

**Letter of Agreement Between
City and Borough of Juneau
Parks and Recreation Department
and
State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Regarding Public Lands in the
Amalga Meadows – Eagle Beach Area**

Recommended by PRAC/SPAB Subcommittee – June 12, 2003

1.0 Purpose

This agreement between the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Parks and Recreation Department and the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) addresses future use and management of the City and State public recreation lands in the Amalga Meadows – Eagle Beach area, north of Juneau (Map 1). The agreement:

- Describes an expanded trail system, future public uses and facilities, and opportunities for cooperative management of the area, and
- Establishes a commitment for future collaboration and consultation on new issues or projects in the area, through interagency staff communication and establishment of an on-going subcommittee with representatives of the CBJ and State Parks citizen advisory committees.

This agreement was developed by a joint subcommittee of the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and the State Parks Advisory Board. Its recommendations were reached by a consensus of the subcommittee on June 12, 2003.

2.0 Background

North of Tee Harbor, Juneau's main road corridor is bordered by large, contiguous tracts of public lands and waters that are valued by residents for their recreation, habitat, cultural/historic and other values. These public lands are managed primarily for recreation by the CBJ, DPOR and the USFS. Several private camps also serve public recreation and outdoor education needs. Other private lands in the area primarily support low density residential neighborhoods.

The CBJ 1996 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan recommended that there be an "interagency strategy for management" for the public lands in this area. The Southeast Alaska Land Trust documented land status and existing uses and development, and echoed the call for a comprehensive strategy for the public recreation lands.¹

¹ Southeast Alaska Land Trust, April 2001. *Juneau's Wonderful Green Zone, A Land Status Report by SEAL Trust.*

A first step was taken on March 23, 2001, when 35 people – including owners, managers and users of the area – met to discuss their visions, goals and plans. Meeting participants envisioned the area growing as a premiere recreation, outdoor education, and culturally/historically-rich destination for Juneau residents, visitors and youth.

Collaboration between the CBJ Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) and the State Parks Advisory Board (SPAB) – the citizen boards that advise CBJ and State park managers regarding these lands – was identified as the “first step” to explore and implement the many ideas shared that day. The CBJ offered funding to support these discussions.

In June 2002, a subcommittee with representatives of the CBJ and State parks advisory boards formed to discuss developing an interagency agreement regarding future use and management of the Amalga Meadows – Eagle Beach area.² The subcommittee developed its recommendations through a year-long public process – working with the Huffman Harbor Neighborhood Association, Boy Scouts of America, Trail Mix, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Methodist Camp, Southeast Alaska Land Trust, Friends of Ernest Gruening State Historic Park, Discovery Southeast, and landowners, managers and users of the area. The subcommittee held eight committee meetings which were open to the public, including two well-attended public workshops in December 2002 and May 2003.

3.0 Agreements

The following agreements will form the basis for continued collaboration and consultation between the CBJ Parks and Recreation Department and the State of Alaska Parks in the management of City and State public recreation lands in the Amalga Meadows – Eagle Beach area (Map 1).

3.1 Vision

The vision for the area is a premiere recreation, outdoor education and cultural/historic destination for Juneau residents, visitors and youth.

Public lands in the Amalga Meadows – Eagle Beach area will be managed with consideration to the area’s existing values, resources, and uses and its tremendous potential to meet public recreation and other interests. The area should offer a diversity of public use experiences and levels of development, from less to more intense. Factors to consider in future management include:

- Protection of the recreation, outdoor education, cultural and historic values of the area.
- Protection of important and sensitive fish and wildlife habitat and use areas.
- Need for trails/facilities that provide a variety of recreational and educational experiences and serve a broad population, including accessible trails/facilities.
- Compatibility with adjacent private-land developments and other uses.

² Subcommittee members included: Chas Dense (SPAB), Karla Hart (SPAB), Dixie Hood (PRAC), Jim King (PRAC & SPAB), Alex Lukshin (PRAC), Joan O’Keefe (PRAC) and Alice Rarig (SPAB), assisted by Kim Kiefer, CBJ Parks and Recreation Department Director and Mike Eberhardt, Alaska State Parks.

- Compatibility with maintaining and enhancing the primary uses of the property for recreation, outdoor education, and appreciation of cultural/historic values.
- Preserving natural sound-scapes and aesthetics.
- Feasibility of use or development (e.g., slope, wetlands).
- Land management rules or plans that affect future public use or development.
- Socioeconomic factors.

3.2 Public Use, Trails and Facilities

3.2.1 Concentrate Public Facilities at Existing Developed Areas

Public facilities should be concentrated at existing developed areas, rather than starting new “nodes” of development to serve public uses. These areas – some of which are public and some privately-owned – include Eagle Beach State Recreation Area and Eagle Beach picnic area, Southeast Alaska Guidance Association (SAGA) Lodge area, Amalga Harbor, Ernest Gruening State Historic Park, and the Boy Scout and Methodist Camps.

3.2.2 Consider Sensitive Areas and Uses

The location, design and use of trails and facilities will consider and protect the values of sensitive areas and uses, including:

- Peterson Creek Salt Chuck
- Eagle and Herbert River confluence
- Anadromous fish stream corridors
- Wetlands, important for bears (Amalga Meadows, Peterson Creek area)
- Coastal areas important for river otter
- Salt marshes, important for waterfowl
- Landmark/monument trees
- Areas important for historic, archaeological or cultural resources
- Areas important for wildlife viewing
- Areas selected for “dark sky viewing”

Some sensitive areas may be located on private land. This section of the Letter of Agreement urges consideration of sensitive areas and uses, but does not preclude the private land owner from determining appropriate uses for their land.

3.2.3 Develop a Linked, Diverse Trails System

Recommended trail routes and parking are shown on Map 1. Trails should be carefully sited to take wildlife and private property into account. A unified system of signage should be used to mark trails; agencies will coordinate on sign design, construction and placement.

Main features of the recommended linked trail system include:

- **Amalga – Eagle River Main Trail:** First priority for construction. Construct an unpaved ADA accessible main trail for non-motorized use from the intersection with the Boy Scout Camp trail in the north, to the SAGA Lodge Road in the south (see route in RED on Map 1). Consider gating the SAGA Lodge Road and using the roadway as a trail segment in the short-term. (Improve that trail section or add a trail parallel to the road at a later date).
- **Spur/Loop Trails:** Consider constructing new spur/loop trails to access diverse areas and provide looping trail routes. These trails would be less-developed and encourage less intensive public use than the Amalga-Eagle River Main Trail. New spur/loop trails, shown in BLUE on Map 1, could include:
 - Ridge Trail – Companion, north-south loop trail to the main Amalga – Eagle Beach Main Trail.
 - North Beach Trail – Designated, well-signed trail to North Beach (the beach north of the Boy Scout Camp), with beach access to Crow Point. Discourage public use of other routes on Boy Scout Camp property.
 - Herbert River Wetlands Loop Trail – Loop trail to provide for recreation and natural history education (through former Tonsgard property). Coordinate with Southeast Alaska Land Trust on trail routing, design and construction.
 - Butts Property Trail – New trail along Amalga Harbor Road with views of Peterson salt chuck; south through Butts property to connect to USFS Peterson Creek trailhead; loop trail and coastal access spur trail at south end of property.
 - Coastal Access Points – Trails to coast at North Beach and at two areas north of and one area south of Amalga Harbor. Consider the importance of protection wildlife values and habitats in trail routing, design and construction.
- **Potential Trails – Special Considerations:** Further careful consideration must be given to the following trail segments (see YELLOW trail segments on Map 1). Each segment would provide additional public access and would enhance connections within the Amalga – Eagle Beach trail system. However, each also raises considerations related to potential impacts on wildlife, aesthetics, or compatibility with adjacent private properties (as further described below). Careful consideration must be given to these potential impacts when deciding whether or not to build each trail segment, and determining its routing and design. It will be essential to fully involve the public in deliberations and decisions regarding these potential trails.
 - Eagle River Crossing – Construct crossing of Eagle River to connect the Amalga Meadow trail system with the existing Eagle Beach State Recreation Area trails and Eagle Beach. Concerns have been raised regarding the potential sensitivity of wildlife using the Herbert-Eagle River confluences to disturbance. However, the subcommittee finds that

the crossing is a critical link for connecting trails on State and CBJ public land north and south of Eagle River. There are no practical alternatives for linking the trails north and south of the river. Consider the potential route from the armored dike on the north side of the river, to a bedrock outcrop on the south side.

- Crossing of Peterson Salt Lake Falls – Consider a connection from the Ernest Gruening State Historic Park trail to the new Amalga – Eagle River Trail. Significant public concerns have been raised regarding the affect of a crossing on the aesthetics of the area and on sensitive wildlife areas. However, the crossing would provide a link between the trails north and south of the salt chuck, while avoiding trail development directly adjacent to the salt chuck. Consider whether a tidally-dependent crossing of the Peterson salt falls could be constructed that would not affect the viewshed and aesthetics of the area. Consider also the affect of such a crossing on the sensitive wetland and wildlife use area north of the salt chuck.
- Butts Property Trail additions – Consider the following additions to the Butts Property Trail:
 - Consider constructing a trail connection from the Amalga Harbor Road to the Butts Property Trail, through the spruce uplift area and wet meadow, if the trail can be constructed compatibly with wildlife and wetland values; or, alternatively, consider constructing a small looping trail within the spruce forest area that does not cross the wet meadow.
 - Consider whether a trail could be constructed along a routing east of the Huffman Harbor private properties that would be compatible with the private lands and acceptable to land owners. Close communication with land owners would be essential.
- Viewpoint Trail – Construct a trail to the coastline viewpoint, if that is possible through an agreement with the private property owner, the Alaska Mental Health Land Trust. (See also Section 3.3 Adjacent Lands).
- **Existing Trails:** Connect to existing trails to create a trail system that accesses diverse areas and terrain and provides a range of experiences. Connect to:
 - Eagle Beach State Recreation Area trails.
 - Ernest Gruening State Historic Park – upgrade to accessible loop trail, with fishing access to saltwater.
 - Trail from SAGA Lodge to coast.
 - USFS trails – Peterson Creek, Windfall Lake, Herbert Glacier, Amalga, and Yankee Basin.
 - Boy Scout Camp Trail – Note: The Boy Scout Camp Trail is used to access a private camp. As such, different types of uses are acceptable on

this trail (such as motorized use) than would be allowed on the public land trails in the Amalga – Eagle Beach area.

3.2.4 Vehicle Access and Parking

In general, improvement and enlargement of existing parking sites to serve the trail system is preferred to constructing new parking areas. Existing parking areas that serve public recreation needs include:

- Peterson Creek trail head (across Glacier Highway)
- Amalga Harbor parking
- Boy Scout camp trail head
- Windfall Lake trailhead (across Glacier Highway)
- Herbert River trailhead (across Glacier Highway)
- Eagle River trailhead (across Glacier Highway)
- Eagle Beach State Recreation Area

Construction of a new parking area is proposed near the intersection of the SAGA access road and Amalga Harbor Road (see Map 1). It may also be necessary in the future to expand parking to access the Ernest Gruening State Historic Park.

3.2.5 Campgrounds and Cabins

There are plans to construct a campground and accessible cabin in the Eagle Beach State Recreation Area. The Ernest Gruening cabin may eventually be open for public overnight use. No additional campground or cabin development is recommended, as the private camps, existing cabins, SAGA Lodge and new State campground/cabin should meet public need at this time. However, land managers/owners should consider whether there is an appropriate location for occasional large-group camping.

3.2.6 Other Facilities

- Managers should consider opportunities for sharing facilities and infrastructure, when appropriate.
- Managers should work together to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure at the right locations to meet user needs, and avoid unneeded duplication.
- Managers should consider developing a cooperative CBJ/State public information site at Amalga Harbor to provide information about the Ernest Gruening State Historic Park, natural values of the area, and harbor use / boating.
- Development of a large, central visitor center or outdoor education center is not recommended at this time.
- A caretaker/staging building may be needed at the Boy Scout trailhead for Boy Scout Camp use. (Note: The trail head is located on public property and siting of a building at this location would require approval by the public land manager.)

- A caretaker building is also being considered for Ernest Gruening State Historic Park.
- Opportunities should be provided for dark sky viewing. Lighting of facilities should be designed to minimize glare and “light pollution.”

3.3 Adjacent Lands

There is interest in securing long-term public ownership of or access to selected adjacent privately-owned lands that are valued for their public recreation and other values, when that can be negotiated and achieved with the agreement of the private landowner. These properties include: Boy Scout Camp point (“Crow Point”) and Alaska Mental Health Land Trust property.

State tidelands adjacent to CBJ Natural Area Park should be managed in a manner compatible with the CBJ parkland.

3.4 Cooperative Management and Communication

The CBJ, State Parks and managers of other public lands agree to regularly communicate and consult with one another about public use, area management, and facility development or redevelopment within this area.

When appropriate and feasible, the CBJ and State Parks will share responsibility, effort and funding to provide better service and protection in the area.

3.4.1 Long-term Advisory Committee

A long-term citizen advisory committee with representatives from the CBJ Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and the State Parks Advisory Board will be formed, with agency staff participation, to:

- Continue to pay attention to these important public use lands,
- Advise CBJ and Alaska State Parks on issues related to public land development and management,
- Advocate for funding for improvements,
- Assist in efforts to secure continued public access to and use of important adjacent private lands, and
- Help educate the public about values and appropriate use of the area.

The advisory committee should invite participation by the area neighborhood association and landowners, the Boy Scouts, Trail Mix, Southeast Alaska Land Trust, USFS, and other interested parties.

3.4.2 Maintenance

When appropriate and feasible, the CBJ and State Parks should cooperate in basic maintenance to improve efficiency and save money, including snow plowing, garbage/litter pickup, sewage disposal, and trail maintenance.

3.4.3 Enforcement

The CBJ and State Parks should coordinate on responsibilities for law enforcement for this area.

The CBJ and State Parks should coordinate on placement of barriers to off-road vehicles.

4.0 Funding Obligation

This instrument is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligation document. Any endeavor involving reimbursement, contribution of funds, or transfer of anything of value between the parties to this instrument will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures including those for Government procurement and printing. Such endeavors will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the parties and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This instrument does not provide such authority. Specifically, this instrument does not establish authority for noncompetitive award to the cooperator(s) of any contract or other agreement. Any contract or agreement for training or other services must fully comply with all applicable requirements for competition.

5.0 Agreement and Modifications

This agreement takes effect upon the date of signature of the parties and remains in effect until terminated by either of the parties, with 45 days prior written notice. Parties will annually discuss the need to update the agreement to respond to new events, reflect accomplishments, and revise/update the action plan. Modification of the agreement may be proposed at any time by either party and shall become effective upon approval by both parties.

6.0 Signatures

CBJ Parks and Recreation Department

Date

Alaska State Parks

Date