

Dec. 8, 2013

Dear Mayor and Assembly,

I support the ordinance specifying the Chilkat Beach area non-motorized.

I grew up in Haines and remember my parents driving along that stretch of beach. Now that I am an adult, I am glad the beach has become, what most assumed, was non-motorized.

As a commercial fisherman I have come to understand that little stretch of beach is an important fish habitat because of the One Mile Creek that runs through and because of the Chilkat River tidelands. Even though in the last few years only one or two ATVs have ventured onto that stretch of beach, their tracks across One Mile Creek remain. And that concerns me as to what regular or even occasion ATV or snowmachine use would do to that fish rearing stream and the Chilkat River.

Plain and simple, that stretch of beach is not conducive to motorized use. This is not about discriminating against any user group – I do not think motorized recreation is “bad” – it’s just a stretch of beach that is not well suited for ATVs or snowmachines.

This is also not about the legality of whether this ordinance can be enforced or not. That is for the borough and state to figure out and make happen. This is about dozens of residents asking you to clarify the borough’s seemingly long-standing assumption that the stretch of beach was designated non-motorized recreational use. It would seem that making this clarification is a step in whatever direction needed to eventually enforce it, if necessary.

Nor should it matter at this point that few ATVs or snowmachines try to ride in the area. The point of good planning by a community is to plan and designate areas for its best use BEFORE conflicts arise. That is why the Planning Commission recommended this ordinance. Waiting on this issue until motorized use becomes a more regular activity is priming the community for a conflict that could be avoided by clarifying the designation now.

This issue seems to much more controversial among six assembly members than it does the entire rest of the community. The Planning Commission heard from dozens of residents in support of this ordinance. You’ve heard from dozens of residents in support of this ordinance. I have not spoken with a single neighbor or current user of the beach who does not support this ordinance.

Please pass this ordinance now, before this issue causes any more conflict and in order to protect the habitat of this stretch of beach.

Thank you for your consideration,

John S. Hagen  
535 Mud Bay Road