

Introduced by: Bjorkman, Elam, Cox, Carpenter
Date: 05/04/2021
Action: Adopted
Vote: 9 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION 2021-036**

**A RESOLUTION REQUESTING PRIORITIZATION AND COMPLETION OF A FIRE
FUEL BREAK PROTECTING FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES OF THE CENTRAL
AND WESTERN KENAI PENINSULA**

WHEREAS, a fire-adapted community (FAC) consists of informed and prepared citizens who collaboratively take action to reduce the risks of wildland fire; and

WHEREAS, a FAC understands that minimizing wildfire risk is a shared responsibility among all landowners from individual small-parcel owners to huge tracts of land managed by governing policies; and

WHEREAS, a FAC has knowledgeably engaged residents and agencies who strategically shape infrastructure, buildings, landscaping, and the surrounding ecosystem to lessen the need for extensive and costly emergency action; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Kenai Peninsula All Lands All Hands Action Plan calls for landscape scale fuels management activities, cost effective forest management, and the inclusion of as many stakeholders as possible in the design and implementation of fuel breaks to ensure a community-wide approach to fuels reduction projects; and

WHEREAS, individual property owners, federal, state, tribal and local governments must share in the costs and level of effort necessary to redeem rewards for reducing risks posed by wildfire; and

WHEREAS, fire fuel breaks (“fuel breaks”) have been extremely important at protecting property and human life within the wildland urban interface; and

WHEREAS, the 1969 Swanson River Fire burned homes and threatened many lives and properties in Nikiski, Kenai and Soldotna and without preexisting fuel breaks, hastily constructed fire lines were constructed to protect the local communities; and

WHEREAS, a fuel break was instrumental in protecting the communities of Funny River, Kasilof and Soldotna while containing the Funny River Fire of 2014; and

WHEREAS, fire fuels mitigation by mechanically treating lands on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (“Refuge”) in 2009 and 1984 helped contain the Card Street fire which started on private land in 2015; and

- WHEREAS,** the existing Sterling fuel break, beginning at Three Johns Street, was extremely important in protecting the community of Sterling during the Swan Lake Fire of 2019; and
- WHEREAS,** previous decades of fire fuels mitigation, existing roads, and trails were utilized to protect the community of Cooper Landing during the 2019 Swan Lake Fire; and
- WHEREAS,** well planned fuel breaks provide tactical access for wildland firefighters to engage and attack fires; and
- WHEREAS,** since 2019 stakeholders from local, state, and federal agencies as well as tribal entities successfully completed a portion of the Sterling fuel break from Three Johns Street north/northwest, incorporating the marshlands of the Moose River; and
- WHEREAS,** ground surveys will continue to determine the course to completion of the Sterling fuel break west/northwest through diverse land ownerships to its final terminus in the northern Kenai Peninsula; and
- WHEREAS,** extending the Sterling fuel break project from its current terminus will protect community and residents of Sterling, Soldotna, Kenai and Nikiski as well as increase the management action points for agency administrators responding to new wildland fires; and
- WHEREAS,** extending the Sterling fuel break will provide opportunities to manage naturally ignited fires for maintaining fire's role as a natural process, maintaining and improving wildlife habitat; and
- WHEREAS,** many of the largest concentrations of hazardous fuels are located on the 1.92 million acre Refuge; and
- WHEREAS,** the southern and western border of the Refuge provides for space and opportunity to interrupt continuous segments of hazardous fuels; and
- WHEREAS,** use of the public lands within the Refuge for a fuel break would meet the Refuge's mission on fire management; and
- WHEREAS,** the construction of critical safety infrastructure fuel breaks combined with local residents employing Firewise principles on their properties is essential to the safety of the communities of the Kenai Peninsula and their residents;

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

SECTION 1. The assembly supports the extension of the Sterling fuel break project and the importance of providing wildfire protection and wildlife habitat benefits for the communities of Sterling, Soldotna, Kenai and Nikiski from wildland fires.

SECTION 2. The assembly supports all land managers on the Kenai Peninsula and their efforts to complete the extension of the Sterling fuel break project with continued collaboration and coordination of resources.

SECTION 3. The assembly requests the borough administration to continue their work with the diverse land managers whose expertise and advocacy are needed to leverage funding for the completion the Sterling fuel break project.

SECTION 4. The assembly supports a strategically expedited timeline for the extension of the Sterling fuel break from its current terminus to its future end - protecting communities and residents of Sterling, Soldotna, Kenai and Nikiski.

SECTION 5. That a copy of this resolution shall be made available to all entities, people and groups sharing an interest stake in the extension of the Sterling fuel break project.

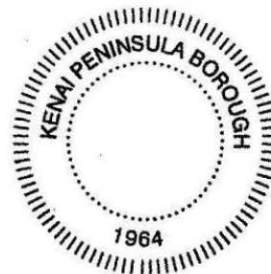
SECTION 6. That this resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 4TH DAY OF MAY, 2021.

Brent Hibbert, Assembly President

ATTEST:

Jonni Blankenship, MMC, Borough Clerk



Yes: Bjorkman, Carpenter, Chesley, Cox, Derkevorkian, Dunne, Elam, Johnson, Hibbert
No: None
Absent: None