

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
WATERSHED & NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO. 2010-03

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING SEASONAL CLOSURE OF MELLEN'S WAY IN FAR NORTH BICENTENNIAL PARK.

(WNRC Case No. 10-03)

WHEREAS, Far North Bicentennial Park is located on Anchorage's urban/wild interface and at least 20 brown bears are known to be attracted to the South and North Forks of Campbell Creek during summer and early fall when salmon are spawning; and

WHEREAS, Mellen's Way (also known as Rover's Run), a developed and maintained trail located near the South Fork of Campbell Creek, was originally intended for winter use by skiers but has attracted many more users in the past decade in all seasons; and

WHEREAS, the number of bear attacks has increased in Far North Bicentennial Park in the past decade with increased use of Mellen's Way and adjacent trails, resulting in three brown bear maulings on Mellen's Way in three summers, more than any other trail in the Municipality; and

WHEREAS, the Municipality closed Mellen's Way after the second mauling in 2008 and in summer and early fall 2009 to avoid further maulings when brown bears were concentrated in the area; and

WHEREAS, the Administration has declined to close trails for any wildlife-related reason, including the increased likelihood of a bear mauling brought about by special circumstances, such as a seasonal concentration of brown bears or a recent bear mauling in the vicinity; and

WHEREAS, public surveys of Anchorage residents repeatedly demonstrate that trails and wildlife are desirable amenities; and

WHEREAS, a recent public survey found that most Anchorage residents prefer to temporarily close an existing trail or avoid building a new trail where the risk of a brown bear attack is higher than normal; and

WHEREAS, the plan *Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort* was accepted by the Anchorage Assembly (AM 566-2001) and referenced in the *Anchorage 2020—Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan* as guidance for managing human-wildlife interactions in the Municipality; and

WHEREAS, the Administration has elected not to comply with the protocol for trail signs and trail closures developed by the interagency Anchorage Bear Committee, resulting in two different standards, which may confuse trail users; and

WHEREAS, temporary and seasonal trail closures are an effective and commonly used method for avoiding bear maulings; for example, the Albert Loop Trail in Chugach State Park, also located next to a salmon spawning stream, which experienced three bear attacks in four years in the mid-1990s, has been closed during the period salmon are spawning every year since the last attack, with no further attacks; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission in the Draft *Far North Bicentennial Park Trails Plan* recommended re-routing Mellen's Way farther from the creek and closing the existing trail to summer use to avoid or minimize stream bank erosion and bear attacks on trail users; and

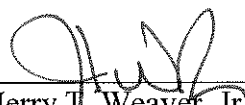
WHEREAS, local recreation, park, and bear experts from agencies, including the Municipality, represented on the Anchorage Bear Committee, believe that the risk of future bear attacks is heightened by not closing a trail when brown bears are concentrated in the area by spawning salmon or other special circumstances; and

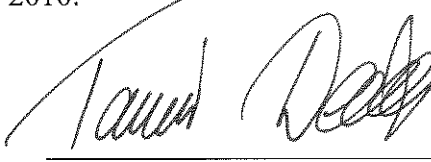
WHEREAS, the Municipality routinely closes trails for other public hazards, such as erosion; and

WHEREAS, Mellen's Way is located in a riparian area where the soil is often wet, and increased use of Mellen's Way in the past two years, particularly by bikers and horses, is eroding the trail and exposing tree roots.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Watershed & Natural Resources Advisory Commission recommends that the Municipality close Mellen's Way in summer and early fall in accordance with the protocol developed by the interagency Anchorage Bear Committee and re-route the trail as recommended by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (Resolution No. 2009-24, dated December 10, 2009).

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Watershed & Natural Resources Advisory Commission on the 27th day of October 2010.



Jerry T. Weaver, Jr.
Secretary

Tamás Deák
Chair