

G. OTHER

1.Funny River Comprehensive Community Plan



Draft 2023 Funny River Comprehensive Plan



Draft 2023 Comprehensive Plan

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I. Introduction

The residents of Funny River are interested in guiding development in our community that will complement the rural character of the place we call home; will safeguard the watershed and natural areas that allow wildlife and human inhabitants to co-exist peacefully; and will promote and develop economic sustainability. To help achieve the goal, this Comprehensive Plan has been developed.

II. Background

A. Plan Area

The Funny River community was designated as a Census Designated Community in the 2000 US Census.

Funny River is located on the northwestern side of the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska. It is bordered to the west by Soldotna and to the north and east by the Kenai River. The southern boundary is the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Across the Kenai River to the north is the city of Sterling. The community is approximately 29 square miles; 26.7 square miles of land and 2.2 square miles of water. The three main bodies of water in the community are the Kenai River, Funny River, and Browns Lake.

There are no bridges across the Kenai River between Funny River and Sterling. The only road access is via Funny River Road from Soldotna.

The boundaries are shown in yellow below.

Figure 1 – Funny River Community Boundaries

Map obtained from the Kenai Peninsula Borough GIS mapping site.





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B. History

Folks started homesteading the Funny River area as early as the 1940s. In the late 1950s, a barge was used to cross the Kenai River and transport homesteaders back and forth to Sterling in the summer months. In the winter, residents waited for the Kenai River to freeze and drove across. For a short time in the early 1960s, a three hundred foot cable was stretched across the Kenai so that year-round access was possible. The cable car was used until Funny River Road was constructed. A photo provided by the Funny River Community Association is of Bertha Moore using the original cable car.



The original road alignment was not designed or surveyed. Local residents worked with the state to find areas of gravel and used heavy equipment to construct a single lane road with occasional pull-outs for passing from the

Soldotna Airport to the Funny River. The bridge over Funny River was constructed in 1961 by a handful of local residents, including Shorty Harris, Harry Moore, Bill Eylar, Jim Whitcomb, Dick Hills, Elmer Bird, and Jim Chapman. A photo of the construction was provided by the Funny River Community Association.



Sporadic improvements to the road were constructed and it was paved for the first 17 miles in 2000. A project to resurface the road will be constructed in summer 2023.

As access improved and homesteads were subdivided, the population increased from the few homesteaders in the mid 1900s to the 636 counted in 2000 to the 1,005 in 2020.

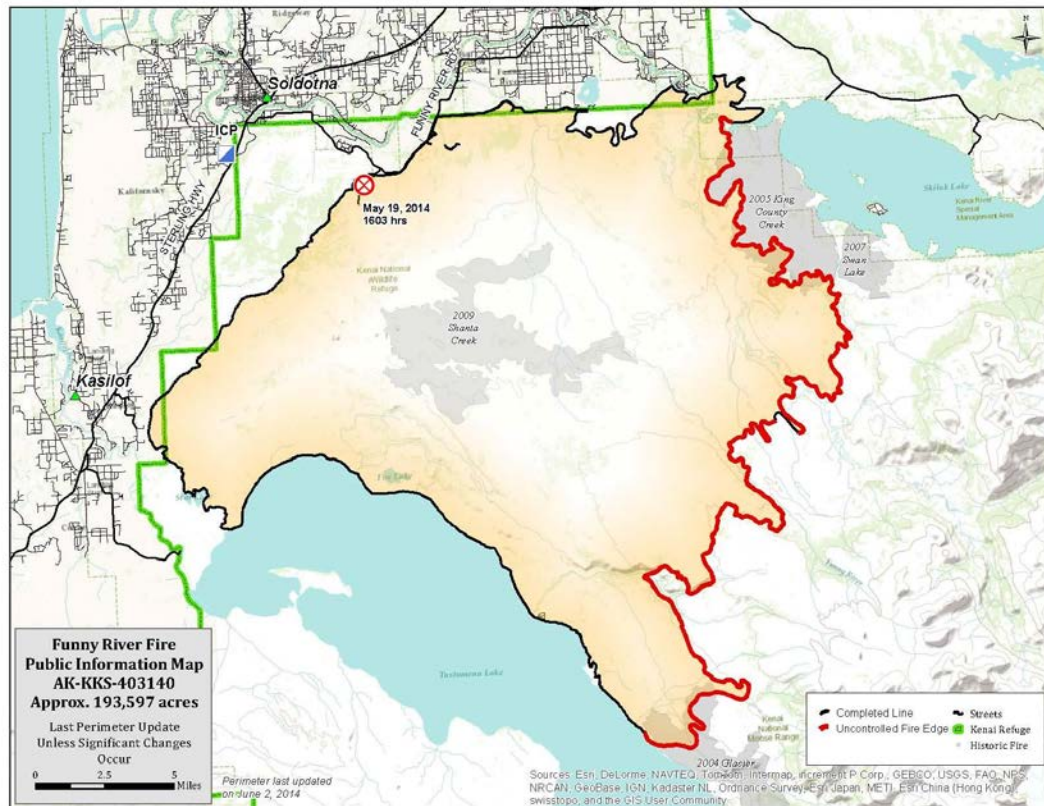


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The Funny River fire in May 2014 gained national attention. During May and June, the fire consumed almost 200,000 acres. Evacuations included all of Funny River and parts of Sterling, Kasilof, and Lower Skilak Lake.

Figure 2 – Funny River Fire Boundaries

Map obtained from the Alaska Inter-Agency Management Team Facebook site.



C. Climate

Funny River gets an average of 22 inches of rain each year. The average temperature in July is 64° F and in January is 16° F. Seven months of the year have significant snowfall with an average accumulation through the winter of 86 inches.

In the middle of a relatively flat area of the Kenai Peninsula, wind is common, but strong winds are rare.

On the Summer Equinox, the sun never quite sets in Funny River. The Winter Equinox provides approximately 8.5 hours of daylight. Between the Equinoxes, the daylight time changes by approximately 5 minutes per day.



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D. Vegetation and Wildlife

The non-populated areas of Funny River are composed primarily of naturally growing black and white spruce. There are pockets of cottonwood, aspen, and birch trees. There are also wetland areas. Most of the vegetation is typical Alaskan vegetation including wildflowers. Sporadically, there are issues with spruce bark beetle infestations that impact swaths of mature spruce trees. In the early 2020s, a significant number of mature trees were impacted.

The Kenai River is renowned for many kinds of fish, including Chinook (king), Coho (silver), Sockeye (red), Pink, and Chum salmon; Rainbow Trout; and Dolly Varden. Coho and Chinook salmon run in the Funny River. Aurora Lake (near Browns Lake) is stocked by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Browns Lake does not support fish because the lake is shallow and freezes solid some winters.

In addition to the fish, the Funny River area has a variety of wildlife. The wildlife species known to inhabit the area include moose, black bear, brown bear, wolves, caribou, coyote, otters, fox, marten, beaver, ermine, lynx, hare, squirrels, porcupine, ptarmigan, and spruce grouse. Additionally falcons, crows, ravens, bald eagles, golden eagles, and owls and a host of smaller birds make the Funny River area their home or a migratory stop on their way to warmer climates.



E. Demographics

According to the 2020 Census, the population of Funny River is 1,005. The density is approximately 38 people per square mile. Ratio of males to females is 50/50. The median age is 61.7 years old: 39% of the residents are over age 65, 10% are under 18 years old and 51% are between ages 18 and 65. Racial makeup is 86 % White (86%), 7% Black, 3% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% Native.

The per capita income is approximately \$32,500 with a median household income of \$55,000. Approximately 12% of the residents live below the poverty line and of that 12%, the majority are over 65. No children are below the poverty threshold. The majority of the employed residents work in Soldotna or Kenai.

There are approximately 515 households in Funny River with an average of two persons per household. Seventy-two percent are occupied by married couples. There are 1,155 housing units, 56% of which are vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 78% are owner occupied and the bulk of the units (81%) are single-family residential homes.



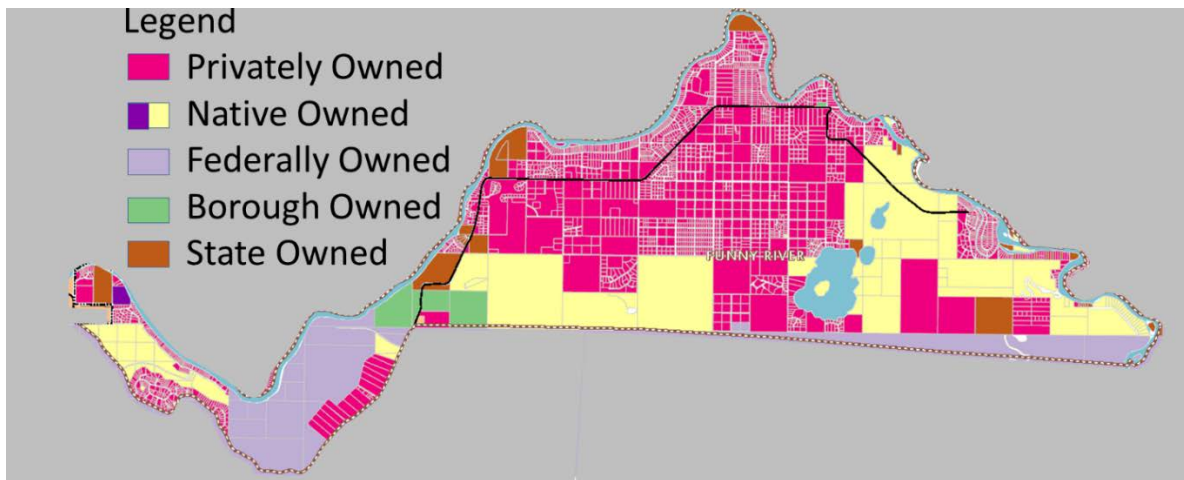
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F. Land Status and Ownership

The majority of land, approximately 60%, in the Funny River community is privately owned. The remaining property is divided between Native Corporations, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, the Federal Government, and the State of Alaska. The distribution is shown in the figure below.

Figure 3 – Funny River Land Ownership Information

Map obtained from the Kenai Peninsula Borough GIS mapping site.



G. Economy

The larger businesses in the area consist of a golf course, several gravel excavation/construction businesses, and several farming-type businesses (hay, peonies, vegetables, cannabis). Several attempts have been made at keeping a small general store afloat; the latest went out of business in January 2023 and the building/property is currently for sale.

There are many small campgrounds, cabins, lodges, and other affiliated business such as guide services in the area that profit from the abundant sport fishing opportunities on the Kenai River.

H. Local Governing Bodies

Early residents wanted to help develop a thriving community, even before the US Census Bureau classified the area as an official community, and in 1987 the Funny River Chamber of Commerce & Community Association (FRCCCA) was established. In 2017, the FRCCCA Board of Directors made the decision to split the Chamber of Commerce away from the Community Association to facilitate fundraising and to reflect the actual structure of the organization more accurately. The two organizations continue to work closely together for the benefit of the residents and the businesses of Funny River and both operate out of the Community Center at 35850 Pioneer Access Drive in the Funny River Community. The



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Chamber of Commerce maintains a gambling license which allows them to host bingo, raffles and such.

I. Other Planning Documents

Because Funny River is located within the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB), the KPB Comprehensive Plan (KPBCP) applies to our area. The purpose behind the KPBCP is to diversify and grow the KPB economy; proactively manage growth to provide economic development opportunities on the KPB while preserving what residents and visitors value about the area's natural resources; preserve and improve quality of life in the KPB through increased access to local and regional facilities, activities, programs and services; improve access to, from and connectivity within the KPB; and create more active and engaged KPB residents, local communities, and a more effective and efficient Borough government. The KPBCP is a more global perspective of planning and land use within the Borough. The intent behind this Comprehensive Plan is to help guide the Borough by providing area-specific information.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources developed the Kenai River Comprehensive Management Plan (KRCMP). Implementation of the Goals and Objectives of this Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with any applicable parts of the KRCMP.

III. Community Goals and Recommendations

A. Survey

To better understand the wants and needs of the Funny River residents, the Funny River Advisory Planning Commission conducted a survey in 2022. The survey was made available to all residents within the Funny River Census Designated Place boundaries. Approximately 1,500 surveys were distributed and approximately 19% of recipients responded. A copy of the survey and a summary of the survey results are included in Appendix A. The survey results were used to prioritize goals and recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

Table 1 – Funny River Survey Demographics

Ages of Respondents:	Residency
38% - Over 65 years old	26% - More than 20 years
44% - Between 51-65 years old	22% - Between 11 & 20 years
12% - Between 41-50 years old	18% - Between 6 & 10 years
7% - Between 18-40 years old	18% - One and 5 years

Sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they did not believe that building codes were needed in Funny River and 96.5% indicated that they believed that property owners should have full control of their property.



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B. Land Uses

There is currently only one location within the Funny River area that is zoned using the KPB Local Zoning option. It is a small subdivision off Funny River Road in the vicinity of Rabbit Run that is zoned exclusively single-family residential (R-1).

The survey provided respondents were provided with four zoning types and asked to rank whether or not they thought that requirements should be implemented. Overall, the survey responses indicated that the majority of respondents are not concerned about additional regulation or zoning for future developments. Table 2 provides a brief summary of the responses to the four regulation/zoning questions.

Table 2 – Funny River Survey Regulation/Zoning Responses

	Residential Zoning	Private Airstrips	Commercial Zoning	Sand/Gravel Pits
Not Concerned	168	157	145	136
Very Concerned	11	20	31	41
Average	2.7	3.2	3.6	3.9

No Community Land Use Goals or Objectives are identified at this time. The Advisory Planning Commission requests to be involved in any proposed regulation of sand/gravel pits; private airstrips; or commercial development in rural areas and specifically the Funny River area.

C. Watersheds and Water Resources

The Funny River area lies within the Kenai River watershed. The two primary tributaries in the area are the Funny River and the Killey River. There are numerous small lakes in the area, the two most notable are Browns Lake due to its size and Aurora Lake because it is stocked with trout annually.

Of the survey respondents, protection of area lakes, streams and wetlands was identified as the highest priority.

There are significant existing regulations regarding development adjacent to lakes and streams. The Donald E. Gilman River Center (the River Center), located at approximately mile two of Funny River Road, is a one-stop facility with the designated mission of implementation and enforcement of those regulations.

Watershed and Water Resources Goals and Objectives:

- Continue to work with the River Center to ensure that the existing regulations are followed and enforced.



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- The Advisory Planning Commission will work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that future regulations meet the needs of the community.

D. Safety

Community safety was ranked as the next highest concern in the community.

Currently there is a Central Emergency Services Fire Station located at approximately mile 16.5 of Funny River Road. The station is manned 24/7 and provides efficient and effective medical response to our community. Continued staffing of this facility is imperative to maintaining a healthy community.

There is currently no active police presence in the Funny River area. There is an Alaska State Trooper station located essentially at the beginning of Funny River Road.

Residents are concerned about crime and safety. Many residents have started using the Funny River Facebook page as an informal neighborhood watch program. Concerns, possible crimes, and other discussions occur on a daily basis. A more formal program could be examined.

In addition to crime, another safety concern is Funny River Road, the only road access to the entire community. During the 2014 wildfire, this road was closed on several occasions because of the proximity to the fire. The Kenai Peninsula Borough has an Office of Emergency Management (OEM), but they have no specific plan in place in the event that the road is closed and ingress/egress is necessary.

Safety Goals and Objectives:

- Work with the KPB OEM and Central Emergency Services to develop a Funny River Emergency Evacuation Plan that identifies possible alternatives in the event that the road is inaccessible for emergency evacuation. Some suggestions include: identifying gathering locations where boats can be used to transport people to safety or evaluating the feasibility of installing some sort of ferry or cable system to be used in the event of an emergency.
- Work with the Borough, State and Federal law enforcement agencies to create a more formal neighborhood watch-type program and develop more of a law enforcement presence in the Funny River area.

E. Open Spaces, Forests, and Agricultural Lands

Survey respondents indicated that maintaining existing open spaces, forests, and agricultural lands was a high priority. However, the community specified a desire to minimize regulation and zoning, which hampers the ability to maintain the nature of those spaces. Because there are no regulation or zoning constraints, the most reasonable way to maintain the desired spaces is to ensure that the properties in which the desired places



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exist are owned by entities that are willing to keep them as open spaces, native forest, and agricultural lands.

The Funny River Community Association currently owns the land around the Community Center. As opportunities arise, they could choose to purchase additional properties and control any development on those properties. The Community Association could also choose to provide some sort of incentive to owners of properties that are open or forested or agricultural in nature to maintain those properties as they currently exist.

The community could also explore environmentally conscious grant programs to purchase property or get property designated as park land. The Borough, State, and Federal government all own properties in the Funny River area. The community could work with those governmental entities to expand their ownership and/or open space designations.

One final opportunity may be the many parcels owned by Native Corporations. The community could work with those Native Corporations to have portions of their property designated as preserves or open spaces.

No Open Space, Forests, and Agricultural Land Goals or Objectives are identified at this time. As opportunities arise, the Community Association should explore the opportunity to either purchase additional properties or work with governmental or native organizations to maintain open spaces in the community.

F. Transportation

Funny River Road

Funny River Road is a vital and integral component of this community. As the only road access in and out of the community, maintenance and improvements to the road are of huge concern to all residents. Funny River Road and other streets and roads in the community are owned and maintained by the State of Alaska while the remaining ones are Borough or privately maintained.

There is an Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT) project scheduled to resurface Funny River Road in summer 2023. This resurfacing project should eliminate the majority of resident complaints about the rutting and heaving on the road surface. The project will not include any safety improvements, upgrades, or bridge repair.





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Interest has been expressed by residents in several road upgrades for Funny River Road. Those upgrades include passing lanes, additional pull-outs, larger shoulders, possible bike lanes, a new bridge over Funny River, and a separated multi-use path. Passing lanes and additional pull-outs would improve driver safety by eliminating the miles of being stuck behind a tourist going 20 miles per hour under the posted speed during fishing season. Larger shoulders would increase safety by providing a safe parking area when a disabled vehicle has to pull off the side of the road. Bike lanes would improve bicyclist safety on the road and a separated multi-use path would significantly increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, horse riders, and other non-vehicular users.

[Local Roads](#)

There does not appear to be concern about construction or maintenance of other roads within the area.

[New Bridge Across Kenai River to Sterling](#)

A bridge connecting Funny River to Sterling has been discussed since the day after they tore down the old cable connection. Some residents want the connection as they believe that it will improve access to the rest of Alaska, cut down on travel time to the store and employment opportunities in Sterling, and resolve the safety concern of only having one road access point in and out of the community. Others fear that it will generate even more tourist traffic and that the influx of outsiders will be detrimental to the community in general. There are pros and cons to the discussion that are far more detailed than can be conveyed in this document. Another study should be conducted to see if it is finally time to build the bridge or if the community access should stay as-is.

Transportation Goals and Objectives:

- Work with ADOT to have a new bridge constructed over Funny River.
- Work with KPB and ADOT to find funding to construct improvements to Funny River Road.
- Work with KPB to conduct a study of the feasibility of constructing a bridge across the Kenai River to connect Funny River to Sterling. The study should include locations; possible funding sources; and a projection of economic, safety, and development impacts of the construction at a minimum.
- Obtain more information from community to see if a ride-share program or some sort of carpool communication program would be beneficial.

[G. Public Boat Launch](#)

Currently there is no public boat launch in the Funny River community. There are several private boat launches. Since the mid-1980s the community has been lobbying for the construction of a public boat launch.



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Attached as Appendix B is a copy of KPB Resolution 2019-42 that shows Kenai Peninsula Borough support of the boat launch. The most current activity in the development of a public boat launch was a 2020 committee to study the feasibility of a public boat launch and evaluate possible locations, formed by the Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board (KRSMAAB). Their recommendations were

provided to the KRSMAAB in November 2020 and are attached to this document as Appendix C.

To our knowledge, the project has not progressed since the 2020 recommendations. The community would like to resurrect the project.

Public Boat Launch Goals and Objectives:

- Work with the Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board and the Alaska Department of Natural resources to have a public boat launch constructed at an appropriate location in the Funny River area.

H. Transfer Station

In the summer of 2020, the Solid Waste Department of the Kenai Peninsula Borough opened the new Funny River Transfer Site. The improvements were consistent with other KPB Transfer Sites including: entrance gates, site fencing, bulk head installation, lighting, and surveillance connectivity improvements. While the new Transfer Station is safer (because of access and lighting) and has better capacity than the previous location, the residents still have some concerns about the Transfer Station.

Issues such as improper disposal of garbage, vandalism, people climbing into and on the dumpsters have been identified as concerns by both the Solid Waste Department and the community. Capacity and use of the facilities by commercial businesses in an attempt to circumvent the dump fees, are issues raised routinely by residents on the Funny River Facebook page. The Transfer Station also occasionally exceeds capacity during peak fishing times in the summer due to the influx of tourists.

Transfer Station Goals and Objectives:

- work with KPB personnel and more specifically the Solid Waste Department to address resident concerns about safety at and misuse of the Transfer Station.



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I. Post Office

Currently mail is delivered to individual and group mailboxes posted on major routes within the Funny River community by a Contractor. The United States Postal Service (USPS) manages the contract with no community input. Complaints are logged weekly about lost mail and packages delivered to the wrong address.

Several members of the community have been attempting to get Funny River designated as a separate community from Soldotna by the US Postal Service. The majority of communities on the Kenai Peninsula have their own post offices, such as Nikiski, Kasilof, Clam Gulch, and Ninilchik. Many of those communities have fewer residents than Funny River.

Benefits to having a separate designation include a separate zip code, elimination of the contract carrier, and dedicated postal service staff to our community. The designation also comes with costs, primarily associated with construction of a Post Office. There is sufficient space at the current Community Center to accommodate a designated Post Office, but specific information about the requirements is unknown.

Post Office Goals and Objectives:

- Obtain a grant to fund a study to evaluate the pros, cons, and costs of designating Funny River as a separate community by the US Postal Service. The study would be presented to the community and if a positive vote is recorded, a committee would be formed to process the application and work with the US Postal Service to implement the new designation.

J. Livability

Because of the diverse nature of the residents, there are multi-million properties in close proximity to properties that are covered in abandoned vehicles and other debris that might be considered trash. The community is trying to find balance between maintaining autonomy on personal property and keeping the community clean and safe. However, there is concern about between half a dozen and a dozen properties that are covered in materials that could be detrimental to the environment and are just downright ugly.

Livability Goals and Objectives:

- Work with the Kenai Peninsula Borough personnel to determine what laws are applicable to the situation and what enforcement opportunities are available to clean up the couple of properties that are creating hazard concerns in the community.



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K. Recreational Opportunities

There are many recreational opportunities available to residents and visitors alike in the Funny River area, a majority of which are affiliated with the Kenai River. There is a public access at the junction of Funny River and the Kenai River. There is a public boat launch access to Browns Lake with a small grass area off to the side. The Bird Homestead Golf Course is a nine-hole course that is open from mid-May through the end of August.

In addition to the opportunities available to the general public, there are also privately owned and operated activities in the area such as camping areas, lodges, and private airstrips.

Funny River Community Center

The Center is used for community events such as parties, quilting/sewing clubs, food bank, card games, bingo, bi-monthly breakfast and soup, book exchange, free exercise classes offered a couple of days a week, and holiday celebrations. The building has a commercial kitchen, a meeting/dining area, office spaces and restrooms. Located on the grounds is a communal garden, play area for kids, pavilion for outdoor events, horseshoe pits, and large open field area. The Center is available to residents to rent for a nominal fee that includes full use of the facilities.

Funny River Festival

Each year the Funny River Community Association hosts the Funny River Festival as their primary fundraising activity. The Festival includes a hosted dinner, area vendor booths, children's games, card and golf tournaments, a quilt and other raffles, and an silent/live auction.

Directory of Services

While the Community Association publishes a newsletter monthly that includes a lot of the activities scheduled that month, there is no comprehensive list of services available in the area. Residents indicated an interest in developing a more comprehensive list of recreational opportunities and services available in the area.

Purchase additional Land for Community Use

There has been discussion by the Community Association about the possibility of purchasing additional property for use of the Community. While the concept appears to be beneficial to the community, the decision to purchase the property will be made by the Community Association and based on the current needs of the community.

Other

The survey included items such as a public library, exercise facilities, and public transportation as possible wants of the community. These items ranked very low on the scale and as such will not be pursued as part of this Comprehensive Plan.



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L. Utilities

Electric

Currently most properties in the Funny River area have access to electricity. The Homer Electric Association (HEA) provides power to the entire area.

Phone/Internet

The only company that provides land-line service to the Funny River area is Alaska Communications (ACS). Pretty much all cellular carriers provide service to the Funny River area. There are several dedicated internet providers including ACS, Spit Spots, and Starlink. Other than a slowdown in service during peak fishing season due to the volume of users registered with the system, there appears to be sufficient service in the area.

Heat

There are a multitude of heating options available in the Funny River area. Many homes rely almost exclusively on wood stoves to heat their homes. Some supplement their heat with electricity. Both oil and propane tanks are also common sources of heat. In 2016 ENSTAR constructed a line across the Kenai River to provide service to some of the northern subdivisions at approximately milepost 16.2 of Funny River Road. Gas service is limited to those adjacent to a gas line unless the property owner is willing to pay the cost to extend the gas main to their property.

Water/Sewer

Wells and septic systems are regulated by the State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). Well and septic are one of the only components of development in the Funny River area that is regulated. New development must meet their standards, which preserves the integrity of the water supply in the area and allows additional development to occur.

Utilities Goals and Objectives:

- Reliable, affordable heat is extremely important to future development in the Funny River community. It might be beneficial to the community to work with ENSTAR to see if additional main lines can be constructed allowing more of the residents to have affordable, accessible heating options available.
- Some residents have expressed an interest in promoting a local renewable energy source. If grant funding is available, a study of local opportunities for renewable energy could be beneficial to the community.

IV. Comprehensive Plan Revisions

Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan will be necessary as new development takes place in the Funny River area and the needs of the community change. The Comprehensive Plan should be



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reviewed at least once every five years or more frequently upon Advisory Planning Commission or Borough Assembly initiative.

V. Implementation

Once the Public Review process is completed and the Final Comprehensive Plan is adopted by the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly, Funny River Advisory Commission members will work with the Funny River Community Association, Borough staff, and appropriate state and federal agencies to obtain funding for studies and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Preliminary Synopsis of Survey Results

This summer, the Funny River Advisory Planning Commission distributed a survey so that we could get a feel for what issues were important to the community. We received responses from 18.8% of the 1500 post cards that were distributed. A summary of the responses are provided below:

Ages of Respondents:

38% - Over 65 years old
44% - Between 51-65 years old
12% - Between 41-50 years old
7% - Between 18-40 years old

Residency

26% - More than 20 years
22% - Between 11 & 20 years
18% - Between 6 & 10 years
18% - One and 5 years

100% of the responses were from homeowners.

63% of the responses were from zip code 99669.

67% of the respondents did not want building codes in Funny River.

96% of the respondents supported full control of their property.

Zoning Changes:

Respondents indicated that Sand and Gravel pits were the most in need of an increase in zoning restrictions and Residential Zoning was the least in need of an increase in zoning restrictions. Commercial Zoning and Private Airstrips fell in the middle.

The listed concerns are ranked, based on responses in order from highest to lowest below:

- 1 Protect lakes, streams, and wetlands
- 2 Concern with crime in the community
- 3 Preserve open space, forests and agricultural lands
- 4 Improve traffic flow on FRR
- 5 Development of a bridge between Sterling and Funny River
- 6 Development of boat launch
- 7 Communal cleanup of property-assist neighbors if requested
- 8 Increase security at transfer station
- 9 Post Office
- 10 Increase recreational opportunities -hiking areas, ski tracks, etc.
- 11 Develop community directory of services
- 12 Promote local renewable energy
- 13 Separate pedestrian walkway parallel to FRR
- 14 Provide bike lanes and “share the road” signs
- 15 Purchase open land for community use
- 16 Recreation & exercise facilities
- 17 Promote regional public transportation, public bus or shuttle
- 18 Public library with regular hours

The FRAPC will be discussing the survey data and putting together a draft community plan to help us move forward as our community grows.

Introduced by:	Mayor
Date:	07/02/19
Action:	Adopted
Vote:	9 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION 2019-042**

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE KENAI RIVER
FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES FROM THE FUNNY RIVER ROAD AND
COLLECTOR ROAD NETWORK SYSTEM**

- WHEREAS,** the Funny River Community is continuing to prosper with the number of improved parcels steadily increasing over the last few years; and,
- WHEREAS,** the ongoing development of this satellite community is expected to continue to be enhanced with the availability of natural gas to many of the residents and business interest; and,
- WHEREAS,** according to the Geographical Information System division there are over 2100 platted residential lots and a variety of businesses defining this element of the borough; and,
- WHEREAS,** in 2003 the State of Alaska funded the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District Inc. to provide a Long Range Development Plan ("Plan") to outline the long term goals and development needs of the Funny River Community; and,
- WHEREAS,** in April 2004 public scoping meetings were held to identify the essential needs impacting on the long term economic related issues of the Funny River Community; and,
- WHEREAS,** in September 2004 the Funny River Chamber of Commerce and Community Center accepted and endorsed the findings provided in the Funny River Community Plan dated June 2004; and
- WHEREAS,** the goals and objectives in the Plan addressed essential public facilities and infrastructure elements needed to advance the community's development needs for the community to expand and attract new residential property owners, provide support to new business interest and development of the Funny River community; and,
- WHEREAS,** one of the identified community goals, objectives and action items this report specifically addressed for promoting recreational and tourism related to economic development was to develop river access areas for day use activities such as fishing and a boat launch; and,

WHEREAS, the report also acknowledged that the community and visitors to the area have very limited to almost no public access to recreational activities and facilities traditionally associated with the Kenai River, including river access areas, public bathrooms, picnicking areas, overnight campgrounds, travel trailer sewage dump stations and other amenities; and,

WHEREAS, although the economic development plan addressed these needs some fifteen years ago, little to no improvements to accommodate public access to the Kenai River from this traffic corridor have occurred; and,

WHEREAS, during this 15-year period the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Parks acquired the Hanson Ranch Property using Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) funding and immediately closed the property to all bank fishing; although, some Funny River residents state that prior to, and during the acquisition process, DNR representatives assured them orally the continued public access for bank fishing to the Kenai River along this 4480 river running feet of river frontage; and,

WHEREAS, as of the date of this resolution the Hanson Ranch Property consisting of 146 acres of public property has remained closed to all traditional recreational use; and,

WHEREAS, collectively the DNR's, Division of Parks and Recreation has managed and has had oversight of over 15, 068 river running feet of public property (329.27 acres) along the Funny River Road collector road system, however DNR does not allow any public bank access for sockeye fishing accessible from the Funny River Road and collector road infrastructure to any of these areas except for the five to seven fishing positions at the Funny River Recreational Area; and,

WHEREAS, as DNR is statutorily responsible for the oversight of Kenai River Special Management Area, the Commissioner of the DNR has developed, supports and has permitted over 16 public boat launch ramps along the west side, or downstream right side of the Kenai River, while the community of Funny River has no public access to fishing activities of this recreational element of the Kenai River except for a very small element (bank locations for approximately 5 to 7 anglers) at the Funny River State Recreational area; and,

WHEREAS, over the past 15 years the public access to the Kenai River sports fishery continues to be improved throughout its estuary with the construction of numerous elevated fishing platforms and improvements for day use and recreational needs, the 36 Kenai River road miles paralleling this fishery have not been improved and in some instances have regressed in access to residents along the Funny River Road corridor; and,

WHEREAS, this lack of public facilities has caused significant problems with people using a section line easement at the terminus of Mykiss Street to launch and recover their boats, resulting overcrowded parking, trespassing on private property, and public

safety issues along an unmaintained section line easement running from the Kenai River to the intersection of King Salmon Avenue and Mykiss Street, and continuing for about 1,500 feet parallel to the river along King Salmon Avenue and perpendicular to the river for about 1,000 feet along Mykiss Street; and

WHEREAS, the draft revised Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehension Plan 2018 update contains an objective of supporting opportunities for sportfishing, including personal use fishing, while protecting the resource, and specifically identifies the need for a public boat launch at Funny River Road; and,

WHEREAS, members of the Funny River Community have tried unsuccessfully for 15 years to gain public access to the Kenai River to advance safety and recreational needs of this community with absolutely no success; and,

WHEREAS, the Kenai River Sportfishing Association has advocated for public access to the Kenai River along this 36 road mile element; and,

WHEREAS, the Kenai Peninsula Association of Realtors has formally stated that access to the river is on most of their potential buyers' wish list and has a major influence on the property's value and desirability;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH:

SECTION 1. The assembly supports the recommendations contained in the draft Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehension Plan, 2018 update, addressing the needs of the Funny River Community; the above recommendations of the Kenai River Sportfishing Association; the understanding that property values will be impacted by denying public access to the Kenai River along the 36 road miles constituting the Funny River road corridor and the basic public economic infrastructure needs of the Funny River Community.

SECTION 2. The assembly supports the Funny River community's efforts to design and construct public access to the Kenai River including a public boat launch, adequate parking spaces and related amenities with the understanding that any enhancements to the current infrastructure to improve the recreational activities identified herein cannot negatively detract from the existing traffic flow patterns, cause an increase to these traffic flow patterns, cause an increase in suspended road dust, or increase noise levels to established residential subdivisions.

SECTION 3. The assembly strongly encourages collaboration between the State of Alaska's Departments of Natural Resources, Fish and Game, and Transportation and Public Facilities, and the Kenai River Sportfishing Association, to address the issues of property value impacts and the recommendations addressed and outlined in the draft Kenai Peninsula Boroughs' Comprehension Plan 2018 update in identifying a public process for the design, location and build-out to construct a public boat

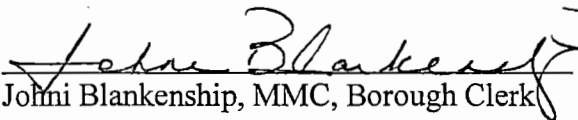
launch ramp and other yet to be identified supporting infrastructure that meets the needs of the Funny River Community and visitors to that element of the Kenai Peninsula.

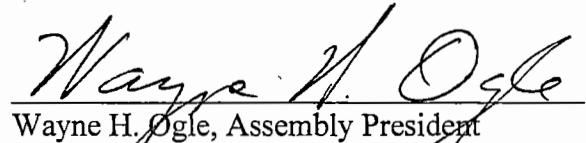
SECTION 4. That a copy of this resolution shall be provided to Governor Mike Dunleavy, Lieutenant Governor Kevin Meyer, Corri A. Feige, Alaska Department of Natural Resources Commissioner, Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner Alaska Department of Fish and Game, John MacKinnon, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, Fred Braun, President of the Kenai Peninsula Association of Realtors, and Ben Mohr, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association.

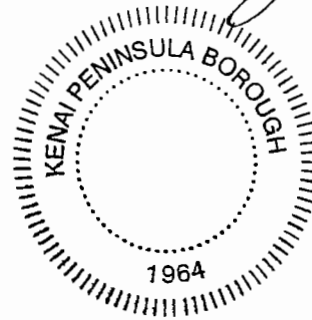
SECTION 5. That this resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 2ND DAY OF JULY, 2019.

ATTEST:


John Blankenship, MMC, Borough Clerk


Wayne H. Ogle, Assembly President



Yes: Bagley, Blakeley, Carpenter, Cooper, Dunne, Fischer, Hibbert, Smalley, Ogle
No: None
Absent: None

**Funny River Boat Launch
Selection Committee Recommendations
Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board
November 30, 2020**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Funny River Boat Launch Selection Committee was established by the Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board to identify two sites for developing a boat launch off of Funny River Road, one downstream and one upstream from the Naptowne Rapids. The committee requests the Advisory Board endorse the following recommendations.

1. Property managed by the Department of Natural Resources at the end of Fisherman's Road, is suitable for developing a boat launch that would provide access to the middle section of the Kenai River above the Naptowne Rapids.
2. The Kenai Peninsula Borough should improve the MyKiss Street right-of-way which is currently used as a boat launch. The site would also provide emergency egress and access via the Kenai River for residents off Funny River Road downstream of the Naptowne Rapids. The right-of-way should be fenced to reduce conflict with neighbors.
3. After these two items are complete, continue to evaluate user needs for boat launch access off Funny River Road below the Naptowne Rapids. This would be an opportunity to revisit the Kenai River Ranch property at a later date.

Although outside the scope of what the committee was tasked with, committee members did hear concerns about three additional items and decided to share these concerns with the Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board for consideration.

4. There are concerns about the Funny River Road bridge being susceptible to damage during a natural disaster and how important this infrastructure is to the transportation corridor.
5. Evaluate whether to rechannel the lower Funny River near the highway bridge and confluence of the Kenai River to decrease erosion and improve fish and wildlife habitat.
6. Borough, state, and federal land management should continue to pursue fuels reduction and spruce bark beetle mitigation efforts at all public lands on Funny River Road.

BACKGROUND

The Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) was established in 1984 as a unit of the state park system. The purpose of this designation was to protect and perpetuate the fishery and wildlife resources and habitat in the unit and adjacent areas; and to manage recreational use and development activities in the unit and adjacent areas.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) Assembly passed resolution 2019-042 Supporting Public Access to the Kenai River for Recreational Purposes from the Funny River Road and Collector Road Network System. The resolution requested that the State Departments of Natural Resources (DNR), Fish and Game (DFG), and Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) and Kenai River Sportfishing Association collaborate on this issue. Since the KRSMA Advisory Board is established to provide DNR with recommendations on the management of KRSMA, including public access to the Kenai River, it was practical for this board to address this access issue.

The KRSMA Advisory Board began working on this issue in the fall of 2019 and held committee and board meetings which were open to the public. Stakeholders offered the committee many recommendations, both in support and not in support of a public boat launch, off Funny River Road.

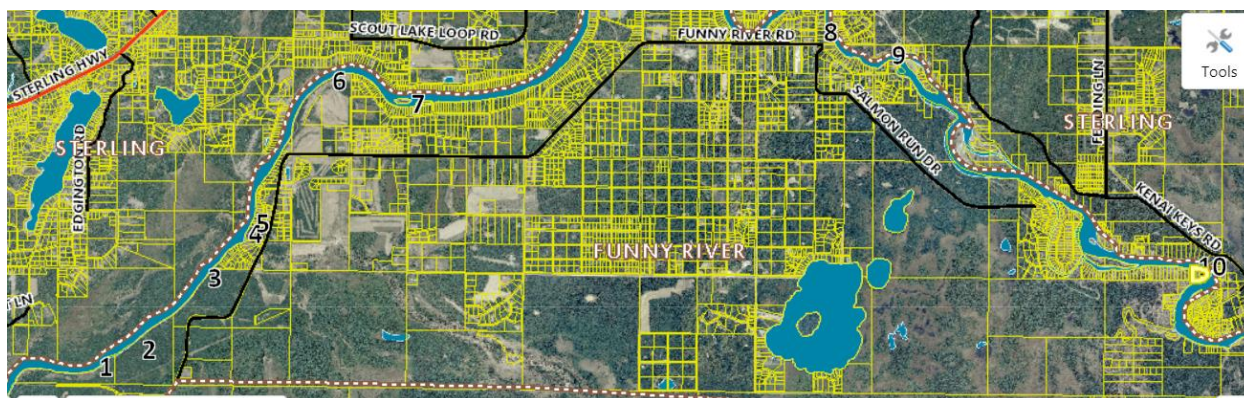
In the fall of 2020, the KRSMA Advisory Board established a selection committee to evaluate locations for two potential boat launches to provide access to the Kenai River from Funny River Road, one downstream from the Naptowne Rapids and one upstream. The Funny River Boat Launch Selection Committee includes representatives from the KRSMA advisory board and staff from DNR and DFG.

On October 16, 2020, the selection committee scheduled a field trip and visited most of the ten sites that were previously identified in KRSMA committee meetings. The committee included the following people: Bill Tappan (KRSMA Advisory Board), Monte Roberts (KRSMA Advisory Board and Fishing Guide), Ben Mohr (KRSMA Advisory Board and Kenai River Sportfishing Association), Jenny Gates (DFG), Ricky Gease (DNR), Jack Blackwell (DNR), Jacques Kosto (DNR), and Pam Russell (DNR). Jeff Perschbacher (DFG Access) was unable to participate in the field trip but was also a member of the selection committee.

SITES CONSIDERED

Boat launch selection criteria was developed with the board and the committee evaluated ten sites off of Funny River Road. Note that the numbers listed below are referenced throughout this document.

1. US Fish & Wildlife Service, approximately mile 9 Funny River Road
2. KPB, approximately mile 10 Funny River Road
3. DNR, approximately mile 10.5 Funny River Road
4. DFG, Funny River, approximately mile 11.25 Funny River Road
5. DNR, Funny River State Recreation Site, approximately mile 11.25 Funny River Road
6. DNR, Kenai River Ranch, approximately mile 12 Funny River Road
7. MyKiss Street right-of-way, approximately mile 13 Funny River Road
8. Funny River Road right-of-way, approximately mile 17 Funny River Road
9. Zachary Street right-of-way, near Naptowne Rapids
10. DNR, end of Fisherman's Road



COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

This committee recommends the KRSMA Advisory Board pass a resolution endorsing the following actions:

1. DNR parcel (Number 10) is suitable for developing a boat launch that would provide access to the middle section of the Kenai River above the Naptowne Rapids.
2. The Kenai Peninsula Borough should improve the MyKiss Street right-of-way which is currently used as a boat launch. The site would also provide emergency egress and access via the Kenai River for residents off Funny River Road downstream of the Naptowne Rapids. The right-of-way should be fenced to reduce conflict with neighbors.
3. After these two items are complete, continue to evaluate user needs for boat launch access off Funny River Road below the Naptowne Rapids. This would be an opportunity to revisit the Kenai River Ranch property (Number 6), at a later date.

CONSIDERATIONS AND FINDINGS

The selection committee considered the following reasons when making these recommendations:

1. Participation in fisheries off of Funny River Road **above the Naptowne Rapids** is greater than participation below the rapids. It is assumed that the state will charge for the use of any boat launch that is developed and thus will generate more revenue from a boat launch above the rapids. Capital funding should be directed to projects that will generate additional revenue for the state.
2. There are only two public sites upstream from the Naptowne Rapids.
 - a. Numbers 9 (Zachary Road ROW) Not suitable due to topography.
 - b. Number 10 (DNR end of Fisherman's Road) Suitable
3. Of the eight potential boat launch sites identified **below the Naptowne Rapids** only four are suitable
 - a. Number 1 (USFWS) Not suitable due to management plan.
 - b. Number 2 (KPB) Could potentially be developed but is adjacent to DNR land (Number 3) which is more suitable.
 - c. Number 3 (DNR) Could potentially be developed. Not ideal due to location on the lower section of the middle Kenai River which is not a popular fishery. In addition, there are rocks in the river which create a navigational hazard.
 - d. Number 4 (DFG) Not suitable due to location at the confluence of the Funny River and Kenai River. River waters are shallow and there are concerns with fish habitat and cultural resources.
 - e. Number 5 (DNR – Funny River State Recreation Site) Could potentially be developed at the upstream end of the parcel.
 - f. Number 6 (DNR – Kenai River Ranch) Could potentially be developed in the future. Currently not suitable due to the management plan.
 - g. Number 7 (MyKiss Street ROW) Suitable, however parking is limited.
 - h. Number 8 (Funny River Road ROW) Not suitable due to topography.
4. The MyKiss Street ROW currently provides public access to the Kenai River. While the ROW is undeveloped it offers safe access to the river. With minimal work, this ROW could be enhanced to provide better access to the river which would also provide river access and egress to the community in the event of a natural disaster.
5. The MyKiss Street ROW offers free access to the Kenai River. If a public boat launch were developed within a few miles of this location, such as Funny River State Recreation Site (Number 5) or the DNR property (Number 3) a fee would be charged and it is unlikely either of these locations would generate much revenue if MyKiss Street ROW is a free option.

FUNDING

Funding has not been allocated for any of these items and will likely be an issue with current state budgets. This committee was tasked with identifying locations for developing boat access to the Kenai River, from Funny River Road. It will be up to the community and stakeholders to support funds be allocated to address this access issue.

ADDITIONAL SITE INFORMATION

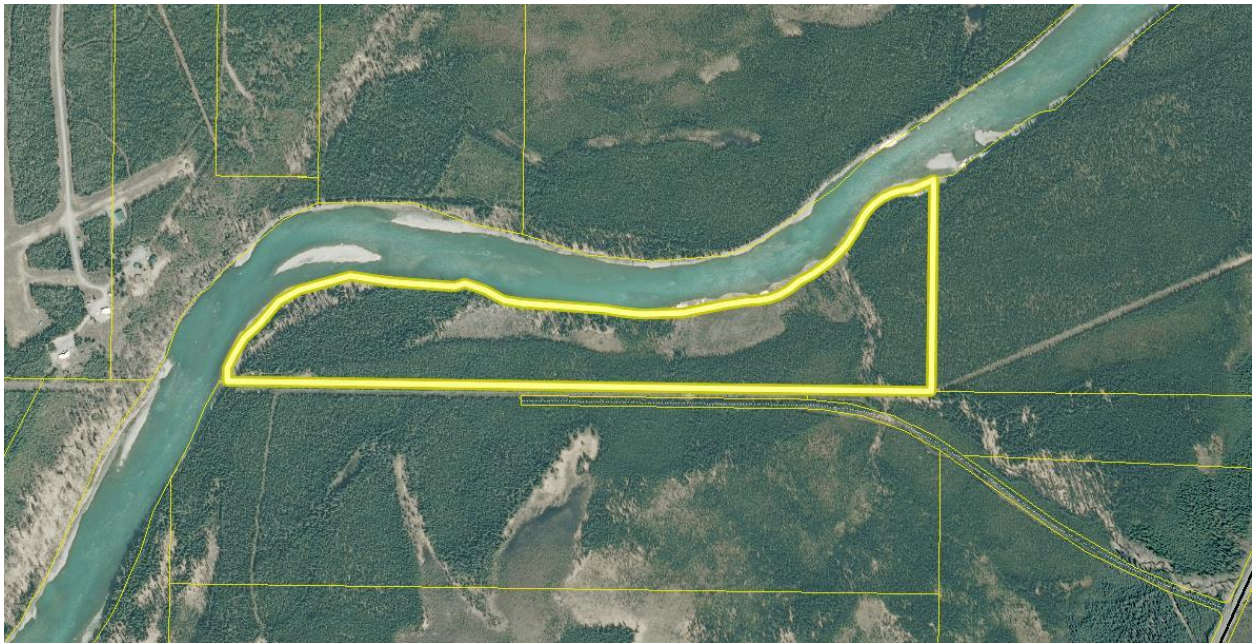
Number 1.

Parcel ID 06601001 71.84 Acres Riverbank: Approximately 5,000 feet Downstream Rapids

Landowner: US Fish and Wildlife

Location: Approximately Mile 9 Funny River Road

Comments: Not a viable option due to current land management plans. The boat launch selection committee did not tour the property.



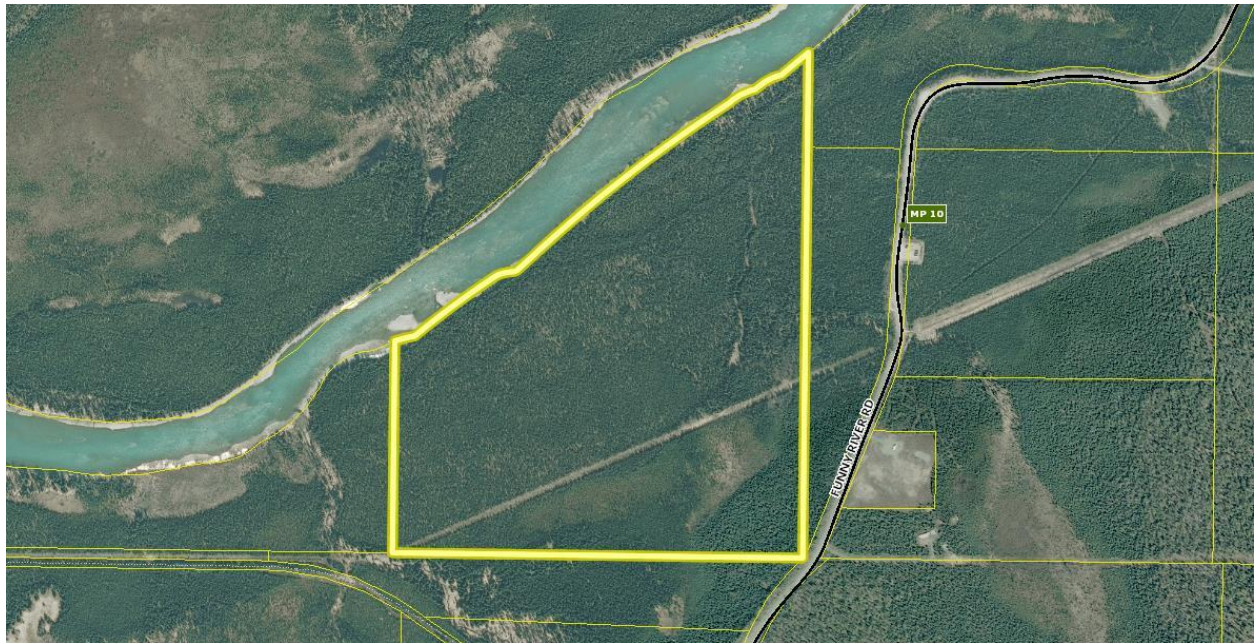
Number 2.

Parcel ID 06601024 141.33 Acres Riverbank: Approximately 3,300 feet Downstream Rapids

Landowner: Kenai Peninsula Borough

Location: Approximately Mile 10 Funny River Road

Comments: The boat launch committee did not tour the property. This is adjacent to an undeveloped DNR parcel which could potentially be developed for a boat launch. Rocks in the river could present a navigational challenge to access. Development costs would likely be high to build a road to the river.



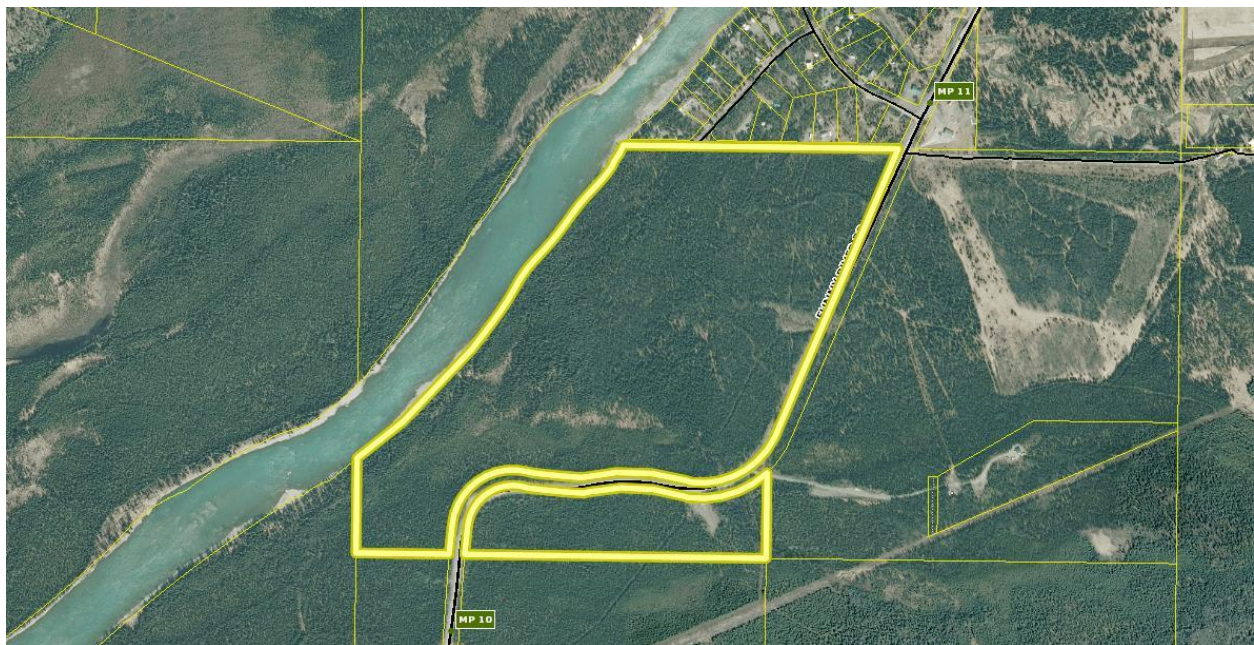
Number 3

Parcel ID 06601023 158.67 Acres Riverbank: Approximately 2,700 feet Downstream Rapids

Landowner: Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Location: Approximately Mile 10.5 Funny River Road

Comments: This is a completely undeveloped DNR parcel. This site has good topography for development and located in a straight section of the river. The riverbed angle at this site could be conducive for a boat ramp. There are some navigation issues located just upstream and downstream from this site. The property can be accessed directly off from Funny River Road or through the subdivision along the northern property line. Access would not conflict with adjacent subdivision if a new road were developed off-of Funny River Road. However, development costs would likely be high for a new access road to the river. This site is also within the Funny River seasonal boat fishing/king closure area.



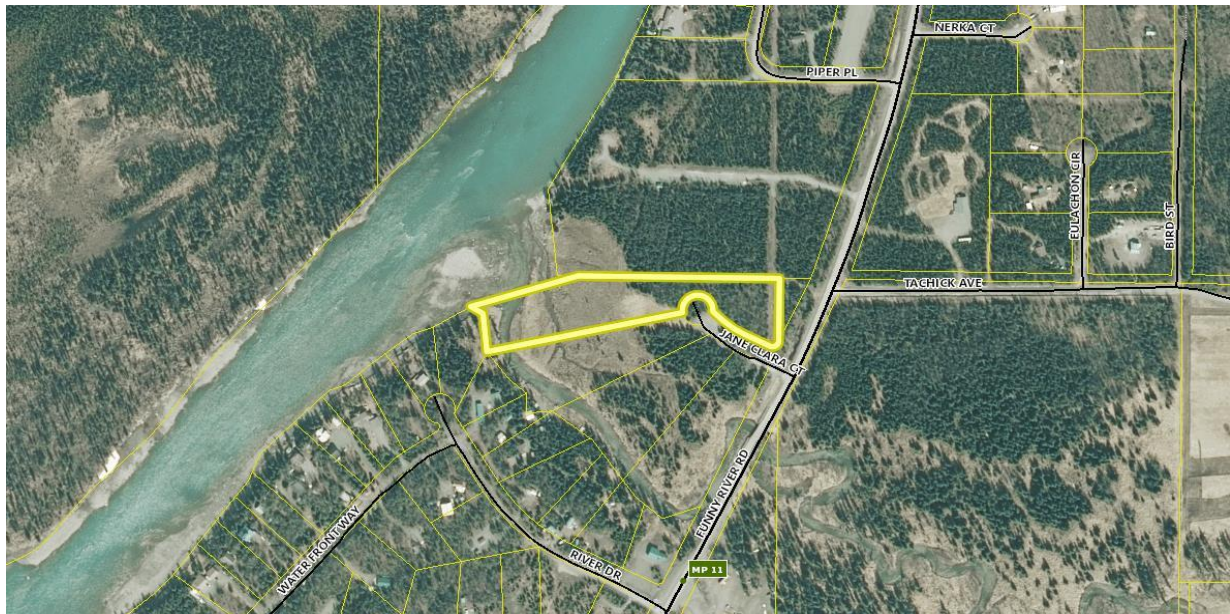
Number 4

Parcel ID 06635001 3.63 Acres Riverbank: Approximately 0 feet Downstream Rapids

Landowner: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Location: Approximately Mile 11.25 Funny River Road

Comments: Not a viable location due to the wetlands, a critical holding area for Funny River king salmon, cultural sites, and the boat launch would have to be located on Funny River and not the Kenai River. A boat launch at this location could potentially negatively impact salmon and habitat. The riverbed is very shallow at this site with numerous rocks that create navigation issues and could limit use of the boat launch during the year.



Number 5

Parcel ID 06602014 13.9 Acres Riverbank: Approximately 430 Feet Downstream Rapids

Landowner: Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Location: Approximately Mile 11.25 Funny River Road

Comments: This location is at Funny River State Recreation Site. This developed recreation site has primitive camping and limited day use parking so there would not be conflict with the adjacent subdivision. There is a floating dock and stairs to access the river for bank anglers. Almost all the riverbank is a high cut bank (12 to 15 feet tall) with erosion issues. There are cultural sites along the top of the cut bank and likely cultural resources that could affect development. The riverbed angle is decent at this site. There are numerous navigation issues just downstream from this site. This site is also within the Funny River seasonal boat fishing/king closure area.





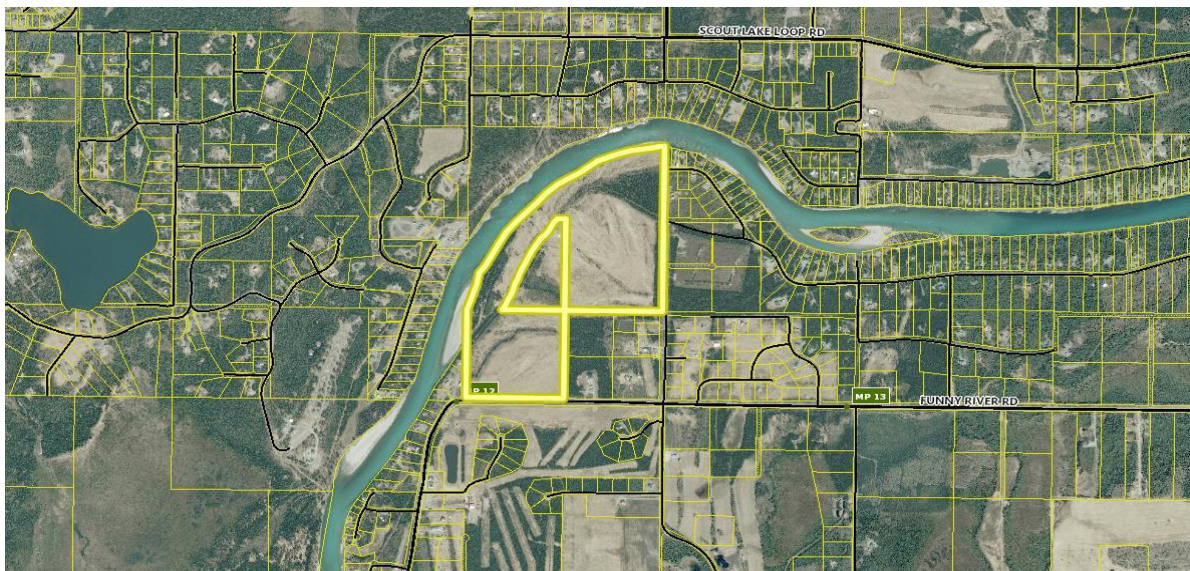
Number 6

Parcel ID: 06639039 120 Acres Riverbank: Approximately 4,300 Feet Downstream Rapids

Landowner: Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Location: Approximately Mile 12 Funny River Road

Comments: This location is at the Kenai River Ranch parcel which is co-managed by DNR and DFG. This site is not considered for development due to the site plan that was adopted in 2016 that does not recommend developing any new facilities on the parcel.





Number 7

MyKiss Street Right-of-Way Riverbank: Approximately 100 Feet

Landowner: Kenai Peninsula Borough Downstream Rapids

Location: Approximately Mile 13 Funny River Road

Comments: This site has been used for many years by the Funny River community as a boat launch. It is a 100' road ROW and therefore has limited parking at this location. The riverbed slope is conducive for launching and retrieving a boat. This site is located behind an island that protects it from the faster moving current of the mainstream. The water is too shallow to operate a boat upstream from the launch. However, there are no navigation issues heading downstream. There is no public land ownership within the vicinity of this site and consideration to purchase property nearby would need further discussion. This ROW is between two private properties in a subdivision.



Number 8

End of Funny River Road Right-of-Way Downstream Rapids

Landowner: Kenai Peninsula Borough

Location: Approximately Mile 17.5 Funny River Road

Comments: This is a 30' road ROW. Not a viable option due to the steep topography.



Number 9

Zachary Street Right-of-Way

Upstream Rapids

Landowner: Kenai Peninsula Borough

Location: Approximately one-mile past Funny River Road on Moonshine Drive.

Comments: This is a 116' road ROW. Not a viable option due to the steep topography and proximity to Naptowne Rapids.



Number 10

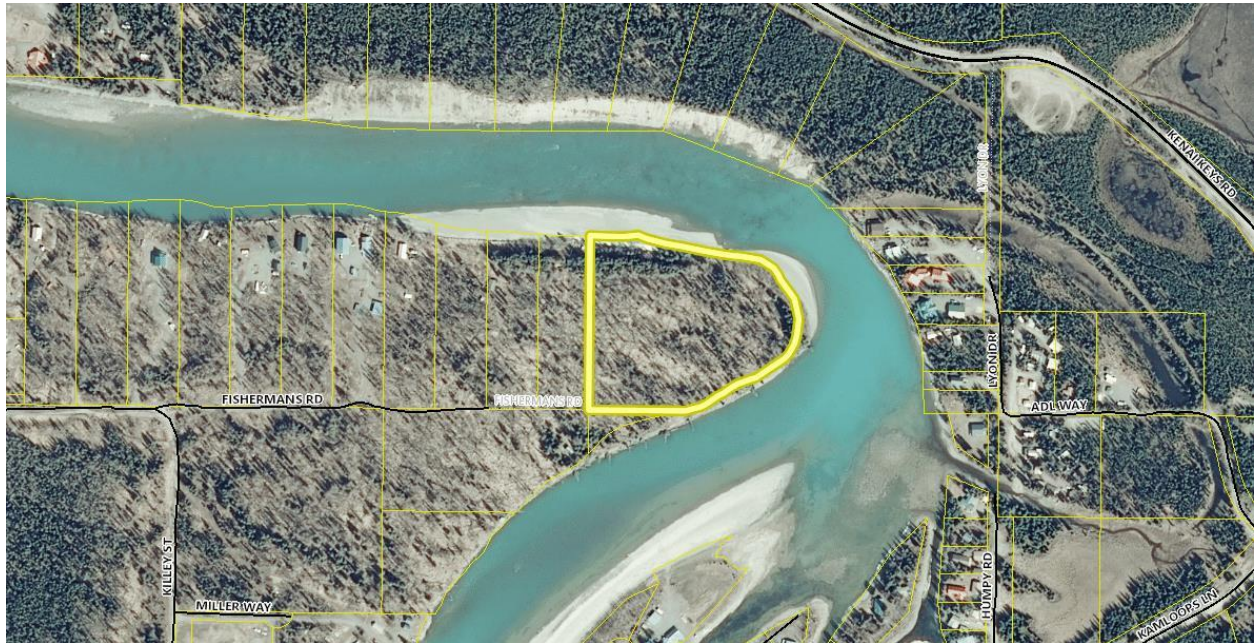
Parcel ID 06622025 6.95 Acres Riverbank: Approximately 1,330 Feet Upstream Rapids

Landownership: Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Location: At the very end of Fisherman's Road

Comments: This site is located on the inside of the hairpin bend at number three hole, just downstream and the opposite side of the river from the Kenai Keys. Upstream from the apex of the bend, below the downstream boundary of the Killey River king salmon sanctuary area, the riverbed drops off enough so that it might be conducive to installing a boat ramp. However, in this reach, it is a cut bank that has been prone to erosion. Downstream from the apex of the bend the riverbed is very shallow and has numerous rocks creating navigation issues. Other navigation issues include visibility around the hairpin

bend to avoid someone launching or retrieving a boat. The topography at this site is conducive for development. The site is near a subdivision and could conflict with neighbors.





ADDITIONAL CONCERNS OUTSIDE OF THE SCOPE OF THIS COMMITTEE

During discussions with the community and stakeholders there were additional issues that were brought to the attention of the committee, beyond the scope of finding suitable locations for boat launches. While these items are beyond the purpose of this committee, they can potentially impact the lands and habitat managed in KRSMA and affect public safety. The following issues are shared with the KRSMA Advisory Board for future consideration and require additional evaluation.

Residents voiced concerns of the long-term viability of the Funny River bridge which provides the only road access to the community. There were concerns raised about this bridge providing a critical link to the highway transportation corridor and being susceptible to damage during a natural disaster. Replacing the bridge with a modern design may help address these concerns.

A section of the Funny River was modified during previous road and bridge construction. Evaluate whether to rechannel the lower Funny River near the highway bridge and confluence of the Kenai River to decrease erosion and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Borough, state, and federal land management should continue to pursue fuels reduction and spruce bark beetle mitigation efforts at all public lands on Funny River Road.

END