A big thank you to all of those who were able to attend the April 20th Get Acquainted Meeting. We apologize for the lateness in this follow up email.  I (Loren) almost immediately left for camp in Port Heiden, where I still am, so I'm often otherwise occupied. Kathy was also down here, and is now winging her way to D.C. for a memorial service.

When we sit down to add all of the new names to our list, we keep coming up with many problems with the 'newly updated' Google Groups system.   We have been working with our National office, where people who know more than us are also stumped, and hope that we finally added everyone who wanted to be on our list.

The meeting was so well attended, thanks in no small part to efforts by member Terry Koch (thanks Terry!!) who also designed our meeting announcement flyers. We had a very lively group of people, interested in many of the issues around our state (as well as nationally).  We also celebrated some recent good news: that the proposed Ambler Mining District Access Road SEIS (from the Dalton Highway to near the village of Ambler in the NW Arctic) had received a No Action Alternative selection; that BLM had recently adopted a new Public Lands Rule that, for the first time, put recreational use and conservation on an equal footing with development projects in all land use decisions; and that the Administration has announced substantial new protections for a big portion of the Western Arctic. These are all issues that the Alaska Soles, and other Great Old Broads Broadbands, had commented on, sometimes repeatedly and for years.

Meeting attendees also brought up some other issues to consider.  One is the use of  state roads and bridges for transportation of ore from the Mann Choh Kinross mine in Tetlin to Fairbanks for processing; another was the potential development (through efforts aided by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, AIDEA) to construct the West Susitna Road for access to another mining project.  There was also interest in the Eklutna River Restoration proposals by the utilities involved, and the countering interest by the Tribe and the Anchorage Assembly to see restoration of the full Eklutna River and removal of the Eklutna Lake Dam.  Lastly, there were questions regarding whether to support the proposal for the Alaska Long Trail, and what that proposal would entail in terms of trail use (motorized, non-motorized, or differing restrictions for differing parts of the trail).

We are digging around for more information on these issues.  At present, the EKlutna Dam/Eklutna River restoration proposal controversy seems very convoluted.  Kathy has written letters trying to get clarity as to the proposals.  We will forward information as soon as we get some that we can verify.

If any of you are involved in the Alaska Long Trail proposal, and have some good information to share with us, please email us and we will see that the information is disseminated to the whole group. Member Kierre Childers sent us this link to find details about the project and the BLM feasibility study:  <https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/alaska/alaska-long-national-scenic-trail>

A good piece of news to share is that the legislature recently turned down a request from AIDEA for $300 million dollars for unnamed projects related to mining.  This is from Dermot Coles's May 4th column:

*"The House Finance Committee stripped the $300 million blank check from a bond bill Friday for the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority.*

*The change, if it survives the rest of the legislative process, means AIDEA would have to come back at a future date with a specific plan on how it would like to use the $300 million. It has said only that the money would be for something related to mining somewhere in Alaska.*

*A clever guy like Randy Ruaro, the executive director of AIDEA and former Dunleavy chief of staff, can make a connection between mining and almost anything. The* ***West Susitna road*** *project is one prime candidate. The* ***Ambler Road*** *is another.*

*AIDEA wants to avoid the need for getting any specific project debated and approved in the open. "*

We had seen this request coming before the legislature as an amendment to the house transportation bill, and immediately joined many concerned Alaskans in writing our representatives urging that this amendment not be approved. Happily, it wasn't!

What can we do now? One action item that is coming up....the SEIS for the proposed Ambler Mining District Access Road, can be issued a Record of Decision as early as 30 days from its publish date, which will be June 6.  Usually the administration goes ahead and issues a decision reflecting the Alternative chosen in the SEIS decision, which in this case is the No Action Alternative (what we all were pushing for).  We are urging folks to go ahead and send an email, a postcard or make a phone call to the Administration, Pres. Biden offices (202-456-1111; go to WH.gov and select Contact Us to email; or write The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington DC 20500), with a copy to the BLM, before that date, urging him to accept the No Action Alternative.  We have found that they do listen to the public outcry (at times). Sadly, both of our Senators have supported the Ambler Road proposal. NANA (the Northwest Arctic Native Association) recently withdrew their support for the road. If you have any questions or concerns, you can email, or call Loren at the number below, and I will try to help!

We anticipate that we might soon recommend action in regards to some of these other projects, especially the Ekluntna proposals and the Alaska Long Trail, as well as the Susitna Access Road.

One other issue was **just** brought to our attention. A bill has been introduced to remove the new BLM Public Lands Rule immediately. The passing of this rule is mentioned above, one of the things we celebrated at our meeting! Here is a short explanation copied from an email from the Great Old Broads:

* [**H.R. 3397 - WEST Act**](https://www.votervoice.net/BroadcastLinks/jrg8Ib4Q8hdlLfktNXddkA)—In April, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released its final “Public Lands Rule” to balance and uphold its multiple-use mission by promising to place conservation on equal footing with industrial development. But the **WEST Act (H.R. 3397)** would require the BLM to not only withdraw the Public Lands Rule, it would also prohibit the agency from implementing any similar rule in the future. **This legislation ignores public input, disregards the administrative process, and attempts to prevent a long-overdue update to the way our public lands are managed!**

We would recommend that any of you that have the time, send a short email or make a quick phone call to Representative Mary Petola, urging her to see that the WEST Act (H.R. 3397) NOT be passed.  Her contact information is

   **ak-marypetola@mail.house.gov****.**

Her phone number in Washington, DC is **202-225-5765**.  Rep. Peltola has a background working for the Donlin Mine, and has recently changed some positions in support of mining activity.  We need to let her know where we, her constituents, stand.

Okay that is enough information for today!  Again, thanks so much to those of you who were able to attend our meeting in Palmer in April.  In the future, we hope to have ZOOM attendance also be possible.  We also hope that we will see some of our good friends, who weren't able to attend the last meeting, at our next one.  We have talked with Kierre Childers about helping us get a group guided hike together, where we share the small fee. Please don't hesitate to email if you have ideas and suggestions for future meetings, gatherings or activities, or want to get information or share information about an issue.  We know that the summer months are very busy for Alaskans, so we aren't scheduling a meeting in the immediate future but will work on it later this summer.

We are WILDLY happy to have met so many interested, enthusiastic and knowledgeable Broads!

Loren J Karro

Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle

(she, her, hers)

Co-Leaders, **Alaska Soles**

**Great Old Broads for Wilderness**

(907) 355-3712

26239 E Buckshot Dr

Palmer, AK 99645

***"To make life a little better for people less fortunate than you. That's what I think a meaningful life is. One lives not just for oneself, but for one's community."       Ruth Bader Ginsburg***

