

September 22, 2012

To: Sara Wilson Doyle, USKH

Cc: Assemblyman Warren Keogh, District 2

BCC: Butte Area Residents Civic Organization Inc.

**Jim Creek Parcel – Residents’ Alternatives to USKH Plan**  
**We think it can be done. Let’s banish Madd Maxx from Jim Creek**

**Jim Creek Parcel is our crown jewel.** While assuring motorized and non-motorized access to the Knik River, the Dunes and the KRPUA, engage everyone, including Butte School, 4-H groups, Scouts, local seniors, along with various user groups, to create a vision for this unique piece of land at the headwaters to the Pacific. The time has come for us, as a community, to take ownership of Jim Creek and to reverse the many years of abuse and misuse our leaders have allowed to continue. The center piece of Jim Creek Parcel will be a 40-acre community park .

**Butte already has several “Motorized Attraction Zones:”** The KRPUA, Alaska Raceway Park, the Knik River and Jim Creek Parcel as it is now. We don’t need any more.

**Specific Motorized Attraction Zones** as depicted in the USKH draft plan, including “pay for play,” technical challenges, mud bogs, rock crawler parks and camper parks do not belong on our valuable public land, where local property tax payers suffer the burden, financial and emotional, of increasing traffic, dust, gun fire, and other criminal activity that sets bad examples for our young people.

**Neither the Mat-Su Borough,** the State of Alaska, nor the local property tax payers, should use valuable resources that pay for the fun of mostly outsiders, leaving behind their trash, their recklessness, their criminal activity and robbing us of peace and our natural resources in our back yard.

## **Background:**

In 2007, the Mat-Su Borough adopted the “Asset Management Plan for Borough Land in the Butte area.” The enabling Ordinance 07-060 states that the Plan addresses the social, economic, and environmental factors that affect the Butte area. Jim Creek Parcel is included. The ordinance classifies the lands in Jim Creek Parcel as follows:

Parcel 1-A. 463 acres Public Recreation.

Parcel 1-B 8 acres Public Recreation/Commercial

## **Prerequisites:**

- 1) Page 1 of The Asset Management Plan for Borough Lands in Butte states:

“Asset Management Plans articulate community values and long-term goals and in this way ensure that land and resource development, use, and management decisions occur in a way that will benefit those they most affect – the local community and its residents.”

- 2) The Plan includes the requirement for a Master Plan for Jim Creek Parcel prior to any easement or development.
  
- 3) .... The plan determines the highest and best overall use for the parcels and reflects community goals. Community Goal No. 1 was to “Retain and Improve Recreation, Connected Open Space.” (page 24: ) “The great natural beauty of the region coupled with the strong community desire for recreation and access to outdoor recreation are two keys to the community’s quality of life. Borough land should be used to support this goal, for example, by creating a network of open space and connecting trails. This strategy can meet the recreation need of local residents while attracting visitors to the region to enhance economic development opportunities. **“It is important to develop facilities that are enjoyed first and foremost by local residents and then by visitors.”**

## ISSUES:

Deputy Mayor Arvin, the Mayor and other assembly members had no right to change the mandate of the 2007 Assembly - based on community input - who had created the Asset Management Plan for Borough Lands in Butte and specified that a “Master Plan for Jim Creek Parcel,” needs to be done prior to allowing any easements or developments. Not a “Motorized Plan.”

Mr. Arvin and the Assembly must not have realized that the petition signatures that were presented to them were in the majority signed by Anchorage, Eagle River/Chugiak and Wasilla area residents. While people from outside the Borough DO have a voice in what happens on State of Alaska lands, like the KRPUA, Mr. Arvin nor the Assembly should have betrayed those of us who actually pay for the privilege of living here in Butte.

It is recognized that the majority of users, visitors and participants to the existing venues come from outside the Mat-Su Borough and other communities within Mat-Su. There is no benefit to the majority of us locals who actually pay with our service area taxes for emergency rescues and the repairs to our roads. We have to deal with unsafe traffic for the entire length of the Old Glenn Highway and on the access roads to Jim Creek. We also have to deal with their trash, their noise, their dust, their drugs, their dead bodies, their personal waste and their lack of personal responsibility and respect to residents in an environment of minimal law enforcement.

BARCO was instrumental in having a fiscal note added to the KRPUA legislation that provides \$180,000 a year for on-the-ground law enforcement for 6 years. FY 2012 is the final year for this assured funding. Even at that, it is recognized that law enforcement has been minimal and depends on the availability of overtime personnel from Alaska Department of Public Safety.

If it is indeed the intent of the Assembly to continue for the community of Butte to take the brunt of excessive motorized recreation and remain at the mercy of richly funded statewide organizations whose members have no respect for our wildlife and its habitat, nor our way of life and our peace, then the Mat-Su Borough and the State of Alaska will

have to make some rules and provide 365/24/7 law enforcement based Butte, paid for by the State of Alaska and all Mat-Su Borough residents.

There is little room for our economy to grow like normal communities are allowed to do, since Butte is tainted with the "Jim Creek" reputation.

## **THE SOLUTION and how to get there:**

Requesting a Community Park in Jim Creek Parcel is not a new idea. In 2007 we gave testimony to the Planning Commission and the Assembly at the time that, while the Butte Asset Management Plan suggested a community park be placed in the "School Parcel," BARCO proposed that such a park might be better suited for the Jim Creek Parcel as a place for the community to come together and play and for the community to have access safe access from there to the Knik. As the community grows, it stands to reason that the School Parcel will require additional structural cultural resources in the future, such as an addition to the school itself, a library, a health center, a senior citizens center and more parking.

The Assembly agreed with us and for that reason added the "Community Park" requirement into the Jim Creek Parcel Plan. The only concern was expressed by Assemblyman, Bill Allen, of the difficulty for finding funding for a community park, but this would have been equally difficult whether the park is located at Jim Creek Parcel or on another piece of Borough land.

Residents of Butte should rightfully expect recreational amenities nearby that will enrich the quality of life for families; families that have been displaced from "their" Jim Creek public recreation site by the rowdy crowd that Jim Creek is known for.

This is our opportunity to turn around the perception that our community is the gateway for south-central Alaska's extreme motor sports paradise, where anything goes that isn't allowed anywhere else. This is our time for us to take a stand and say: "It's our land, it's our Plan." We are the ones who are paying for the privilege of living here.

DNR is in the process of creating a new access for them into the KRPUA - to Jim Creek and to the Glacier

The extreme motor sports folks already have 260,000 acres of land right next to our Jim Creek Parcel.

They have been disturbing our peace and making our major thruway, access roads and our trails in the KRPUA a hazard for us, and making us property owners pay for their rescues and for the repairs along the roads and the Knik River. They only reason they want our Jim Creek Parcel is that so they "have it all," and can show pride in the fact that the Mat-Su Assembly has created the first playground in Alaska that has the name "Motorized" in it.

What we request is that a portion of the Jim Creek Parcel, a parcel that is already designated "Public Recreation," be utilized for the benefit of our community; to have a place where "kids and families something to do; a place near their homes to engage in sports and other fun activities," including family-type, safe motorized recreation. The Butte Asset Management has recommended a 40-acre community park that will serve not only our community of 3,000 plus, but would serve as local regional park for our neighbors in Lazy Mountain, Knik River and Palmer. This would integrate well into the mandates of the

Butte Asset Management Plan, where fish and wildlife and the upriver resources need to be protected.

We feel it is realistic to plan on a 1-year, 5-year and 10-year schedule to make this a reality.

This 40-acre community park will be the center piece of Jim Creek Parcel, to be located in the northern portion of what was suggested as the "Motorized Attraction Zone," fairly close to the parking area and west of Sexton Trail.

(We believe that private enterprise on private lands should be given the opportunity to host venues such as Mud Bogs, Rock Crawler, Technical, competitive and Pay for Play. Our Jim Creek Parcel is too valuable to be used as playground for big boys and their toys.)

Fields and venues will be spaced based on vegetation and terrain and should retain their forested setting in an Open Space concept to protect the resources that our fish and wildlife depend upon.

Suggested changes based on the USKH "Planned Activity Zones" map:

- 1) Neighbors across the street from Sullivan will have to be buffered from noise and the dust generated in the parking area along Sullivan.
- 2) The 5-acre area of the USKH "Community Pride Park Zone" next to the race track will remain the sparsely vegetated fire break and sound buffer and will provide a pleasant entry to the Visitor Service Zone.
- 3) The ATV learning area/loop (5 ac) – if liability issues to the borough and the tax payers are being resolved - should be designed and built as sustainable trail winding through the forested, to be located alongside (north-south rather than east-west) the race track. From there, going south, to connect with a controlled-speed multi-use directional trail that currently traverses the Community Park Zone (former Motorized Attraction Zone). The slow-speed Controlled Use zone will make users aware that they will be sharing the area with wandering moose.
- 4) Forget about the non-motorized trail and camper/RV parking being located next to the race track. They'll want their money back. Locate the Camping/RV to adjoin the ATV learning course.
- 5) The Visitor Service Zone is fine where it is. The connector trail would connect from the visitor service area to the existing trail (not shown on the USKH map) that goes from the Parking Lot to the Knik River.
- 6) Use the parking area next to the visitor service zone for concession, pay station for regional sports and game events, paid parking, restrooms, services for maintenance of fields and venues, secure storage of equipment and supervisor of moto-cross practice and events. None of the concessionaire services should be allowed to compete with existing private recreation facilities, including camp grounds and motor sports venues.
- 7) No bon fires. No uncontrolled camping. No unprogrammed trail and venues. Use the KRPUA that is accessible via the MSB's Sexton and Envy Trails. These features already exist and can be reached in 5 minutes on a fourwheeler.
- 8) Locate the picnic camping area in the parking lot that accesses Sexton and Envy Trails near where the old "Pavilion" was built. Make it nice. Utilize the old well, and

possibly, build another pavilion there.

- 9) Trails: Use the trail (no official name) that traverses the center of the parcel from the parking lot to the Knik River as slow-speed multi-use or non-motorized trail and/or rebuild to sustainable standards. That trail if it is used as multi-use, slow speed, does connect already as a destination to the “Veterans’ View,” but needs to be repaired to be safe for handicapped people on ATVs.
- 10) Flood Plain Open Space Zone needs to be a buffer for wildlife – and also an area where one non-motor and multi-use slow speed trail may connect with the existing trail that traverses the center of the parcel.
- 11) The Veteran View is a nice idea as a destination for veterans, visitors and locals. However, there are many “Veterans View” locations throughout the State of Alaska. We would prefer that the name reflect the local history of this parcel, and would take suggestions for that name from long-time residents of Butte.
- 12) The Recreation Attraction Zone will include:
  - A multi-age playground with appropriate sports and recreational equipment.
  - Several nature trails with interpretive signage, possibly combining these with 3-mile
  - jogging/walkabout/cross-country loop for cross-country skiing. These trails should be built with the option of continuing on to Jim Creek, the Flats/dunes and hike a loop towards the wetlands and lakes.
  - Ball Fields (Baseball, soccer, rugby, softball, volley ball)
  - Tennis court
  - Multi-Use Paved Venues for Skateboard Park; Roller blade loop, remote control toys.
  - Mountain bike trail loop and BMX park

We envision the “Recreation Attraction Zone” to be designed and landscaped in a park-like setting using the natural vegetation (birch, cottonwood and spruce) to separate venues and users.

The sports fields will allow our community to hold regional events bringing school and adult sports to our area.

Sexton Trail will continue to remain motorized. It was built as a multi-use trail. We are asking that the Mat-SU Borough have a hard look and work with DNR to give Envy Trail back to the horse and non-motor community. Volunteers and the Mat-Su Borough – with State of Alaska Jobs money for that purpose – built that as non-motorized trail. The Mat-Su Borough recognized it as that and described Envy Trail in their Trails Inventory and Comprehensive Trail Plan for many years. As you know, there is a no-motorized approx. 600 foot easement for that trail on the Jim Creek Parcel. With DNR building a new access into the KRPUA, there will be less pressure on the Jim Creek Trails to get to Jim Creek. The Sexton Trail should be sufficient to get motorized users to the Knik River and towards the Glacier.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gregory Nilsson, Chair

