

MEETING SUMMARY AND UPDATE

Wolverine Creek Management Committee

October 6, 2004, 5:30 PM. – 9:30 PM

Anchorage Senior Center

Meeting Participants

Facilitator: Lisa O'Brien, Recorder: Teri Arnold

Committee Members: Mark Bell, Mike Cowan, Lance DeSaw, Carl Dixon, Mark Glassmaker, Alan Helfer, Pete Heppe, Jeremy Schimmel, Joe Schuster, Steve Stringham, Tom Thibodeau, and Peter Thompson.

ADF&G Staff: Teri Arnold, Mark Burch, Gino Delfrate, Wayne Doezal, John Hechtal, Grant Hilderbrand, Doug Hill, Cindi Jacobson, Colleen Matt, Joe Meehan, Dave Rutz, Doug Vincent-Lang

Meeting Purpose

To discuss last season; evaluate the WCMC; and get input from the WCMC about the next steps regarding management of Wolverine Creek Cove.

Introductions, Overview, Agenda and Ground Rules Review

Committee members, staff, and members of the public introduced themselves. Lisa reviewed the agenda and ground rules. The last meeting summary was adopted.

Colleen introduced Grant Hilderbrand, the new Regional Supervisor for Region II, Wildlife Conservation. Grant stressed that some type of user fee was needed if ADF&G is going to continue to actively manage the Wolverine Creek area. He noted that he was not sure that ADF&G would be able to use federal funds to contribute to management of the area. Grant told the group that ADF&G has not been able to fill vacant positions and has significantly cut programs due to increasing costs without increasing funding. He said that a hunting license fee increase bill that may be introduced during the legislative session could offer some relief.

Debriefing regarding last season

Joe evaluated last season using the six management objectives as criteria. Although there continues to be some problems, Joe concluded that, overall, things were going pretty well. The committee discussed the need make the guidelines clearer and thus easier to follow.

Evaluation of WCMC and ADF&G presence at Wolverine Creek Cove

Lisa presented a summary of her interviews with the WCMC and alternates. The following are highlights from the interviews:

- Everyone thought that the WCMC has been successful. Most people thought that the WCMC should continue in some capacity. There is still a lot of work to be done.

- The majority felt that the process was fair. It was mentioned that the initial selection process could have been better and that the committee doesn't adequately reflect the users of the area. The Committee agreed that it is good that the public has been able to participate in discussions.
- It was noted that a guide-training program should be offered and that the issue of a set back should be explored.
- The WCMC thought that the guidelines were good overall but that some need to be improved.
- Most people said that ADF&G presence on-site was positive, while others thought that users could "police" themselves.
- Many people thought that the situation at Wolverine Creek has improved because of ADF&G presence and the WCMC. However, some people thought that user conflicts are still a significant problem and that the experience for bear viewers has worsened.
- Some people suggested that most of the issues at Wolverine Creek would work themselves out. For example, people would stop going there if it gets too crowded. Others thought that the committee was needed to make sure people will follow the guidelines.

Discussion of user fee scenarios and ADF&G services

Colleen outlined three scenarios including services provided and related costs for management of Wolverine Creek. The WCMC discussed each scenario as well as other options for raising funds to continue ADF&G presence at the Cove as well as ADF&G support of the WCMC. The WCMC agreed that it would like ADF&G to maintain its on-site presence at the Cove and continue to support the WCMC. Although the WCMC did not agree that one scenario was preferable over the other, it agreed to work together to design a fee structure that it could support.

Update

On January 17, Colleen, Joe, and Cindi met with some WCMC members and alternates in Soldotna. Peter Thompson, Tom Thibodeau, Steve Stringham, and Greg Bell were present. Cindi spoke to Joe Shuster on the phone. Jeremy and Fred provided input by e-mail. The group discussed the various levels of service that ADF&G could provide and decided that full staff presence for the full season (12 weeks) and the continuation of the WCMC at a reduced cost (no facilitator) was the best option. In addition, the group wanted reporting to be as simple as possible.

ADF&G thought that it would need between \$60,900 and \$ 30,500 to use as matching funds for a SWG grant to continue the program outlined above. The amount needed will depend on the type of grant funds that are available.

Those present at the meeting developed and agreed on the following fee structure for consideration of the entire Committee:

- \$5.00 per head access fee. ADF&G would provide tickets to each of the commercial operators to sell. The WCMC would also be available on-site as well as at the ADF&G office in Anchorage (and perhaps Soldotna). A season pass would be available for private users at a rate of \$50.00.

- Guides would pay a \$100.00/season fee, \$65 of which would be waived if they take a training course from ADF&G.

Since the meeting, Cindi was able to contact all members of the WCMC, with the exception of Lance DeSaw whom she was unable to reach, and gain consensus for the ideas listed above.

ADF&G was able to secure funding for the 2005 season and will be on-site for 9 weeks.