



City of Homer

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Office of the City Clerk

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Memorandum

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
FROM: RENEE KRAUSE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK
DATE: MARCH 19, 2015
SUBJECT: SUPPLEMENTAL PACKET

PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

From: Jo Johnson
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 8:15 AM
To: Renee Krause
Subject: FW: Closing Bishops Beach to Coaling

From: Andrea Miller [<mailto:alynnak28@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2015 5:28 PM
To: Jo Johnson
Subject: Closing Bishops Beach to Coaling

My name is Andrea Miller and I'm writing in response to what I heard at the March 2nd Commission meeting. In regards to what might be restricted on Bishops Beach, I urge the commission to make a proposal to the City Council about restricting access to the east side in front of Beluga Slough (section seven) for the summer months only. Like many others, I pick up coal from the beach and depend on the heat it provides in the winter months.

After a storm, coal is readily available in section seven to those without a large pickup truck. Although coal might not be a preference to those with natural gas or for those who might be able to afford fuel oil, it is a preference for people like me with limited means. I would hate to further my costs by purchasing a wood burning stove and cutting down trees when I can continue taking what the sea provides- and might otherwise go to waste.

During a "normal" winter, there is not the heavy use of Bishops Beach as in the summer. Therefore, I believe the compromise of leaving the beach open to people using vehicles to obtain coal from October to March to be reasonable.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: Jo Johnson
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2015 4:12 PM
To: Renee Krause
Subject: FW: Bishops Beach Ban

Jo Johnson

-----Original Message-----

From: Heather [<mailto:hmchenry2000@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2015 4:09 PM
To: Jo Johnson
Subject: Bishops Beach Ban

Hello. We are year round residents and love to get takeout food from Old Town and drive way down the beach for a family picnic. We are mindful of our surroundings and have never had issues with other beach enjoyers.

There are only limited parking spaces at the beach entrance and without parking on the beach some would be denied beach access. Honest we're not excited about a bigger parking lot - the cost to build it, maintain it or even the looks of it. Why are we increasing restrictions when the rules in place are difficult enough to enforce?

As a statewide destination we would like Homer to be more welcoming. "NO" signs everywhere just don't give off that vibe. Bishops Beach is one of the last free places to explore. Let's not punish the thousands who enjoy it responsibly because of a few ornery kids.

Thanks for listening.
The McHenrys

Sent from my iPhone

Steve Tarola
P.O. Box 1051
Homer, Alaska 99603

RE: Proposal to Restrict Automobile Use on Bishops Beach

March 17, 2015

Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioners
Homer City Council Members

This letter is to voice my opposition to permanently or seasonally closing any part of Bishops Beach to automobiles, but especially the area to the East as you drive down onto the beach. See attached map called "Bishops Beach East".

I drive on Bishops Beach East frequently. I love to park my car on the high berm above the Beluga Slough outlet creek and watch the natural wonder of the tide flooding and draining the Beluga slough. When I heard of this plan my partner and I went down to Bishops Beach and spent two and a quarter days (March 13-15) watching the goings on and walking the beach. During our time there we counted 221 automobiles including cars, pickups, vans, suvs and jeeps that came down onto the beach with an average of between two to three people in each, which adds up to about 550 people.

We noted that automobiles driving on the beach followed the clearly visible packed road to the left or right and then turned toward the water and spread out on the high berm facing the ocean. Many got out and walked toward the ocean, many with children, and a few ran their dogs down by the waterline. We observed no trash and no observable damage to the habitat other than the remains of a few camp fires. Everyone was enjoying the crisp cold, windless days. The police made periodic visits onto the Beach.

I am a champion of sound environmental policy. I believe a traditional use beach closure and restrictive policy change should be based on sound fact and verifiable evidence, not on anecdotal information.

Following is a discussion of why automobiles should not be restricted from Bishops Beach East.

AUTOMOBILES ARE NOT THE PROBLEM

- The entire area of the Beluga Beach East that is accessible by automobiles is dry rock with no vegetation. This dry rock is re-arranged each year by storms and waves on super high tides.
- When automobiles enter the beach and drive to the east, they follow a clearly defined route, which has an impenetrable natural border on the land side made up of logs and grasses and slightly higher ground. This natural border protects the Beluga Slough area.

- The East end of the beach is bordered by the Beluga Slough outflow creek, which would be extremely difficult to cross by automobile. It forms a perfect border for defining where vehicles are allowed on Bishops Beach East. See attached map.
- Autos invariably turn toward the ocean and park on the high berm which affords a view.
- Autos do not venture down the steep berm and onto the sandy beach which is visible on low tides because of the steepness of the berm and irregular and mushy sand below.
- Though automobile tracks will show on the rocky beach, they are not damaging anything as waves and storms are continuously re-arranging the rocks.
- It is highly doubtful that automobiles or their occupants on this rocky stretch of beach could negatively impact birds resting or nesting inside the Beluga Slough Area as the rocky part where automobiles use is far away from the Slough.
- Automobiles have not been identified as a problem in your own information, other than the fact that they carry humans.

NO HABITAT DEGRADATION OR DESTRUCTION

Automobiles are not causing habitat degradation or destruction in this area as it is all dry rock. Obviously there are no nesting or feeding birds on Bishops Beach East. If four wheelers are a problem, then they should be addressed separately. By restricting “all vehicles” you are punishing a user group that isn’t even related to the problem.

ACCESS FOR EVERYONE

Policy changes that consider the wishes of a smaller user group (birders) over the wishes of a vastly larger user group (people who drive on the beach), is unreasonable, unfair and over-reaching.

- There are many people who are elderly or have physical problems and aren’t able walk long distances on this rough rocky beach.
- There are families with small children who can’t make the long hike to enjoy the expansive views from the warmth of their car.
- The east end of Bishop Beach East is also a popular launching spot for surfers, another user group who use their autos to carry their boards to their spot.

SIGNS DO WORK

- Contrary to comments made during your process, signs do work. A simple well defined sign with graphics at the entrance to the beach on the left side would quickly clue in drivers and four-wheelers where they can and can’t go. Picture signs are the best.
- A prominently placed sign eliminates excuses to authorities for not knowing the rules.
- For four wheelers, which have been consistently identified as a problem, a simple sign with a picture of a four wheeler with a slash through it will do the trick.

A SENSIBLE APPROACH

- To address the well documented harm by four wheelers in Beluga slough where enforcements need teeth to curb the problem, close Beluga Beach East to four wheelers.
- In crafting your policy use the word “four wheeler” instead of “motorized vehicles”, which unfairly penalizes the large non-offending group using automobiles.
- Allow year round access to automobiles, including cars, trucks, suvs etc.
- Place a prominent sign at the entrance to the beach that has a picture of the beach and shows the areas that are open to automobiles bordered by the Beluga Slough outlet creek and the high berm where vehicles should park as depicted in the attached map. The sign could say autos allowed on rocky areas only and not on the sandy beach at low tide and are not allowed to cross the creek at the east end.
- Place a sign on the high point of land where the creek from Beluga Slough emerges that says “no vehicles beyond this point”, which will stop the rare driver who might attempt to enter the sensitive Beluga Slough area.

This sensible approach will be much more popular than trying to explain to a non-offending user group why their freedom to access is being unnecessarily denied. I urge you to make certain any restrictive policies are based on sound facts and verifiable evidence and not on anecdotal information.

I can't think of a more appropriate and exciting situation as Bishops Beach East for driving on the beach. It is safe, it is indestructible, it is strategically located and accessible to all, it has fantastic views and open spaces, it is a place where people can spread out and feel the wide expanse, and it has been used and loved by a very large traditional user group for many decades. At 68 years I hope to continue to enjoy the beach as I have in the past for many years to come.

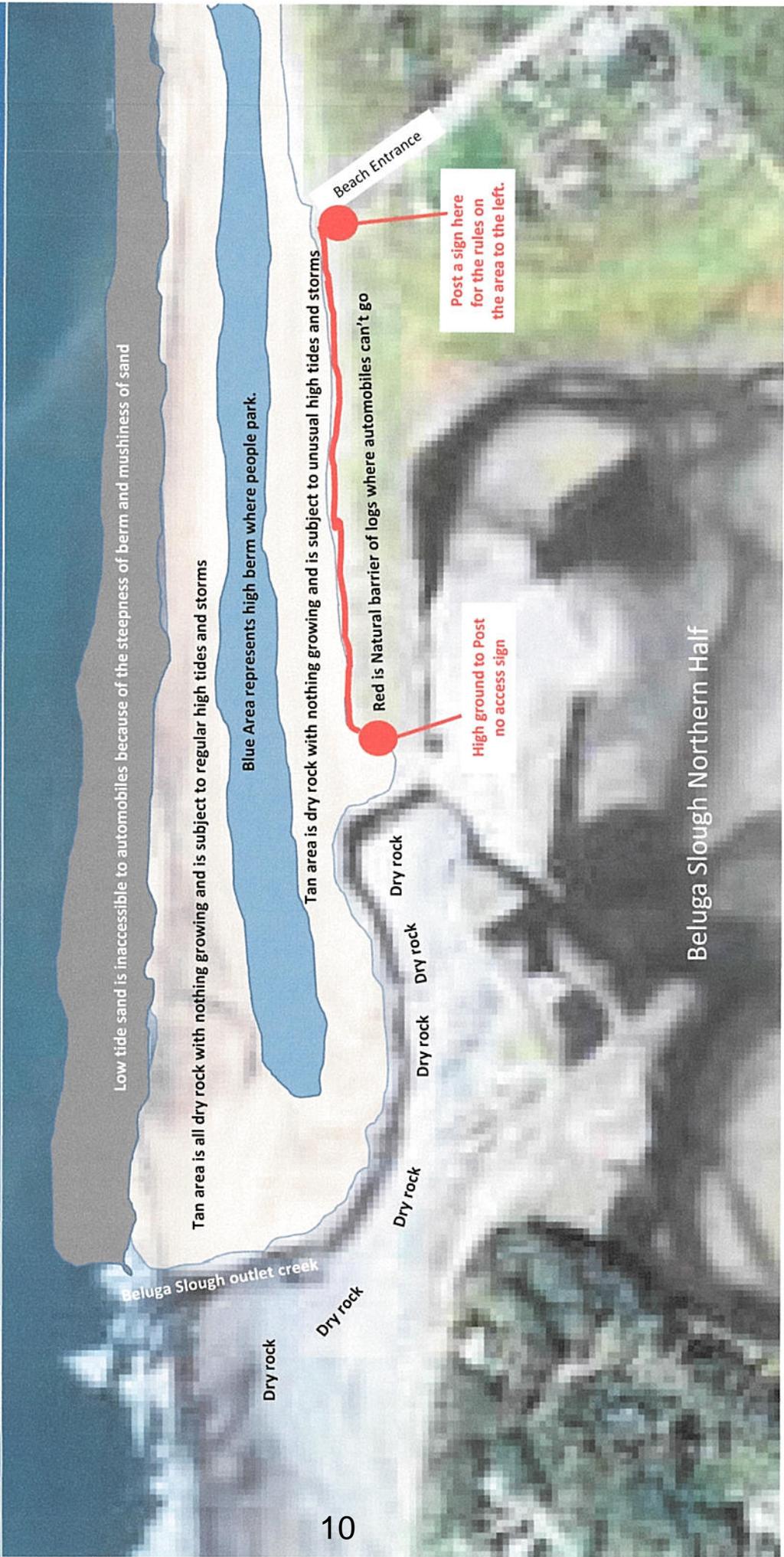
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,



Steve Tarola
Homer, Alaska
907-399-3393

BELUGA BEACH EAST – AREA PROPOSED TO REMAIN OPEN TO AUTOMOBILES



Mar 17, 2015

To Homer Parks and Recreation Commission —

Dear Members,

Hello again. This is Robert Townsend — the guy who brought in the bucket of coal during the March 2nd meeting.

If I may, I would like to ^{present a} suggestion that hopefully would be viewed as a reasonable compromise regarding coaling East of the Bishop's Beach parking Lot.

Please recall that the area referred to as Section 7 (fronting Beluga Slough), is a prime coaling area for people who don't own big 4-wheel drive pick-ups; in other words, people in smaller vehicles and smaller pick-ups that don't have the option of driving 2 to 3 miles to the West.

During the Mar. 2nd meeting there was a brief discussion about setting a line of boulders in the area of the parking lot to prevent people from driving East. It was also brought up that most coaling is done from Oct to Mar.

So would it be possible to leave an 8 ft. gap between 2 of the boulders, between which a chain is stretched, attached to a pair of eye-bolt anchored into the top of the boulders. Between April 1 and Oct 1 the chain is padlocked in place.

On Oct. 1st the chain would be removed and a sign would be posted that read: "Please do not drive beyond this point except to gather coal.

Thank You — Parks and Recreation."

Perhaps this would satisfy most user groups.

Sincerely,

11 Robert Townsend 907-748-1925

From: Mary Lou Kelsey <mlkelsey53@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 10:18 PM
To: Renee Krause
Subject: Beach Policy Review- private beach owner input

City of Homer Park and Recreation Commission,
Thank you for reviewing the current City of Homer Beach Policy and accepting public input. We live on the beach in Area 6- Mariner Park Lagoon (outlet) to Beluga Slough (outlet)- which is a very dynamic, tidal beach. There is no longer signage in this area discouraging motor vehicle usage and there is daily driving and parking on the storm berms. As a landowner adjacent to the Critical Habitat tidal tracts around the Beluga Slough outlet, we would like to preserve the intact natural berms and wildlife habitat. We also support continued restriction of removal of driftwood to allow the continued building and stabilization of the berms. Another area of concern for us is the many unattended campfires left on the beach. It is scary to see the beach grasses and dry trees blowing near an active fire. Please consider requiring fires be completely doused before being abandoned. Thanks for considering our input. Good Luck on preserving our beautiful beaches.

Mary Lou Kelsey mlkelsey53@gmail.com
William Bell wmbell51@alaska51@gmail.com
Box 894, Homer, Alaska, 99603

