

SETTLERS BAY COASTAL PARK COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH PLAN

Introduction

Settlers Bay Coastal Park Vision

Settlers Bay Coastal Park will provide a location for residents and visitors to experience the trails, salt marshes, fish and wildlife habitat and views of the Knik Arm of Upper Cook Inlet.

The new park is inclusive of a conservation easement held by the Great Land Trust that specifically guides land use and development in order to preserve the quality of the natural environment. With exception of the Wet Gulch Trail (RST 1710) the park is intended for non-motorized use. Overall land use is to be low impact with limited development.

Purpose of Communications and Outreach Plan

This plan will guide the core planning group's communication and outreach to target audiences with the objective to increase support for, and participation in, Settlers Bay Coastal Park development planning and implementation. Outreach efforts will be focused and deliberate.- Messages will be delivered consistently and clearly to key stakeholders throughout the life of the project.

The Settlers Bay Coastal Park project will be a community-driven effort. Active support and participation from key stakeholders including local government, trail groups, and adjacent property owners is required to make this project a success.

Public Involvement Overview

Phase 1: Vision, Issues & Opportunities

The purpose of the first phase is to introduce the park to the public and key stakeholders, gather information on their vision and goals for the park, and incorporate the public's input into the analysis of the project. This phase is essential to setting the foundation for the planning effort and sets the tone for the remaining project.

Potential Actions

- Go where the people are and take advantage of existing popular events, rather than hoping for attendance at a scheduled planning meeting. Intercepting the public at events should include an education component (maps, displays, handouts, etc.) and an input gathering component (questionnaires, comment cards, posters to mark up, etc.).
- Hold focus groups that bring together engaged members of the community, the general public, organizations and agencies to discuss specific topics regarding the park.
- Include the web address for project information on public information materials, including agendas, comment cards, and handouts. All meeting materials, including handouts and meeting summaries etc. should be updated and posted to the project website regularly.

Phase 2: Planning, Design & Development

The second phase functions to engage the public in making the project better. This phase provides

opportunities for input on project alternatives and options within the Conservation Easement allowances. An honest accounting of the constraints and possibilities during this phase makes for a stronger final product.

Potential Actions

- Holding a public workshop requiring extensive planning and preparation is a central focus of this phase. The workshop will be scheduled when people are most able to attend (weekday evenings or weekends). Consider holding companion workshops at different times and in different locations to ensure a broad cross-section of participants. The workshop should include a detailed discussion of the possible alternatives or concepts, drawings specific to the concept or design, a discussion or description of how the alternatives were developed, as well as scheduling an extended period of time for discussion and feedback from the group.
- Supplement the workshop with focus groups that may provide in-depth discussion and feedback of the scale of the project. A broader cross-section of the public could provide feedback online through a questionnaire or survey regarding the concepts and/or alternatives to supplement the focus groups and workshop.

Phase 3: Review & Approval

The final phase of the outreach effort during the planning phase is focused on gathering input on the final designs or concept and ensuring that the public is educated about the decision.

Potential Actions

- Document the public outreach effort. A good public involvement effort influences the planning and design effort and demonstrates to the public that their input has been heard. Project materials, including the final concept and plan decisions should include an extensive discussion of the issues raised during the public involvement effort, and how these issues were considered and addressed.

Phase 4: Project Implementation

Once the Development Plan is approved, supporting community groups and other members of the public will help with the construction phase, and will provide labor and fundraising support.

Potential Actions

- Provide opportunities, at existing meetings and events, for the public to provide input on the design of the park infrastructure.

Communication and Outreach Goals and Key Messages

GOAL 1: A majority of adjacent property owners are aware of and support the Settlers Bay Coastal Park project early in the plan phase.

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Develop project awareness through outreach to all adjacent property owners.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Solicit input from adjacent property owners.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Develop a community advisory group.
- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Communicate with project detractors in a timely fashion.

GOAL 2: Local and state government bodies endorse and/or approve the project, and participate in the plan phase as needed.

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** The Assembly, Planning Commission, Parks, Trails, and Recreation Advisory Board, community councils, Alaska DNR, Alaska DF&G are regularly informed of progress during the project.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Determine the appropriate approval from each level of government and prepare draft approval documents in advance of project completion.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Gain approval upon completion of this plan.

GOAL 3: Local community groups help shape the Development Plan and take the lead in project implementation.

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Distribute project information to community councils.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Distribute project information to homeowners associations.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Distribute project information to trail groups such as the Knik Chapter of the Iditarod Trail Blazers.

Key Messages for all Audiences

The project vision – *Settlers Bay Coastal Park will provide a location for residents and visitors to experience the trails, salt marshes, fish and wildlife habitat and views of the Knik Arm of Upper Cook Inlet.*

- The Settlers Bay Coastal Park development plan will enhance the atmosphere of the nearby neighborhoods.
- The purpose of the project is to layout the future development of the Settlers Bay Coastal Park in phases starting with appropriate public access.
- The project will include interpretive and educational components of the Settlers Bay Coastal Park and identify ways to share that history with visitors.
- The needs and interests of the communities using the park will be incorporated to the extent possible under the Conservation Easement allowances.

Target Audience Outreach Methods and Key Messages

Target Audiences

- Knik-Fairview Community Council, Knik Tribal Council
- General Trail Users (hikers, bikers, skiers, walkers), Dog Musers, Snowmachiners, Winter Bike Enthusiasts, ATVers
- Settler’s Bay and Secluded Pointe Homeowners Associations, property owners near the park, Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats
- MSB Assembly, Planning Commission, Parks Recreation and Trails Advisory Board
- State of Alaska, DNR and DF&G – Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

1. Knik-Fairview Community Council

Objectives

- Endorse / pass resolutions in favor of the Development Plan and assist with the construction phase through funding/fundraising and volunteer organization

Methods

- Attend regular meetings and provide information
- Invite representatives to participate in park-related activities

Key Messages

- The Settlers Bay Coastal Park will be an asset of the local community
- The project will enhance the availability of outdoor recreation and economic opportunities
- The project partners are eager to work with local residents, especially adjacent property owners

2. Trail Groups and Trail Users

Objectives

- Trail groups actively participate in planning to shape the park
- Trail groups will help reconstruct, restore, and/or maintain trails and trail connections to the park

Methods

- Attend regular meetings and provide information
- Invite representatives to participate in trail related activities
- Create project website to share information

Key Messages

- The Settlers Bay Coastal Park development plan will support local trails
- Success of the project is dependent on local support and active participation in planning and implementation
- Local input will help determine trail alignment, trail management objectives, and where and how much development should occur to the extent possible under the Conservation Easement allowances.

3. Property Owners

Objectives

- Neighbors recognize the value and importance of the Park and support the Development Plan
- Support the Settlers Bay Coastal Park

Methods

- Mail notice and invite participation in the development planning process
- Create project website to share information

Key Messages

- We want to hear your interests and concerns about the Settlers Bay Coastal Park
- Your input will help determine the future layout of the park, trail alignment and trail use and where and how much development should occur to the extent possible under the Conservation Easement allowances.

4. MSB Assembly and Planning Commission

Objectives

- The Assembly and Planning Commission resolve to support the park and approve funding for capital improvements

Methods

- Provide regular updates and draft resolution language

Key Messages

- This project aims to enhance the public health, safety, and welfare in the borough

5. State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Objectives

- DNR staff work to integrate the RST right-of-way into the park plan
- DNR supports the project team with drafting the Development Plan for the Settlers Bay Coastal Park
- DNR interpretive planners assist with the planning effort

Methods

- Invite DNR staff to participate in all planning meetings
- Request DNR comments on the draft and final development plan

Key Messages

- Successful cooperative projects bring good management and recognition with minimal time and money
- The Settlers Bay Coastal Park project aligns well with the goals of your organization