

**Conservation Lands Advisory Committee
Report for June 9, 2025, City Council General Meeting**

The City of Gustavus Conservation Lands Advisory Committee was established by Resolution CY24-2 in May 2024. We now have seven members:

John Barry
Tanner Horst
Larry Landry
Colleen Stansbury
Kathy Streveler
Mike Taylor (Chair)
Susan Warner

Shelley Owens graciously serves as a non-voting secretary preparing our minutes.

Our charge from Resolution CY 24-2

Mission: Provide recommendations, strategies, and supporting documentation to the City on oversight and stewardship of conservation lands within the City boundaries.

Scope: The committee's efforts shall be limited to undeveloped lands recognized or formally-identified for their conservation values. Developed properties and City lands with industrial or intensive recreational uses are outside the committee's scope.

Activities may include:

- Develop a framework for Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), comment on management plans, joint projects, and title transfers with owners of conservation lands and conservation easements on those lands;
- Help to develop formal deed instruments for full protection of all conservation lands;
- Participate in management planning on the City's behalf;
- Advise private owners in designating protection for the golf course area;
- Advise or facilitate transfer or association of private parcels to larger conservation units.

We last reported to the council on March 10, 2025. We outlined and assigned our top priorities as 1) securing a conservation easement on the DeBoer beach meadows tracts to be held by the Southeast Alaska Land Trust, led by Susan Warner; 2) Mapping and description of all conservation lands in Gustavus, assigned to John Barry; 3) initial contacts and discussions with The Nature Conservancy of Alaska regarding a possible memorandum of understanding between the City and TNC toward mutual assurance of the sustainability of TNC lands comprising the Gustavus Forelands Preserve, led by Kathy Streveler, Colleen Stansbury, Tanner Horst and Larry Landry; and 4) establishment of a relationship with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to track management of the Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area and to advocate for formal addition of shoreline Tracts A&B, purchased through the 2004 Land Legacy for addition to the CHA, led by Mike Taylor.

The Committee has met monthly in posted public meetings to coordinate our tasks, while individuals have worked on their assigned tasks between meetings. We are pleased to report significant progress toward our assigned directives.

Beach Meadows Conservation Easement

Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEALT) is negotiating terms of a temporary two-year conservation easement with the DeBoer family. The SEALT legal advisor completed a document detailing the easement terms and SEALT forwarded it to the DeBoers for review and consideration. The temporary easement would be partially funded by a grant from the City of Gustavus Endowment Fund with substantial additional funding from private donations already on hand from Gustavus residents. SEALT discussions with the family also extend to the potential permanent conservation easement to follow the expiration of the temporary easement. SEALT is preparing a grant application with the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) to fund a permanent easement if such is agreed by the DeBoer family. There are other grant possibilities if the NWACA grant is not awarded to the project. In support of the temporary easement and the possible long-term easement, SEALT staffer Dan Hysell and volunteer David Love came to Gustavus April 29-30 and mapped the beach meadows lands, documenting details and conditions. Committee members Colleen Stansbury and Mike Taylor assisted with the field work.

Susan Warner sponsored and arranged a photo exhibit and competition at the Gustavus Community Center in May depicting the wildlife and natural values of the beach meadows. The exhibit opening and awards ceremony were each well attended. The exhibition highlighted the special community values of the beach meadows. 70 individuals voted on the photos exhibited. Thanks are due to all who submitted fine photos and to those who enjoyed seeing them and voted for their favorites.

Susan continues to track developments on the conservation easement and SEALT grant applications and will report updates to the committee at the June 19 meeting. Thanks to Susan for her leadership toward conservation of the beach meadows tracts for the benefit of present and future Gustavus residents!

Conservation Lands Mapping and Descriptions

Before our committee's work, no single source conveyed full information on conservation lands across Gustavus. John Barry accepted the challenge and searched online sources such as Alaska Mapper, DNR Records Office files with plats and deeds, and other online documentation for conservation parcels across. Using Alaska Mapper, he completed new consolidated maps for the key areas with summary descriptions, deed restrictions, easements and other protective measures for each tract. He is working with Clerk Barker to post the information on the City website for easy access by city residents and staff. Look for it soon on the City's web page for our committee. This will be a valuable reference resource far into the future. Thanks to John for his detailed and careful work in assembling this information and to Clerk Barker for making it available to the public soon.

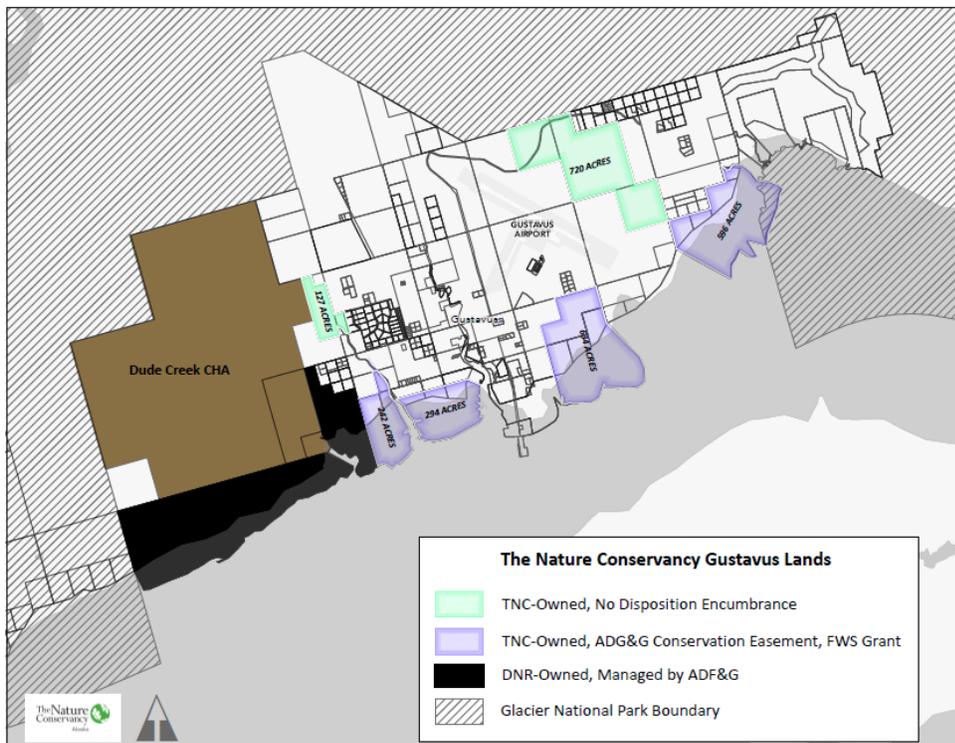
TNC Gustavus Forelands Preserve

TNC representatives Hank Lentfer and Julia Nave zoomed into our March 7 meeting,

which kicked off a new, stronger partnership between TNC and the City of Gustavus, represented by the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee. The Committee team of Kathy Strevler, Colleen Stansbury, Tanner Horst and Larry Landry are working with TNC toward a celebration next September of the Gustavus Forelands Preserve, now 21 years old. The intent is to raise awareness of the Preserve lands, locations, and natural values and to promote sustainable use. We envision quite a party! Most important, we have established a working relationship with TNC Alaska toward assuring sustainability of the Preserve lands with input from Gustavus residents regarding any management issues. There are no immediate threats to the Preserve lands and TNC says they have no plans for any ownership transfer. The team will consider with TNC whether some additional trails might support better low-impact access and enjoyment by residents and visitors. Any suggestions will be brought forth for public comment and input before being carried forward. Thanks to Kathy, Colleen, Tanner, and Larry for leadership on our relationship with TNC.

Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area

The Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area was established primarily to sustain habitat for sandhill cranes. It is also widely appreciated for moose hunting and other recreation. The CHA is managed with a light touch by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Habitat Division, under the direction of Roy Churchwell. Roy assures us that ADF&G is satisfied with the current management regime and sees no immediate risks to habitat there. Human use and impacts are low, and the wildlife is getting along just fine. ADF&G will continue to monitor conditions, particularly during hunting seasons, and consult with us if they see issues developing.



Roy is aware the two Tracts A&B (black area on map above) between the south boundary of the CHA and the Icy Passage shoreline were purchased by TNC and deeded back to the State for addition to the CHA, and that no formal legislative action has yet added those two shoreline tracts. At his suggestion, ADF&G Legislative Liaison Joe Felki and I discussed the tracts by phone call. Joe confirmed that ADF&G continues to support the formal addition of Tracts A&B to the CHA and is prepared to help with a bill when either the Governor or our legislative delegation request it. I suggested that a complete package might also include the southwest quarter of Section 16 (an inactive school trust parcel shown as a white box next to the NPS boundary on the map above) be added to the CHA. The other three-quarters of that school trust section are already in the CHA, and it seems reasonable that the last quarter should be managed similarly. To those ends, I emailed our legislative delegation communicating the committee's continuing interest in seeing the CHA addition *as supported by City resolution CY16-14*. Both Senator Keihl and Representative Story are aware of the need to finalize the intent of the 2004 Land Legacy purchase of those tracts and will move legislation forward when the political conditions appear supportive.

The committee meets next at 6:30 pm, June 19, 2025 at City Hall. Interested members of the public are welcome to join us.

I'm honored to serve with the fine group of dedicated Gustavus residents comprising this committee. John Barry, Tanner Horst, Larry Landry, Kathy Streveler, Colleen Stansbury, Susan Warner, and volunteer recording secretary Shelley Owens share a vision and dedication to sustaining our abundant natural land resources for present and future Gustavus generations. I thank them for their fine work on the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee. Finally we appreciate the support of City Clerk Liesl Barker for posting our agendas and updating our website with committee materials.

Mike Taylor

Conservation Lands Advisory Committee Chair