



NEWSLETTER

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PO Box 100627; Anchorage, AK 99510-0264

907/334-8049

www.alaska-trails.org

ALASKA TRAILS NEWS AND NOTICES

USE "PICK. CLICK. GIVE." TO DONATE TO ALASKA TRAILS

Alaska Trails is included in the Permanent Fund Dividend's "Pick. Click. Give" charitable contributions program. It's a secure and easy way to make a donation. When you file for your PFD online, you will be given an opportunity to donate using money from your PFD. If you do, please remember Alaska Trails.

If you use "Pick. Click. Give" you will be able to check a box that authorizes the state to send your name, contact information and the amount you give when it sends contributions to an organization. We want to acknowledge and recognize your generous support, and this is the only way we will know it's you making the gift.

For more information on "Pick. Click. Give" see: www.pickclickgive.org.

ANNUAL REPORT OUTLINES ALASKA TRAILS SUCCESSES, GOALS

The 2015 Alaska Trails Annual Report is now online. The document includes stories on the trails conference held in Wasilla in April, the Alaska Trails Fall Fundraiser held in November, projects Alaska Trails is involved in, and goals for 2016. See it at www.alaska-trails.org. (Links are on the home page, sidebar, and in Documents > Annual Reports.)

TRACS TRAIL TRAINING SCHEDULED FOR APRIL IN ANCHORAGE

Please mark your calendars for a Trail Fundamentals and TRACS (Trail Assessment and Condition Surveys) training to happen from Tuesday, April 19, to Thursday, April 21, in Anchorage with Jaime Schmidt. We will have registration information soon in the new year. Please call Alaska Trails with any questions or for more information at [907-334-8049](tel:907-334-8049).

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2016 STATEWIDE TRAILS CONFERENCE

Please mark your calendars now for our annual conference, which will be held May 5-7 in Anchorage. We are looking forward to a robust and exciting conference. Alaska Trails would also like your input on topics and speakers that you would like to see at the conference. Please e-mail us at office@alaska-trails.org to share your ideas for the 2016 conference.

ALASKA TRAILS HAS INFO TO HELP GET ALASKANS ON TRAILS

Alaska Trails has an online database of trail guides and other trail-related information found on the Internet. The information is broken down into folders based on regions including statewide, Southeast, Southcentral, and Interior. Clicking on a folder gives a user more folders from which to choose.

People interested in exploring new trails will find an abundance of resources at their fingertips. See the database at: <http://www.alaska-trails.org/cgi/otg/trailguide.cgi>

(Graphic from Alaska State Parks [Trail Browser](#), one of the resources in the database.)



KEEP TRAILS IN THE PUBLIC EYE DURING TOUGH BUDGET TIMES

The Alaska State Legislature will be meeting soon and the budget outlook is bleak. More cuts are being called for, as well as more revenues, such as taxes. Trail advocates need to speak loudly if trails are to be treated fairly. There are several ways trails could be affected.

- Staffing for the Recreational Trails Program could be cut, This would be a huge mistake as \$200,000 in state funding brings in more than \$1 million from the federal government (a 7-to-1 return last year), but that \$200,000 has been considered for the budget axe before.
- Staffing for the Department of Natural Resources could be cut. Very few people in state government work solely on trails, but many deal with trails as part of their jobs. If positions are cut, other duties may take precedence over trails.
- Pullouts along roads that offer parking for access to trailheads could see less maintenance, including snowplowing, as the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities focuses on keeping high-traffic roads clear.
- Direct state grants for trail projects could dry up.
- General grants to local governments could be reduced or cut altogether. That will have a ripple effect on all local government operations, including any that deal with trails.

So, what can trail advocates do? Let your voice be heard.

- Call or write your legislators. Our legislators will have many things vying for their attention this session. If they don't hear from trail advocates they may think that trails are not important to Alaskans. Contact information for senators and representatives can be found at: <http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/> (For guidance in writing letters, see www.alaska-trails.org/get_involved/lobbyletters.shtml.)
- Call or write the governor: <http://gov.alaska.gov/Walker/contact/office-locations.html>
- Write an editorial or letter to the editor for your local newspaper.
- Have your trail-related group pass a resolution, then send that to your legislators, the governor, and the local newspaper.

ORTAB TO CONSIDER RTP GRANTS; PUBLIC INVITED TO ATTEND

The Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board will meet January 6 and 7 in Anchorage to consider grant applications. The public is welcome to attend the meeting which will be held from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm both days in Suite 1270 of the Atwood Building, located at 550 West 7th Ave in Anchorage.

During the meeting, the ORTAB will evaluate grant proposals for the Recreational Trails Program. The board will provide recommendations to the Director of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, who will make decisions on funding for those applications.

To join the meeting via toll-free teleconference, please dial 866/918-8374, conference code 5569714090. Contact Darcy Harris at 907/269-8699 or darcy.harris@alaska.gov for more information. For special accommodations, auxiliary aid or services, and/or an alternative communication format to participate in this meeting, please contact Darcy at least two days in advance of the meeting to make the necessary arrangements.

For more information on the Recreational Trails Program, go to <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm>.

(From state DNR press release)



STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN HAS TRAIL-RELATED PROJECTS

The draft of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) was approved on November 27, 2015. The plan funds transportation programs from 2016-2019. Information about the program can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/nts4d5r>

A search of the program document found several trail references. See regional news sections for specifics.

STATEWIDE TRAILS AND PUBLIC LANDS RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- Eagle Watch, Alaska State Parks (December): <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/eaglewatch/eaglewatchcurrent.pdf>
- Alaska Nordic Skier (December issue has several trail-related stories): <http://tinyurl.com/nkd4nzx>

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Clothing that wards off winter chill in Alaska: <http://tinyurl.com/o39kg4p>
- App lets researchers into the risk-taking minds of backcountry adventurers: <http://tinyurl.com/z2zkmot>
- Winter Trails Day events are scheduled for January 9 in Valdez and Juneau but have little information yet. See <http://www.wintertrails.org/find-a-site/> > Alaska for updates.

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Trapped: Fairbanks man claws himself out of avalanche: <http://tinyurl.com/glwexe4>
- Applying a 'would-you-survive-in-the-wild' quiz to Alaskans: <http://tinyurl.com/h6yqwb8>
- With courage, skill, climbers established several firsts in Alaska mountains this year: <http://tinyurl.com/jckryr>
- Reaching the biggest unclimbed summit in North America: <http://tinyurl.com/ntxwwhw>

SOUTHCENTRAL NEWS AND NOTICES

ALASKA STATE PARKS HOSTS FIRST DAY OUTDOOR EVENTS IN HOMER

Alaska State Parks is encouraging Alaskans to celebrate the New Year by enjoying the great outdoors in their local state parks. The events listed below are part of the First Day Hike initiative sponsored by state park systems throughout the United States. For more information on the First Day Hike initiative see: <http://tinyurl.com/zoucape>

3-mile round-trip hike, ski or snowshoe in the Eveline State Recreation Area:

- Date/time: Jan. 1, 12 pm
- Location: Meet at the Eveline State Recreation Area parking lot. Take East End Road for 13.8 miles past the McNeil Canyon School, take the left onto Alpine Meadow Drive and go .3 miles to the trailhead.
- Difficulty: Easy
- Minimum Age for Children: All ages
- Restrictions: Please leave your dogs at home for this hike.
- Things to bring: Skis/snowshoes/warm hiking boots (depending on conditions).
- Cancellation information 907/235-7042.

1-mile Kachemak Bay State Park: Water Trail:

- Date/time: Jan. 2, 10am-2pm
- Location: Meet at the start of the Water Trail on the Homer Spit at "The Rock," next to the fishing pond.
- Difficulty: Moderate
- Minimum Age for Children: 15

- Restrictions: Please leave your dogs at home.
- Things to bring: kayak and paddle, life jacket, snacks, water, weather appropriate gear.
- Cancellation information: 907/491-1355
(From Alaska State Parks press release)

MAP SHOWS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANDFILL, MATANUSKA TRAILS

A map is now available online that shows what might happen to the Matanuska Greenbelt trails if the Matanuska-Susitna Borough central landfill continues to expand.



People who love these trails might be disturbed by the map, but please remember that the pinkish cells are **proposed** and the timeline is anywhere from 20 to 100 or more years into the future.

“This is a revised plan,” Dot Helm, a Matanuska Greenbelt trails volunteer, wrote in an email. “The earlier one had us losing trails as of 2009.”

But now is the time to start taking action if all or some of the trails are to be saved. In a summary of the December Matanuska Greenbelt Trails (MGT) meeting Helm pointed out that “the more you recycle / reuse, the less goes into the landfill (slowing its advance).” She also pointed out that there are other options, such as incineration, for dealing with trash. However, any option will take a lot of time to implement.

The map was first shown at the December meeting of the MGT meeting, when Butch Shapiro, the borough's solid waste manager, did a presentation on the central landfill sequencing plan.

See the map here: <http://tinyurl.com/j8uaqzm>. (If you want to alter the transparency or turn some layers on/off, go to the Content part in the left margin.)

See the entire landfill sequencing plan here: <http://tinyurl.com/zxntcxj>

STUDY SHOWS BIG RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN MAT-SU TRAILS, PARKS

Earth Economics, an economic research firm from Tacoma, Washington, recently released a study on the economic benefits of trails, parks, and open space in the Mat-Su Borough. Below is the executive summary from the report. See the full report at: <http://tinyurl.com/zrxowfh>

Investing in public open spaces is a wise choice for the people of the Matanuska- Susitna (Mat-Su) Basin. This report finds that for every \$1 spent on public open space in the Mat-Su, there is a \$5.31 return on investment. Not only is investment in open spaces a fiscally responsible decision; it is also necessary for the survival of ecosystems and all of the Alaskan communities they support.

In 2013, Earth Economics conducted a study of the value of the natural assets, also called natural capital, of the Mat-Su. The study used an analysis of land cover types to identify ecosystem services that natural assets provide, such as water supply, raw materials, and recreational value. In all, the natural assets of the Mat-Su totaled at least \$20 billion in annual benefits to the regional economy.

At the same time the ecosystem services study was commissioned, there was a desire from the public for more specific information about the value of public open spaces from the perspective of local people. A 2014 survey revealed that residents prioritize, in order: 1) protecting and restoring healthy salmon runs, 2) retaining and conserving farmland, and 3) expanding access to non-motorized recreation.¹ All three priorities reflect the importance that residents place on protecting the integrity of the lands where their communities are located.

This report, *Economic Benefits of Trails, Parks and Open Space in the Mat-Su Borough*, is the first comprehensive return on investment analysis of the Mat-Su's open space that includes natural capital and health benefits. Using novel techniques and case studies for calculating value and rates of return on investment in natural capital, this report shows that *investing in trails, parks and public open space provides significant goods and services with a high return on investment.*

MEETING TO DISCUSS BIKE PARK PART OF SOUTH ANCHORAGE PARK

Come share your thoughts at a public meeting to discuss the "Bike Park" component of the South Anchorage Sports Park! Pizza will be provided!

- When: Wed. Jan 6, 6-8pm
- Where: Speedway Cycles, 1231 West Northern Lights Blvd.
- The purpose of the meeting is to share the project status and gain feedback from our community. Please spread the word and RSVP to: nevinsmv@muni.com
- For questions, please contact: Maeve Nevins (nevinsmv@muni.org; 343-4135)
- Project website link (being updated): <http://www.muni.org/Departm.../parks/Pages/SASPmasterplan.aspx>
(From Singletrack Advocates Facebook post)

PETITION CALLS FOR HOMER AREA FATBIKE/PACKRAFT TRAIL

A Homer adventurer is trying to establish a fatbike/packraft trail around Kachemak Bay. Such a route might be the first official fatbike/packraft trail in the nation.

Bjorn Olson, who describes himself as a life-long Alaskan adventurer, photographer and storyteller, has started a petition that would allow fatbikes in Kachemak Bay State Park. The bikes are currently not allowed. Olson's ultimate goal is to establish the Kachemak Bay Adventure Trail. This trail would encircle Kachemak Bay with portions being on land and portions being on water. The start and end points would be in Anchor Point and Seldovia. Large sections of the trail cross state park land.

According to Olson's website about the trail:



Kachemak Bay Adventure Trail (KBAT) would be a defined route that weaves along the perimeter of Kachemak Bay, over both water and land. Inspired by the recent addition of the Kachemak Bay Water Trail, this wilderness route would be designed for the dual sport of using a wide-tired bicycle in conjunction with an inflatable raft.

Olson is hoping the petition will influence the planning process of the update of the Management Plan for the Kachemak Bay State Park and the Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park. A public scoping period for the update has already passed and a draft plan is being worked on, but the public will officially have a chance to comment on the draft plan.

For more information check out these sites:

- Kachemak Bay Adventure Trail: <http://kb-at.blogspot.com>
- Petition to allow fatbikes in Kachemak Bay State Park: <http://tinyurl.com/zybwfcc>
- Kachemak Bay State Park and State Wilderness Park Planning: <http://tinyurl.com/hq9rrj8>

(Photo from Kachemak Bay Adventure Trail website: Dylan Kench rides toward Fox River.)

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN TRAIL-RELATED PROJECTS

Following are Southcentral area projects from the recently approved draft of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). They are either trail-specific or have a trail component:

- MP 99-105 Bird and Indian Improvements: Design and construct Seward Highway improvements. Project includes passing lanes and **bike/ped trail**. Includes replacement of bridge over Indian Creek.

- Upgrade Seward Meridian Road to four lanes, a center turn lane, and a **pathway** from Parks Highway to Seldon Road. Intersection improvements will be needed at the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, Bogard Road and Seldon Road. Project to be developed in two phases: Parks Highway to Palmer-Wasilla Highway Palmer-Wasilla Highway to Seldon.
- MP 34-42 Reconstruction - Parks to Old Glenn Hwy: Reconstruct to four lanes, **pathway** and shoulders. Accommodate turning movements and add traffic, safety, and intersection improvements as necessary. Project may be developed in phases.
- Pedestrian safety improvements in the general vicinity of the Parks Highway/Talkeetna Spur Road intersection. Project components include: 1) a lighted Parks Highway underpass from East Helena Ave to the north side of the Susitna Valley Middle/High School driveway, 2) a **pathway** on the east side of the Parks Highway from the underpass north to the Talkeetna Spur Road, and 3) a painted sidewalk across the Talkeetna Spur Road connecting the improvements to existing **bike path**.
- Kenai Spur Road Environmental Mitigation: Project consists of upgrading the existing dirt **road/trail** with an upgraded hardened surface to mitigate the wetlands impacts from vehicle expanding the footprint of the current facility as they try to avoid the worst "mudholes".
- Resurface existing Beaver Loop Roadway, add paved shoulders and separated pedestrian **pathway**. Length is approx 3.75 miles. The City of Kenai will assume ownership and maintenance of this state owned facility upon project completion.
- Sterling Safety Corridor Improvements MP 82.5 to 94: Projects consists of expanding the highway from Soldotna to Sterling as a 4 lane divided highway with median or center two-way left turn lane where appropriate. Also included are a **pathway** and continuous illumination.
- Design and construct a 10' wide **pedestrian/bicycle pathway** from Glennallen through Tazlina, and into Copper Center within the existing DOT&PF right-of- way, 10.9 miles in length. The project also includes a **pedestrian bridge**, approximately 469 feet in length. This is a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) award. (To be delivered by Western Federal Lands Division.)

COMMENT ENDS DEC 31 FOR BUTTE AREA TRAIL EASEMENT APPLICATION

The Knik River Watershed Group has applied for an easement to protect the Chain of Lakes Trail in Butte near Palmer. The public comment period for the application ends December 31.



The non-motorized, single-track hiking trail extends several miles from the motorized, multi-use Rippy Trail, just past the Jim Creek Bridge, southeast along the mountains that line the northern border of the Knik watershed.

According to the Department of Natural Resources application, the trail requires "almost no maintenance for hiking use. All clearing where needed is easily done by hand. No surface improvements are necessary, with possible exceptions of minor reroutes around a few soft areas."

In addition to being a hiking trail, the application refers to it as being a "traditional canoe destination" and says it is a rich wildlife area "where the visitor is able to view fish, waterfowl, mammals – including swans and sheep."

The application was submitted in December 2008 but has taken several years to process. To find out more, including where to comment, see: <http://tinyurl.com/hpc7eqx>

KODIAK VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY - SHUYAK ISLAND DEBRIS CLEANUP

The summer of 2016 Island Trails Network (ITN) is coordinating a marine debris cleanup of Shuyak Island State Park in cooperation with the NOAA Marine Debris Program and the State of Alaska. Every two weeks from June 12 to September 4, 3-6 volunteers are needed to collect and stockpile marine debris for removal later in the

summer. We will travel to the clean up sites and move between camps in sea kayaks.

ITN provides travel from Kodiak to Shuyak, sea kayaks and gear, drysuits (if needed), most camping gear, safety gear, food and remedial sea kayak coaching. You provide some personal camping gear, \$500/person donation, personal clothing, and enthusiasm for wilderness camping and marine debris cleanup. Volunteers need to be fit, able to live in remote base camps, paddle a sea kayak 2-6 hours per day, and pick up marine debris from rocky shorelines. You don't need to be an expert paddler, but you need to be competent.

We apologize for asking for a donation, but marine debris removals are expensive and the contribution of the volunteers' donation is an important part of the plan for the Shuyak project. \$500 is a pretty good deal for a 2-week kayaking trip to Shuyak Island though. To apply, send an email to tom@islandtrails.org with "Shuyak volunteer app" in the subject line, and you'll get an application packet you can fill out and return.

(From ITN Facebook post)

SOUTHCENTRAL LINKS

- Anchorage's U-Med road project would have affected several trails
 - Anchorage mayor cancels U-Med road project: <http://tinyurl.com/j59w6eg>
 - Locals won latest battle in U-Med road fight but next generation will keep watch: <http://tinyurl.com/h3uxwro>
 - Anchorage Assembly members challenge mayor on U-Med road decision: <http://tinyurl.com/ooxdqjr>
- State chooses new Sterling Highway route bypassing Cooper Landing: <http://tinyurl.com/jayhgo4>
 - DOTPF press release: http://dot.alaska.gov/comm/pressbox/arch_2015/PR15-2563.shtml
- Snowmachiners riding again in Turnagain Pass after long hiatus: <http://tinyurl.com/omgedwc>
- Price of popular Forest Service cabin rentals rising starting Jan. 1: <http://tinyurl.com/no8jq3u>
- Come winter, Hatcher Pass offers diverse variety of pursuits: <http://tinyurl.com/jbwoado>
- Island Trails Network seeks interim board member (two-year commitment): <http://tinyurl.com/naxkndc>
- Coping with low-snow winters in Alaska takes extra effort: <http://tinyurl.com/jmcwjfe>

INTERIORWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

STATE PARKS HOSTS FIRST DAY OUTDOOR EVENT IN DELTA JUNCTION

Alaska State Parks is encouraging Alaskans to celebrate the New Year by enjoying the great outdoors in their local state parks. The event listed below is part of the First Day Hike initiative sponsored by state park systems throughout the United States. For more information on the First Day Hike initiative see: <http://tinyurl.com/zoucape>

1.5-mile round-trip hike, ski or snowshoe in the Quartz Lake State Recreation Area

- Date/time: January 1, 12 pm
- Location: Meet at the Glatfelder Trailhead. The Quartz Lake State Recreation Area is ten miles north of Delta Junction and is reached by a three-mile road at mile 277.8 of the Richardson Highway. Follow the signs to the boat ramp and park in the parking lot adjacent to the Glatfelder Trailhead. From there we will ski, hike or snowshoe to the historic Glatfelder log cabin.
- Difficulty: Easy
- Minimum age for children: All ages
- Restrictions: None
- Things to bring: water, a snack to share, snowshoes/skis/warm hiking boots and clothing (as appropriate).
- Cancellation information: 907/415-2698.

(From Alaska State Parks press release)

NEW NAVIGATIONAL SKI SIGNS ADDED TO BIRCH HILL TRAILS

The local ski club has installed new navigational signs along one of the trails connected to the Birch Hill Recreation Area.

New signs have been placed by the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks (NSCF) at every intersection on the outbound leg of the White Bear Trail, most of which is actually on Fort Wainwright land.

Most of the signs have two parts. One has an arrow indicating the direction to go to stay on the White Bear 10-kilometer loop. The other shows the direction back to the Stadium via the White Bear and the distance from that intersection back to the stadium by the shortest route. Both parts of the signs also indicate whether the trail is Easier (green), More Difficult (blue), or Most Difficult (black). The signs have large black lettering on a white background, making them easy to read, even in low light conditions. The signs also give each intersection an official name.

In addition to the intersections signs, signs have been placed at each kilometer along the trail. Each kilometer sign shows the distance covered and the distance remaining, if you ski the whole White Bear Trail (e.g. 1Km/9Km, 2Km/8Km).

The new signs are the first phase of a multi-phase trail signing project at Birch Hill Recreation Area. In phase two, which is scheduled for summer 2016, similar signs will be added to the recreation area's other trails.

Other phases include signs that indicate recommended longer (10Km-25Km) loops of varying difficulty, signs that indicate the route of Birch Hill's International Ski Federation (FIS) certified competition courses, and various other signs, such as place names and maps.

The sign project is being financed by a grant from Fairbanks 2014 Arctic Winter Games Organizing Committee. Tom Helmers, NSCF head groomer, and John Estle, NSCF administrator and race director, are heading up the project.

"Our objective is to have a signing system that would enable a person who is skiing at Birch Hill for the very first time to be able to get around as much or as little of the trail system as they desire to ski, and to do so on trails that are appropriate to their skill and fitness level," according to Estle. "We'd be interested to hear from people if they find the new signs informative and helpful."

(Written with help from John Estle; photo of White Bear trail sign courtesy of John Estle.)



TANANA LAKES REC AREA OFFERS GROOMED WINTER TRAILS

Winter trail users have a new place to play in Fairbanks.

Tanana Lakes Recreation Area, a new and popular summer spot, now has groomed trails for a variety of winter activities, including cross-country skiing, walking and snowmachining.



The area has been used by Fairbanks residents for many years, but until the development of the recreation area using the area had been a do-it-yourself venture. Last winter the borough's parks and recreation department tentatively started grooming some trails. This winter the department is trying to keep the trails regularly groomed, though the area has just two staff so the grooming schedule is based on trail usage and weather conditions, according to Milissa Ackels-Stowell, facility supervisor.

The area currently has about 1.5 miles of groomed skiing trails and another 2 miles of groomed multi-use motorized trails that can be used for a variety of activities, such as snowmachining, walking and skiing. The ski specific trails have tracks for classic skiing and enough groomed space for skate skiing. Park staff will add more trails on Cushman Lake as the ice firms up.

Skiers, please note that some people are using the ski trails for walking. This is a work in progress as park employees try to figure out how best to serve the different user groups, said Ackels-Stowell.

All roads in the park have been plowed, except the summer service roads, which are being used for motorized multi-use trails. A portion of each parking area has been plowed to allow for parking. The Tanana River forms the southern boundary of the rec area, so access should be easy to the river, a popular winter trail when it freezes.

The southern portion of the rec area, south of Cushman Lake, is open to motorized use.

“There are several existing trails in that area that are utilized by ATVs and snowmachines,” Ackels-Stowell wrote in an email. “We have not yet developed this area but it is widely used.”

To see a map of the winter trails see the Tanana Lakes Recreation Area webpage at: <http://tinyurl.com/hpvhv66>. Also check the Fairbanks North Star Borough Facebook page for updates to the map: <http://tinyurl.com/zofgaa8>

(Photo of Flicker Trail courtesy of FNSB Parks and Recreation Department)

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN TRAIL-RELATED PROJECTS

Following are Interior area projects from the recently approved draft of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). They are either trail-specific or have a trail component:

- Mark overland winter **trails** in Northern Region with semi-permanent trail markers. Trail markers will ensure winter travelers can safely journey between communities in the area.
- Construct intersection improvements along Airport Way between Dale Road and the Parks Hwy. Project includes **bicycle/pedestrian facilities** along Hoselton Road to the Boat Street path.
- Construct a paved **bicycle/pedestrian path** on the Richardson Highway between MP 356 - 362, starting from the Richardson Highway/Airport Way intersection, continuing along the Richardson Highway to the Badger Loop North Bound Ramp, and terminating at the Badger Road/Old Richardson Highway intersection.
- Construct dedicated pedestrian facilities at MP 231 (McKinley Village), including intersection improvements, a rest area, and **trail** and pedestrian facility connections.
- Design and construct two new waysides on the Taylor Highway; the Jack Wade Recreational Gold Panning Wayside between MP 82.5 and MP 85.5 and the Mosquito Fork Dredge **Trailhead** at MP 68.1.

NORTHERN AREA STATE PARKS ADVISORY BOARD SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

Alaska State Parks is recruiting to fill several positions on the Northern Area State Parks Citizen Advisory Board. Each member's term is three years with an option to renew. Board members are recruited from the community at large to represent the various recreational, historical, and cultural resource interests in a balanced manner for the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

The advisory board fills an important role of communication between Alaska State Parks and the public. Most recently, the board considered issues including the proposed Stampede State Recreation Area near Healy, the Mastodon Trail in Chena River State Recreation Area, and year-round maintenance of bathrooms at highway rest stops. This year the board issued letters of support for funding through the federal Recreation Trails Program, the Pittman Robertson Act, and capital improvement projects in the northern area. Each fall the board hosts a briefing for the Interior legislative delegation.

Board meetings are held September through May on the second Wednesday of each month at the Alaska Department of Natural Resources office, located at 3700 Airport Way in Fairbanks. The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 13. Members from outlying areas can attend meetings by teleconference. The board welcomes the public to attend their monthly meetings.

Applications are available at the state parks office at 3700 Airport Way or online at www.alaskastateparks.org. Contact: Brooks Ludwig, 451-2698, brooks.ludwig@alaska.gov

(From Alaska State Parks press release)

FORESTRY BOARD OPENINGS CAN INCLUDE RECREATION CONCERNS

January 6 is the deadline for applications for four seats for the Tanana Valley State Forestry Citizen's Advisory Committee. Reappointments will be reconsidered for members with expired terms. This 12-person committee advises the division on plans and proposals for managing the 1.8 million-acre Tanana Valley State Forest and other forested lands managed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in the Tanana Valley. The committee is also a forum for gathering public opinion on management of state forests and helps build a regional consensus about forestry.

These are unpaid, volunteer positions. Descriptions of the vacant or expired seats are: Regional Representative - Lower Tanana Valley represents the public on a regional basis. This includes commercial and non-commercial as well as consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the forest area. The representative should reside in the western Tanana Valley west of the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Private Forest User represents the incidental forest user for both consumptive and non-consumptive activities including subsistence and personal use. Mining Industry represents organizations and individuals involved in the mineral exploration, extraction, and processing industries. Tourism Industry represents the commercial operators who directly use forest lands as well as those whose customers are incidentally exposed.

To apply, send a letter explaining your interests and your qualifications to Jim Schwarber at james.schwarber@alaska.gov. For more information, you may call a Division of Forestry Area Office at: Fairbanks: (907) 451-2704; or Tok: (907)883-5134. Meetings are held about four times each year. More information about the committee may be found at http://www.forestry.alaska.gov/tvsf_committee.htm.

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- Alaska Dog Musers Association trails are in: <http://tinyurl.com/zg2rs46>
- Early-season overflow persists on Interior lakes: <http://tinyurl.com/ncpyktn>
- Snow Travelers take to the trails from Hilltop to Chatanika: <http://tinyurl.com/z557yv2>
- Fairbanks Alaska Public Lands Information Center newsletter (Jan-Mar): <http://tinyurl.com/z3s44nl>
- The Alaska Division of Mining, Land and Water is requesting a public access easement within the Robertson River Subdivision for an access route that branches off of the Forrest Lake Trail (ADL 415250). Comment period open until Jan 28: <http://tinyurl.com/zulv2uy>

SOUTHEAST NEWS AND NOTICES

COMMENT PERIOD OPEN FOR TREADWELL DITCH TRAIL BRIDGES PROJECT

January 16 is the deadline for comments on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for Treadwell Ditch Trail Bridges Construction Project to replace 38 bridges, perform some tread work, and protect and preserve heritage resources on the Treadwell Ditch Trail between the Blueberry Hills Access Trail and the Bonnie Brae Access Trail. The EA briefly explains the current conditions of the area, fully explains the proposed action as well as the no-action alternative, briefly summarizes public involvement and public input, and explains how comments were used in the analysis. It also explains the expected effects of the two alternatives on the environment and people.

For full details of the proposed action, refer to the Environmental Assessment (EA) at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=35471> (case sensitive). The EA and associated maps are located under the "Project Documents—Analysis" heading. The Tongass National Forest and Juneau Ranger District wish to thank Juneau residents for participating in the public meetings and providing comments on plans. For more information or to submit comments, contact Michelle Putz at 907-747-2708 or email mputz@fs.fed.us.

(For guidance in writing letters, see www.alaska-trails.org/get_involved/lobbyletters.shtml.)

(From *What's Up?* by Peg Tileston)

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN TRAIL-RELATED PROJECT

Following is a Southeast area project from the recently approved draft of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). It has a trail component:

- Sitka: Improve Sawmill Creek Road to make it more accessible to pedestrians including those with disabilities and improve mobility of bikers. This project will widen sidewalks on the north side of Sawmill Creek Road from the roundabout at HPR/LAKE/SCR to Jeff Davis. Narrow travel lanes and add 4' bike lanes. Install concrete median to better delineate SCR and DeGroff. Resurface the entire project length. Make the connection from the existing **bike path** to the Jarvis crosswalk ADA compliant.

WESTERN NEWS AND NOTICES

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN TRAIL-RELATED PROJECTS

Following are Western area projects from the recently approved draft of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). They are either trail-specific or have a trail component:

- Mark overland winter **trails** in the western area of Central Region with semi-permanent trail markers. Trail markers will ensure winter travelers can safely journey between communities in the area
- Repave Bering Street from Front Street (Nome) to the intersection of Greg Kruschek Ave/Little Creek Road. Project will include minimal drainage improvements, asphalt repair, improve curb ramps to meet ADA standards as required according to the Alaska Highway Preconstruction Manual, and constructing a **pedestrian facility path** from the existing sidewalk to the end of the project

NATIONWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

HIKING SOCIETY CALLS FOR ACTION ON TRAILS-RELATED BILL

While the Senate has incorporated a slightly “tweaked” version of the [Land and Water Conservation Fund \(LWCF\)](#) reauthorization into a piece of legislation that has already passed through committee with bipartisan support, the House Natural Resources Committee Chairman, Rob Bishop, has introduced an overhaul of LWCF in a bill entitled the Protecting America’s Recreation and Conservation (PARC) Act.

In brief, the bill would allow just 3.5% of LWCF funds to actually be used for land and water conservation. *The PARC Act actually diverts 35% of LWCF funding away from any kind of conservation at all.* Of that 35%, 20% of LWCF funds get returned to the oil and gas industry and 15% go to Payment in Lieu of Taxes, a good program that should be funded from its own appropriations.

Can some aspects of the current LWCF program be adjusted and updated? Absolutely. The Senate did exactly that in its bill. AHS has grave concerns about the PARC Act as it does so much less to actually conserve lands – lands where Americans hike.

To read more and learn how what you can do see: <http://tinyurl.com/pn3gh2f>. (For guidance in writing letters, see www.alaska-trails.org/get_involved/lobbyletters.shtml.)

(From American Hiking Society’s Paperless Trail newsletter)

FORESTRY FOUNDATION PROVIDES OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE GRANTS

January 14 is the deadline for applications for matching grants to enhance the National Forest System from the National Forest Foundation <https://www.nationalforests.org/grant-programs/map>. The Foundation’s Matching Awards Program (MAP) provides grants to nonprofit organizations, universities, and Native American tribes

throughout the U.S. to engage in on-the-ground conservation and restoration projects that have an immediate, quantifiable impact on the National Forest System. Funded projects must address one of the following focus areas: The Outdoor Experiences category supports results-oriented, on-the-ground projects that improve the quality, condition, and care of outdoor experiences in National Forests. The Forest Health category supports results-oriented, on-the-ground, citizen-involved projects that maintain or restore forest resiliency. All grants require at least a one-to-one cash match through non-federal donations. MAP also requires projects to show a strong commitment to civic engagement and community involvement through the direct involvement of the public.

(From What's Up? by Peg Tileston)

GROUPS CELEBRATE PROTECTION OF MAJOR TRAILS PROGRAM

The email message below was sent out by the Coalition for Recreational Trails. Learn more about the group at: <http://www.americantrails.org/rtp/crt.html>.

Dear Members of the CRT and the CRT Council of Advisors: Please share this important message with your networks.

Working together as a potent national force as the Coalition for Recreational Trails, we have achieved a major victory in protecting the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in the recent transportation reauthorization process. Conferees from the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have agreed to new legislation, which covers the next five years (2016-2020), and the bill will now be signed into law by the President. The RTP is essentially unchanged from MAP-21. Annual funding remains at the same \$85 million level over the five years and will be distributed among the states according to the same formula that has been in place since 2009. Unfortunately, the provision allowing a governor to opt out of the RTP also remains in place. Although only one state – Connecticut – has opted out this year, it will be important for the trails community to remain vigilant – just in case other governors appear ready to consider the opt-out provision.

Many thanks to our bipartisan trails champions in the U.S. Congress and to all the RTP advocates across the country. Your unwavering support for this important and effective program made this wonderful victory possible.

Happy trails ahead!

*Marianne Wesley Fowler and Derrick A. Crandall
Co-Chairs, Coalition for Recreational Trails*

AHS OFFERS 2016 VOLUNTEER VACATIONS SCHEDULE

The American Hiking Society's 2016 Volunteer Vacations registration is now live. The group is offering 55 diverse trail maintenance projects across the country. The schedule provides both backpacking and day hiking options, a variety of difficulty levels, and indoor and outdoor accommodations to suit all experience levels and backgrounds. No prior trail maintenance experience is required, just the willingness to get a little dirty and give back to the hiking trails you love.

Find projects and register here: <http://volunteervacations.americanhiking.org/em-volunteer-vacations/>

NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

WEBINARS, MEETINGS, CONFERENCES, TRAINING, ETC.

- For a listing of upcoming trail webinars workshops, conferences, and other meetings, see the American Trails calendar at: www.americantrails.org/Calendar.html

RECENT TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS/MAGAZINES

- American Trails (December): <http://tinyurl.com/jg45aa5>
 - Recreational Trails Program achieves major victory and is funded for five more years!
 - Land & Water Conservation Fund extended for three years
 - Archived webinar on the role of trails in healthy communities, presented by Mark Fenton
 - Oregon rail trail would be one of nation's most scenic
 - and more...
- Outdoor Alliance (December): <http://tinyurl.com/j29ctdh>
 - Big News! LWCF Is Back
 - What Really Happens When You Write To Congress?
 - Keep the Olympics Wild
 - and more...

ADVOCACY

- Public comment open for the 2015-2024 Oregon Statewide Trails Plan: <http://tinyurl.com/o3lvfah>

TRAIL GUIDES

- 50 States, 50 Trails to Run: <http://tinyurl.com/omdkk8q>
- The top 5 winter hiking trails in Toronto: <http://tinyurl.com/grkmxtj>

STUDIES AND REPORTS

- River Network's 2015 Annual Report: <https://www.rivernetwork.org/about/annual-report/>
- Moving to a Highly Walkable Neighborhood and Incidence of Hypertension: <http://tinyurl.com/nh83gg6>
- Regular brisk walking is best exercise for keeping weight down, says research: <http://tinyurl.com/onevayz>
- Quality of Public Open Spaces and Recreational Walking: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26469676

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- Are Mountain Bikers About to Get Their Day in the Wilderness?: <http://tinyurl.com/qyhsx8l>
- NOHVCC's "Great Trails" Book Is A Resource Guide For The OHV Industry: <http://tinyurl.com/nul99x9>
- A Step-by-Step Guide to Winter Camping: <http://tinyurl.com/zdtj778>
- USFS promises more oversight after volunteers wreck trails (Oregon): <http://tinyurl.com/osnb8sb>
- Cheat Sheet: Prep For a Thru-Hike: <http://tinyurl.com/gv4ffxk>
- NOHVCC's New "Great Trails" Book Is A Premier Guide For The OHV Industry: <http://tinyurl.com/nul99x9>

MAPPING AND MAP SITES

- <https://www.pdf-maps.com>
- <http://www.openstreetmap.org/>
- <http://www.opencyclemap.org>
- <http://maps.me/en/home>

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

- World's Best Hikes: New Trails for a New Year: <http://tinyurl.com/jrqa5kq>
- Turkey's Lycian Way Trek in 14 Spectacular Photos: <http://tinyurl.com/zfx5asp>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- The Top 9 Survival Stories of 2015: <http://tinyurl.com/hfru7gl>
- Snowshoe Like a Pro: <http://www.backpacker.com/skills/snowshoe-like-a-pro/>
- 10 Great Cities for Outdoor Fun: <http://tinyurl.com/oygel5k>

- How to Beat Backcountry Insomnia: <http://tinyurl.com/qfum5ap>
- Trapped on a Cliff Side: <http://tinyurl.com/pbro932>
- Survival School: Sharpen a Knife With a Rock (video): <http://tinyurl.com/z56jv2k>

The Alaska Trails board meets via teleconference on the second Tuesday of each month from noon to 1:00 pm. If you want to hear more about Alaska trail topics, share trail information, or propose a trail project, join us for an hour. Members and the public are welcome. More info: office@alaska-trails.org

A copy of this newsletter will also be posted to our web site. Newsletters come out at the beginning of each month. Deadline for articles is five days before the first of the month. Send stories to Editor Eric Troyer at eric.troyer@alaska-trails.org