

# **Birchwood Community Council**

**19213 Sprucecrest Drive**

**Chugiak, Alaska 99567**

**[barb@mtaonline.net](mailto:barb@mtaonline.net)**

**688-4321**

## **A Resolution Strongly Opposing Placement of the ARCTIC Public Safety Training Institute within the Current Boundaries of the Beach Lake Park**

**WHEREAS**, Birchwood Community Council held their regular monthly meeting on March 28, 2007 with 26 members in attendance in addition to several guests; including Channel 11 KTVA cameraman, and

**WHEREAS**, review and discussion of the above named project was supplemented by printed information and maps originated by Rise Alaska as well as the printed MOA PM&E contract. Additional first hand information was provided by those that were in attendance at the prior presentations given before the C-ER Parks & Rec Board of Supervisors on March 12, 2007 and the Chugiak Dog Musher's Assn on March 20, 2007; and

**WHEREAS**, all members of the Birchwood Community Council present spoke in strong opposition to the placement of the ARCTIC Public Safety Training Institute within the current boundaries of Beach Lake Park.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Birchwood Community Council that:

- A. The Birchwood Community Council membership notes that the following findings are of significance to the community as further expounded upon in the attached communication authored by Susan Cantor:
  - 1. The proposed shooting range would destroy the unique values of Beach Lake Park
  - 2. The noise from the proposed shooting range would affect the park, adjacent neighborhoods, both present and future
  - 3. The proposed shooting range would directly conflict with existing dog trails
  - 4. The proposed shooting range would endanger the lives and safety of park users

5. The 'benefits' of road improvements are not worth compromising one of our most scenic, pristine, and popular parks
6. The proposed shooting range will not reduce vandalism in the park
7. the proposed shooting range is not a suitable recreational use and is totally incompatible with the existing uses of Beach lake Park

B. That this Resolution be forwarded to John Rodda,+ C-ER Parks & Rec Board of Supervisors Chairman, Mayor Begich, all members of the Assembly, and the Director of HLB

PASSED AND DULY APPROVED by Birchwood Community Council (26-0) on March 28, 2007

Bobbi Wells, Chair  
Nanette Belk, Secty

Att: Cantor Letter for reference

March 15, 2007

Dear Mr. Rodda:

As a 20-year resident of Birchwood, I strongly oppose the concept of creating an "outdoor shooting range" in Beach Lake Park. I have watched Beach Lake Park grow from our own backyard piece of heaven, to a popular, multi-use, wilderness playground for all socio-economic groups. The noise, traffic, and safety concerns of the proposed project would disrupt the traditional activities allowed in the park. In addition, South Birchwood is a peaceful, semi-rural community with large wooded lots and secluded neighborhoods. The character of these neighborhoods would completely change with the sound of shots from the proposed project.

**The proposed shooting range would destroy the unique values of Beach Lake Park.**

Beach Lake Park is easily accessible, yet feels pristine, rustic and wild. The only houses on the lake are the lodge and the caretaker's house. Moose,

wolves, coyotes, and bears still roam the area. The view from the lake is spectacular – by some quirk of topography, very few houses, roads, and other signs of civilization are visible. The peaceful atmosphere is unbroken even by the sound of car engines. Its location is convenient, yet seems isolated from human civilization.

Beach Lake Park provides a wide variety of activities for residents of Anchorage and Eagle River. In the summer, hikers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders enjoy the extensive trail system. People mysteriously “disappear” within the trail system. You know they are there, but you are unlikely to bump into them once you leave the parking lot. This provides a rare sense of wilderness within a stone’s throw of Eagle River.

The Beach Lake Lodge is a perfect retreat for boy and girl scouts, religious groups, professional meetings, family parties, and more. The cabin provides a peaceful, natural setting conducive to both indoor and outdoor activities. Our kids love to spend hours rafting, swimming, and fishing in the lake. A standard activity is the two-mile hike around the lake to the mudflats. We always pass families gathered along the lakeshore to fish and relax. Once we get to the mudflats, we take off our shoes, look for beluga whales, and make mud pies.

Our enjoyment of Beach Lake is not limited to summer months. The park provides one of the finest cross-country ski trails in the Anchorage bowl. The Beach Lake Chalet, ski trails, and Junior Nordic ski program grow more popular every year. Over a span of several decades, the Chugiak Dog Mushers have created a premier trail system for sled dogs. At the lake itself, we ice-skate, ice-fish, and enjoy marshmallow roasts by the lodge. All these activities combine to make Beach Lake Park an important community asset.

The proposed shooting range would be constructed adjacent to the “jewel” of Beach Lake Park – the lake itself. Access roads and buildings would be visible from all around the lake. Project proponents may argue that walls can be built to absorb noise created by the shooting range. Just how effective would that be? What would be the visual impact of those walls, right next to one of the most scenic places in our community? Would it be safe to watch the whales at their favorite gathering spot in Knik Inlet, right next to the shooting range’s “safety fan”? Would a shooting range scare the belugas away? I don’t know, but it would sure scare our family!

**The noise from the proposed shooting range would affect the park and adjacent neighborhoods, both present and future.**

Both in the park and in our neighborhood near the park, we already hear gunfire from the Isaac Walton shooting range, to the north, and munitions explosions from Fort Richardson, to the south. Having a THIRD shooting range, adjacent to Beach Lake, would destroy the unique residential values that so many of us appreciate there. The shooting range would destroy the pristine quality of the park, both visually and audibly.

Additionally, the voters approved an access road to allow Eklutna to develop its land next to Beach Lake Park. That land has been subdivided and will someday be purchased by families who will discover themselves living with the noise of two nearby shooting ranges – Isaac Walton and the proposed range at Beach Lake – as well as Fort Richardson.

**The proposed shooting range would directly conflict with existing sled dog trails.**

The proposed access to the site, and the site itself, would completely cut off some of the most scenic portions of the trail system created by the Chugiak Dog Mushers. The existing trail system is sandwiched between the lake and the inlet, exactly in the location of the proposed facility. Project proponents can offer to re-route the sled dog trails – but what would be the visual impact of bulldozing more trails in a narrow corridor, adjacent to a road, parking lot, and range facility? One of our community's most accessible natural settings would suddenly look very urban.

One of the most unique parts of the sled dog trail system is not even shown on the proposed concept design. Our trail loops for a half mile onto the mudflats, providing a spectacular view of the Alaska Range! Although technically just outside the “safety zone,” how safe would the musher feel with the shooting range less than a quarter mile away?

**The proposed shooting range would endanger the lives of park users.**

We frequently run into four-wheelers and snow machine drivers who have wandered off of Fort Richardson onto the Beach Lake trail system. Sled dogs and hikers commonly get lost in the area. A shooting range right in the heart of a heavily used recreational area is just not safe.

**The “benefits” of road improvements are not worth compromising one of our most scenic, pristine, and popular community parks.**

Accepting road improvements in exchange for a shooting range in Beach Lake Park is not worth it. Road improvements in the park are already underway. The objective of paving Beach Lake Road is not to create a super-highway, but to reduce dust and improve air quality in the Anchorage Bowl. The existing road is used by joggers, horseback riders, and dog-walkers. We often see high school athletic teams training on the road. We don't need a perfectly smooth road, allowing increased traffic and higher speeds.

The presence of the shooting range will not reduce vandalism in the park.

We already have a full-time caretaker living at the lake. Boy scouts, girl scouts, and junior dog mushers have also stepped in as stewards of the park. Traffic and litter problems will only increase if we open up the park for yet another (incompatible) use – target practice.

**The proposed shooting range is INCOMPATIBLE with the existing uses of Beach Lake Park. There are several other shooting ranges within easy driving distance of Anchorage. I strongly oppose the development of this project within Beach Lake Park.**

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Cantor

cc. Debbie Ossiander  
Lexi Hill