and informal community discussion – summer 2006  
The Borough and Agnew::Beck will be carrying out additional research and preparing a revised draft plan during the summer. There will likely be informal follow-up conversations with community representatives during this time period.
3. Review Revised Plan – Late summer and fall 2006
4. Comment on Plan at public hearings with Borough Boards and Commissions, and the Borough Assembly – Fall 2006

To help resolve remaining issues, we ask you to focus your comments as specifically as possible on the proposed decisions and language of the plan. If you are proposing a change, be specific and provide your best reasons. Comments submitted as part of a public comment period are part of the public record.

## **Summer is a Busy Time: How Will I Keep Informed?**

We will send you an email or written notice of any new issues or proposed policies to review through the completion of this project. There will be generous time for you to respond. Updates to the project schedule will be posted online at [www.agnewbeck.com](http://www.agnewbeck.com).

## **Summary of Public Comments – The Short Version**

This section attempts to give a short overview of the general direction of comments received to date on the March 2006 draft. By design it doesn't include all the details, but gives a general view of points of agreement and points where more work is needed.

### Points of General Agreement

- Both parcels are recognized and valued as productive fish and wildlife habitat.
- Their close-to-town location is valued: residents view this as an important community resource rather than a regional destination.
- Past or current recreation has not changed the intact natural condition of these lands.
- Continued growth in Talkeetna will likely create much greater recreation demand and growing pressures on natural areas and wildlife habitat. These Borough parcels will be increasingly important to the community for both recreation and open space.
- Decisions on the use of both Fish and Numbered Lakes should take into account the current and long term recreational needs of the community as a whole, and also consider how these needs can be met on other public lands in the area.
- Neighbors' interests and uses must be weighed and balanced with community interests.

### *Fish Lake Parcel*

- Steps should be taken to ensure continued legal public access to Borough lands at Fish Lake. In the near term this will likely include development of a parking area just off the Spur Road (along the MSB right of way) that will provide trail access over a bridge at Gator Creek, and continuing due south to Fish Lake.
- The public ROW across the middle of the parcel should be re-aligned to the north to match terrain and reduce impact of a possible road on other park values and recreation.
- Provide narrow winter ski and walking trails at Fish Lake
- Wetlands and channels at the east end of Fish Lake need signage and other methods to protect sensitive wildlife and habitat.

### *Numbered Lakes Parcel*

- Numbered Lakes should have three small perimeter access points with parking for a few cars. New roads should only extend into the outer edge of the area, and not cross deeply into or through the area.
- Numbered Lakes includes sensitive natural areas and wildlife use areas that create an attraction but are also vulnerable to disturbance.
- Future use of the area needs to be managed to keep the natural character of the area intact (the exact degree of "intact" needs more discussion). While the Numbered Lakes area will be managed to maintain its natural character, the area should be open to a range of recreational activities (the exact nature of these needs more discussion).
- These lands should not be made a destination for large-scale commercial or tourist use.
- Add the small parcel of Borough land at the SW corner of the area; designate for the same uses and manage like the remainder of the area.

### Points of Continued Discussion

- Timing, location and design of day use facilities – Over time, as use grows, modest facilities (e.g., trash cans, restrooms, boardwalks or small bridges over streams, perhaps picnic tables) likely will be needed. Such facilities will help guide use to limit impacts, and add to the quality of the experience. More work is needed to outline the specific criteria that will be used to guide the timing and nature of these facilities.
- Timing, location and design of trails – There is a local demand for more trails in the Talkeetna area, both motorized and non-motorized. Limited, low impact, narrow trails are appropriate at Fish Lake; there is a strong current of opinion that Numbered Lakes is valuable for its lack of established trails. More work is needed to outline the specific criteria that will be used to guide the timing and nature of these trails.
- Educational Groups and Commercial Recreation Use – Opinions are mixed regarding whether these uses are appropriate in the area. If permitted, specific guidelines will be needed to ensure such uses have impacts equal to or less than use by independent users. The primary concern is that these uses will get out-of-scale, force development of facilities and trails and disrupt the character of the area for community users.
- Diversity of Recreation Opportunities – Some people believe Fish and or Numbered Lakes are big enough they can be used for a range of uses – developed recreation, day use, canoe trails, ATV/dirt bikes, trails for seniors with benches, undeveloped “wild areas” etc. Others believe these uses can best be provided on other public lands in the greater Talkeetna area.
- Motorized use – More work is needed to sort out if and how these uses should be accommodated. The main points of discussion, which focused on winter motorized activities, are listed below:
  - Some local residents want to be able to use these areas for motorized use – for recreation, or passing through to other areas; other residents believe that motorized uses will damage the environment and displace other forms of recreation.
  - There is a need for legal access corridors that allow snowmobilers to reach large blocks of public land east and west of Talkeetna; there are very few public lands available for motorized recreation within the developed portions of Talkeetna.
  - There is a need for public lands that are closed to motorized recreation use; very few public areas are reserved for non-motorized areas recreation in the Talkeetna area or in the upper Susitna valley.
  - Motorized uses are an equitable form of access because not everyone can or wants to do human-powered recreation.
  - This is the wrong place for motorized recreation because of its compact size and sensitive natural features.
  - This is the only place for future motorized recreation for or people who don't want to trailer out of town.
  - You can't find a practical way to contain the motorized use at current levels.
  - Current levels haven't been a problem, don't cut off motorized use until there is one.

Bottom Line – Despite differences on specific issues, there is substantial common ground among all those who commented on the plan. We're confident that with some time, creativity and a desire to understand all points of view, the Talkeetna community can find agreements that are acceptable to all parties.