

ALASKA TRAILS NEWS AND NOTICES

TRAILS CONFERENCE TO FEATURE SPEAKERS, NEW SUBJECTS



Ned Rozell

The Alaska Trails Statewide Trails Conference, to be held May 5-7 in Anchorage, will feature two great keynote speakers and some new topics.

Fairbanks author and adventurer Ned Rozell and Sitka Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins will be the keynote speakers. Rozell has written newspaper columns about science topics for the past 21 years. In the third year of that job, he hiked from Valdez to Prudhoe Bay along the gravel road that runs beside the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. He

wrote the book *Walking my Dog Jane* about that experience and will share stories from that adventure at the trails conference. Kreiss-Tomkins is the youngest member of the Alaska House, in his second term at the age of 26. He will speak on the importance of trails in Alaska and how they can help Alaska become an international destination for adventure travel.

Jonathan
Kreiss-Tomkins

The conference will also feature some new topics. See below:

2016 Statewide Trails Conference – What's new this year?

- Helical Pile Elevated Walkways
- Maps and Apps – a panel on new technology
- Physics for Trail Builders
- Pitching a Bigger Tent
 - How can we increase diversity on trails?
- Combatting Invasives on Trails
- Trail Bridge Options
- Hotel Rate – Only \$89.99 + tax

See you in May at the conference. Registration up soon at www.alaska-trails.org

**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.

TRAIL TRAINING CLASSES TO BE HELD IN APRIL IN ANCHORAGE

Three days of trail classes will be held in Anchorage this April. The classes are being sponsored by Alaska Trails, the US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Sign up now, as these classes can fill up in a hurry. Fees cover the cost of training materials, food and related expenses. You can register via Paypal at the Alaska Trails website: http://www.alaska-trails.org/get_involved/donate.shtml. For more information or to set up other billing arrangements please call [907-334-8049](tel:907-334-8049) or e-mail office@alaska-trails.org

Information for all courses

Where: BLM Anchorage Field Office; 4700 BLM Road. (Near the junction of 68th Avenue and Elmore Road. This is NOT the Campbell Creek Science Center; turn right into the BLM main offices.)

Instructors: Jamie Schmidt, USFS lead trainer and 1-2 other USFS trainers depending on class size. Jaime has more than 20 years of Forest Service recreation and trail management experience in Alaska, Idaho, and Montana.

Cost: \$300 for all three days

Trail Fundamentals and Trail Management Objectives

When: April 19, 1-5pm

Cost: \$75

Description: Trail Fundamentals include five basic five concepts that are cornerstones of effective trail planning: design, construction, maintenance and management. Trail Management Objectives are the documentation of the intended purpose and management of a trail, based on management direction. During this course, you will learn how to put these tools to work for an effective trail program. After this course, you will be able to provide data collection and management tools that are truly useful for local trail program managers, and to provide quality data for a variety of planning, information and reporting needs.

Note: This course can be taken alone; you do not need to sign up for TRACS (below).

TRACS: Trail Assessment and Condition Surveys

When: April 20-21, 8am-5pm

Cost: \$275

Description: TRACS is an approach to efficiently conducting trail assessment and condition surveys resulting in quality field data that is useful for a wide variety of purposes. In this course you will learn how to put first-hand field knowledge into a useful format for program planning, management, inventory and accountability. You'll learn how to collect the right trail information, the first time. You will learn how to use the condition assessment survey matrix, which helps you to prioritize the collection of field data to meet trail planning and management needs.

Notes: You must take, or have recently taken, Trail Fundamentals before you can take TRACS. Lunch is provided on these two days.

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 to 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.)



ALASKA TRAILS NEEDS YOUR HELP TO PRESERVE, PROMOTE TRAILS

This newsletter is brought to you free by Alaska Trails. Our mission is to enhance the Alaska trail experience by supporting sustainable, world-renowned trails through advocacy and education. We couldn't do this without support from our members. Please join or renew your membership here: <http://tinyurl.com/mbvb76k>

All year long we strive to:

- Promote the health, social and economic benefits of trails by educating users through forums, conferences, information materials, training and other activities.
- Preserve and improve public trail access by assisting public and private organizations in forming coordinated programs, policies, and standards.
- Promote sustainable trail systems for all users by developing and providing technical assistance for trail projects.

FOUR EASY WAYS TO HELP FUND ALASKA TRAILS

With the help of other organizations, you can help Alaska Trails continue advocating for trails.

BAGOY'S: Anchorage-based Bagoy's Florist and Home helps through its Helping Hands web fundraising



program (<http://tinyurl.com/oavza6p>). When you order online from Bagoy's (www.bagoys.com) there is a check box at the bottom of the payment page that says "This is a Helping Hands order." When you check that box, the list of enrolled organizations are shown and you can choose Alaska Trails from the list.

FRED MEYER REWARDS: Sign up for the Community Rewards program by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards



Card to Alaska Trails at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. You can search for Alaska Trails or by our nonprofit number – 91035. Then, every time you shop and use your rewards card, you are helping Alaska Trails earn a donation! You still earn your rewards points, fuel points, and rebates, just as you do today.

AMAZONSMILE: If you shop at Amazon, please take the simple extra step of signing up for AmazonSmile. It's



the same Amazon website, but when you shop from AmazonSmile, you can make a donation to Alaska Trails at the same time: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/73-1677483>

GOODSEARCH: GoodSearch.com is a search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to



charities designated by the user. You use it just as you would any search engine, and, it's powered by Yahoo!. Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter Alaska Trails as the charity you want to support.

ALASKA TRAILS HAS TOOL TRAILERS READY FOR TRAIL PROJECTS



As you start planning trail building and maintenance projects, remember that Alaska Trails has mobile tool caches available to loan to organized trail groups in Southcentral and Interior Alaska. One cache is in the Fairbanks area and the other is in Anchorage/Mat-Su Valley area.

The trailers were upgraded recently and have a plethora of trail tools including Mcleods, pulaskis, rakes, gloves, and much, much more. If you would like to borrow one of the caches, please contact us (info on masthead).

ALASKA TRAILS LINKS

- Our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/Alaska-Trails/707066126002590
- 2015 Annual Report: http://www.alaska-trails.org/about_us/documents/reports/2015_Annual_Report.pdf

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Steve Cleary, Executive Director

Staying Busy with Conference, Volunteer Program, and More

Registration will soon open for the Alaska Trails Statewide Trails Conference, coming up May 5-7, in Anchorage.

Our theme this year is: **Doing More with Less** – Building and Maintaining Trails in a time of Fiscal Uncertainty. We are excited to be bringing trail experts, land managers, trail advocates and YOU



together to help us plan, fund, build and maintain Alaska's world-class trails. Gathering trail users, builders and managers under

one roof is extremely valuable and Alaska Trails will engineer the free time needed for new ideas and collaboration to germinate. The conference will focus on teaching sustainable trail techniques to Alaskans from across the state with a special lens on how that can be accomplished in a time of fiscal downturn. Alaska Trails and other presenters at conference will highlight the many health and economic benefits trails have.

A New, Powerful Type of ATV

Alaska Trails has renamed its Adopt-A-Trail program, which will now be called the Alaska Trail Volunteers (ATV). As both a way to encourage stewardship and a way to maintain trails when money is scarce, ATV will be a plus for Alaska. Training and equipping volunteers who will return

year after year and coordinating with land managers to effectively plug in the volunteers are just two of the exciting tasks that ATV has in store. Pilot projects are set to start this spring with a full-fledged plan due out in the fall.

Partnering and MTB Trails

Alaska Trails has been tentatively awarded two Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants. The first is a partnership with the Chugach Mountain Bike Riders to build five miles of mountain bike trails in the Chugiak-Eagle River area. This continues a great collaborative trend for Alaska Trails. We have teamed up with the Single Track Advocates in Anchorage and the Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers in Palmer on similar trails. We are excited to get to work out in Chugiak.

The other project also involves mountain bike trails, this time in Russian Jack Springs Park in Anchorage. This popular park has golf, skiing, sledding, softball, a playground, a greenhouse and a great proximity to schools and neighborhoods. Adding beginner mountain bike trails to the mix will be a great addition to this urban park.

See you at the conference.

Happy Trails,
Steve Cleary



Trails are Transportation

Trails are a part of the transportation network, so Alaska Trails had a booth at the Anchorage Transportation Fair in February. Many people stopped by to find out about us and several signed up for the newsletter.

Photo: Alaska Trails Director Steve Cleary and board member Kristine Bunnell

STATEWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

ALASKA FEDERAL LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM INCLUDES TRAIL FUNDING

A new funding source for state, local, and tribal government agencies can be used for trails. The Alaska Federal Lands Access Program seeks applications for projects that would provide safe and adequate transportation access to and through federal lands for visitors, recreationists, and resource users.

Proposed projects must be located on a public highway, road, bridge, or trail system that is located on, is adjacent to, or provides access to federal lands for which title or maintenance responsibility is vested in a state or municipal government. All proposals must be submitted by the state or local agency with title or maintenance responsibility in close consultation with the appropriate federal land management agency.

There is approximately \$7.9 million annually for this program. Proposals must be received by May 16. Applications need to be completed by the state, borough, city or tribal governments with the specific federal land management agency co-signing the application.

Proposals will be considered for capital improvement, enhancement and planning projects. Capital improvements include rehabilitation, restoration, construction, and reconstruction of roads and trails. Enhancements are road- and trail-related improvements such as, but not limited to, interpretative signing, kiosks, viewpoints, restrooms, provisions for pedestrians and bicycles, scenic easements, trailheads, and improvements that reduce vehicle-wildlife conflicts. Planning projects include corridor plans, transportation plans, and studies related to transportation.

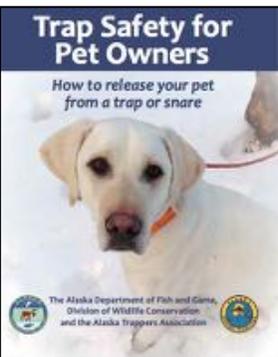
For more information and application forms see: <http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/ak/>

MEDRED STILL WRITING ABOUT THE OUTDOORS ON HIS OWN WEBSITE

Craig Medred, the long-time Anchorage Daily News (and then Alaska Dispatch News) outdoors editor, has started a new writing website. Medred left the ADN earlier over a dispute about journalistic integrity. He still writes about the Alaska outdoors (and other issues) on his website, asking readers for donations. See his website here: <http://craigmedred.news>

RESOURCES HELP REDUCE PET/TRAPPING CONFLICTS

Trapping season is here, so trail users who let their dogs run loose should make sure they know some basic information about traps and trap lines. A Pamphlet and videos are available.



PAMPHLET: A pocket-sized pamphlet titled "Trap Safety for Pet Owners" describes the types of traps and snares that may be encountered and provides illustrated instructions on how to free pets swiftly and safely. It is produced by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Alaska Trappers Association (ATA). Copies are available free of charge at department offices, or may be viewed on the website at: <http://tinyurl.com/m6oulhk>. More information, including video footage featuring trap removal instructions, is found on the department's website at www.adfg.alaska.gov (see "Sharing the Trails" under the "Trapping" tab), and on the ATA website (www.alaskatrappers.org).

VIDEO: The ATA also sells a 30-minute video, "Sharing Alaska's Trails," that includes information such as how to know if you are on a trap line, trap line safety, the physics of handling and opening traps and snares, and tips for first-aid for pets accidentally caught in traps. The video doesn't promote trapping, but deals with the practicalities of sharing the trails. A three-minute excerpt of the DVD can be found on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jk242jZwEAQ). To order a copy of the DVD check the ATA store (www.alaskatrappers.org).



Most trapping seasons run from November 1 to the end of February, but the season for a few species lasts longer. Wolf traps could be active well into April.

RIVER FORECAST SITE KEEPS TRACK OF SNOW DEPTH



The National Weather Service's River Forecast Center has a website that tracks snow depths at many locations across the state. In the spring, summer, and fall, the site also tracks several things regarding rivers, including how breakup is going and what river conditions are like. See the website at: <http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/>. For a brief overview of how the weather service's hydrologic program works in the state, see the web-guide slideshow at: <http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/pubs/Presentations/boaterwebguide.pdf>

STATE PARKS POSITIONS INCLUDE TRAIL DUTIES

Alaska State Parks is looking for seasonal employees and volunteers. Positions include trail crew and backcountry ranger assistant. Applicants must be at least 18 years old.

- For more information on the volunteer program see: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/vip/index.htm>
- For more information on Alaska State Parks seasonal jobs see: <http://tinyurl.com/7mog8q3>

FORAKER GROUP OFFERS CLASSES FOR NON-PROFITS STATEWIDE

The Foraker Group, which is dedicated to strengthening Alaska's non-profits, offers classes about the proper workings of non-profit groups, which include many trail and trail user groups. If you are a member or employee of a non-profit group consider taking one of the classes, which are offered in several communities and statewide by teleconference. For more information visit the Foraker Group website (www.forakergroup.org/) or call 907/743-1200 or (toll free) 877/834-5003.



KEEP TRACK OF STATE LAND USE PLANS FOR IMPACT ON TRAILS



The state Department of Natural Resources has several plans and studies underway across the state that affect how the state deals with its lands. Often this includes land and water trails. These plans and studies have opportunities for public comment. Take a look at the planning web page for the Division of Land, Water, and Mining (<http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/planning/>). If you see a plan or study that affects trails important to you, please look into opportunities for public comment.

TRAIL EASEMENT MIGHT LOWER YOUR PROPERTY TAX

If you've got a recreational trail running across your property that is open to the public, you may qualify for a reduced property tax.

State law requires that land subject to a public recreational use easement (which can include trails) must be assessed at its true value. This recognizes that such easements restrict what a landowner can do with the property subject to the easement. (See AS 29.45.062 and AS 34.17.100. Find Alaska Statutes at www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/folio.asp.)

However, the land or trail in question must have a legal easement. Granting an easement to the state is free and fairly easily. Download the two-page "Public Recreation Easement" form at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/forms/>. The link for the PDF document is about halfway down the page under "Land Forms." Granting the easement will also give the landowner tort and liability immunity (AS 34.17.055).

If you think you may qualify for a property tax reduction due to this law, contact your local government's Assessing Department.

STATEWIDE TRAILS AND PUBLIC LANDS RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- Statewide Alaska Nordic Skier (February issue has a few trail-related stories): <http://tinyurl.com/j5fznh>

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Video: Backpacking in Alaska: <http://www.adn.com/video/video-backpacking-alaska>
- Outdoor Explorer radio show: Winter Bike, Ski, and Foot Races: <http://tinyurl.com/z3ohnvy>
- Iditarod Trail: Proposed pipeline to Donlin gold mine would ruin a piece of history: <http://tinyurl.com/jxhbxkz>
- Iditarod Trail Committee: Donlin Gold plan respects historic trail: <http://tinyurl.com/jctcoz3>
- Fourth-graders (and families) get free pass to any federal parks, lands, and waters: <http://tinyurl.com/hxdg7jd>
- A story map of a 1920 trip from Flat to Anchorage along the Iditarod Trail: <http://tinyurl.com/zbvkaah>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Lifesavers in times of need, Alaska Bush cabins are vanishing: <http://tinyurl.com/jl5qds5>
- National parks are an important part of the state economy (opinion): <http://tinyurl.com/zbyltw5>
- Love it or hate it, Alaska's warm winter is predicted to last until breakup: <http://tinyurl.com/za5gaqw>
- Warming up to Wolverine in winter: <http://www.adn.com/article/20160221/warming-wolverine-winter>

SOUTHEAST LINK

- Stream crossing at the Blue Lake Road drainage of the Heart Lake trail was repaired by Sitka Trail Works (Facebook posting with photos): <http://tinyurl.com/hba3lwn>

SOUTHCENTRAL NEWS AND NOTICES

MEETINGS INVITE COMMENT ON ANCHORAGE WAYFINDING PLAN

The public is invited to attend a public open house to give feedback on the Anchorage Trails Wayfinding Plan. Local landscape architecture firm Earthscape and national wayfinding expert MERJE have developed wayfinding options for the Anchorage Trail system, and the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department and the Anchorage Park Foundation want to hear what people think works best.

The open house will be held Tuesday, March 1, 5-7pm, at Russian Jack Springs Park Chalet (1600 Lidia Selkregg Lane, Anchorage).

On Wednesday, March 2, 10am, a trails initiative meeting will be held at the BP Energy Center. Same contractors, same presentation, but the audience should be more familiar with the needs identified the night before. For more information or if you have questions about the wayfinding plan, please email Trails@AnchorageParkFoundation.org.

DEADLINE NEAR FOR MAT-SU TRAILS FOUNDATION SPRING GRANT CYCLE

March 4 is the deadline for Letters of Intent for the Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation spring 2016 grant cycle. MSTPF partners with entities on projects and efforts that expand and enhance the Mat-Su Valley's trail network and parks. The foundation considers applications for financial assistance on a competitive basis twice per year as funding availability allows.

The first step to apply for financial assistance is to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). An LOI is your organization's idea or "pitch" for your project. Eligible organizations are welcome to submit multiple LOIs year-round to MSTPF. The foundation reviews LOIs twice each year in the spring and the fall. A maximum of one project from each organization may move forward to the full grant process within each funding cycle. The foundation will review all LOIs received by March 4 and select a limited number of applicants to submit a complete grant application. Awards will be distributed approximately 60 days after submitting an LOI. For more information, go to <http://www.matsutrails.org/grants>.

(From What's Up by Peg Tileston)

- Here's a Frontiersman story on the grants: <http://tinyurl.com/jaobr5l>

OPEN HOUSE PLANNED FOR CAMPBELL AIRSTRIP ROAD, TRAIL UPGRADE

A pre-final design open house for Campbell Airstrip Road Upgrade and Trail Improvements will be held Wednesday, March 9, at Baxter Elementary School, 2991 Baxter Road, from 7 to 8:30 pm.

Anchorage's Campbell Airstrip Road is the only way to or from the Stuckagain Heights neighborhood, home to over 100 families. It also provides access to at least six popular trailheads that lead into Far North Bicentennial Park and Chugach State Park.

Three plans have recommended a segment of the road be improved and the multi-use trail be extended through the identified section. This project would provide safe access to both residents and park users and is a top priority for the Basher Community Council.

For more information see: <http://www.campbellairstriproad.com>

ALASKA TRAILS SEEKS HELP WITH STEWART'S ROAD ACCESS SURVEY

Alaska Trails is working with local residents, recreational users and volunteers to document the history of public recreational access to Chugach State Park (CSP), through Upper Potter Valley via the extension of Steamboat Drive and the existing road to the former Stewart Homestead.

We hope that this information will make a persuasive argument for regaining public recreational access to Chugach State Park (CSP) through Upper Potter Valley.

Please call or e-mail Alaska Trails if you would like to participate in the survey. 907/334-8049 or office@alaska-trails.org



COMMENT SOUGHT ON ASPECT OF ANCHORAGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

March 10 is the deadline for comments on the Public Participation Plan for AMATS (Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions).

AMATS was designated in 1976 as a multi-agency team that works together to plan and fund the transportation system in the Anchorage Bowl and Chugiak-Eagle River areas when federal funds are used. The mission of AMATS is to guide the development and implementation of transportation improvements within the Anchorage Bowl and Chugiak-Eagle River.

AMATS leads local planning for all modes of transportation in the metropolitan planning area. These modes include roads, trails, public transit, freight, pedestrian and bicycle travel -- as well as their impacts, such as air quality and congestion. Because AMATS only addresses the urbanized areas of the municipality, planning area boundaries do not include the smaller communities of the Turnagain Arm region, including Girdwood.

For more information or to submit comments go to www.muni.org/transplan/ or contact 907-343-7996 or email amatsinfo@muni.org.

VALDEZ TO HOST REGIONAL FAT BIKE SUMMIT MARCH 18

Trends and best practices will be the focus of a Regional Fat Bike Summit here March 18 led by Mountain Bike Hall of Famer and leading national fat bike advocate Gary Sjoquist.

The summit is designed to bring together retailers, manufacturers, non-profits, trail builders and state and local parks and land use managers to learn and share information and success stories about the fastest growing sector of the cycling industry.

The summit will be held from 9 am to 5 pm in the Valdez Civic Center, 110 Clifton Court, overlooking Prince William Sound. Registration, which includes lunch, is just \$25.

Levitation 49, the new non-profit sports commission in Valdez, is organizing the summit. The summit is followed immediately by the opening night of the Inaugural Chugach Fat Bike Bash, a fun-filled weekend of races and competitions. The festival will mark the world debut of the Fat Freeride World Championships.

The event brings to life a two-year-old dream by Levitation 49 Executive Director Lee Hart.

“The Fat Free Worlds is designed to shine a spotlight on the emerging gravity-fed adrenaline side of a sport that, until now, has mostly focused on endurance events,” Hart said.

Complete information about the summit, Fat Bike Bash, lodging in Valdez, and online registration can be found on the Chugach Fat Bike Bash website, <http://chugachfatbikebash.com>

(From [Levitation 49](#))

SOUTHCENTRAL LINKS

- Island Trails Network’s *trails update*: <http://tinyurl.com/z9w9t5f>
- Chugach Foothills Connector trail project in East Anchorage: <http://www.cfconnector.org>
- Matanuska Greenbelt Trails (race application instructions, forms): www.matanuska-greenbelt.org/events
- Outdoor Explorer radio show: Chugach National Forest Town Hall Meeting: <http://tinyurl.com/holzza9>
- Anchorage’s Youth Employment in Parks is hiring. Deadline March 18: <http://tinyurl.com/hey7mn>
- Trail-related job opening in Homer (application deadline March 9): <http://tinyurl.com/h57amea>
- Campers trashing Prince William Sound threaten its future as wilderness: <http://tinyurl.com/hdoukyc>
- New fees go into effect for Kodiak area state parks starting March 1: <http://tinyurl.com/ha9soo5>
- Kenai River state park advisory board recruiting members: <http://tinyurl.com/hjvatvc>
- Only specific Chugach State Park trails are open to biking. Information here: <http://tinyurl.com/jkctuu9>

INTERIORWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

DELTA TRAILS GROUP HOLDS ‘CELEBRATE THE SUN’ EVENT

The Delta Junction Trails Association is holding a “Celebrate the Sun” event on March 12.

The event will be held at Quartz Lake from noon to 3pm. Activities include snowshoeing and cross-country skiing on groomed trails, dog sled demonstration, ice fishing, ice carving and more.

SEVERAL BOROUGH TRAIL EVENTS POSTED ON FACEBOOK

The Fairbanks Parks and Recreation Facebook page has several posts regarding area borough trails. Two involve the Tanana Lakes Recreation Area. The department is posting maps of new multi-use snow trails as the trails are created. The crew has also created a half-mile skating trail on Cushman Lake. There’s also a post about a new ski trail map at the River Park at Chena Lake Recreation Area. Check out the news at:

<http://tinyurl.com/zofgaa8>

(Photo of ski trail map at Chena Lake Recreation Area courtesy of Fairbanks North Star Borough)



MEETINGS PLANNED FOR CONTROL OF WEED THAT CLOGS WATER TRAILS

Public meetings will be held on Elodea in interior Alaska in March. Elodea is an invasive aquatic weed, which currently infests Chena Slough, Chena Lakes, patches of the Chena River, and Totchaket Slough.

The Elodea Steering Committee, in conjunction with the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, is gathering public opinions on alternatives for managing the weed. The meetings will be held at the following locations:

- March 7 – Fairbanks from noon to 2pm at the Fairbanks City Hall
- March 7 – Nenana from 6 to 8pm in the Dementieff Tribal Hall
- March 8 – North Pole from 6 to 8pm in the North Pole City Hall

Options discussed include ceasing to monitor and control Elodea, continuing manual control, or herbicide

treatment. The DEC Pesticide Use Permit is currently up for comment at <http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/pest/publicnotice.htm>. The committee is in the process of creating an Environmental Assessment on impacts of alternative control plans, and your questions and feedback are a vital part of this process. For questions or comments, please contact Aditi Shenoy, Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District at [907-479-1213](tel:907-479-1213) ext 104 or email aditi.shenoy@gmail.com.

(From What's Up? by Peg Tileston)

ADVOCATES HELPING YANKOVICH BIKE PATH PROJECT

An advocacy effort is helping increase the chance that a bike path along Yankovich Road will get finished.

As originally planned, the path would run around the north part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. A portion of it was finished by the state Department of Transportation and Public Works this past fall. The department, working with the university, built a new path and improved a portion of an older path. The path now runs from the roundabout at the university to Miller Hill Road (the path along Sheep Creek Road still continues past Miller Hill Road), up Miller Hill to Yankovich Road, and east on Yankovich, where it ends just across the road from the Large Animal Research Station (LARS).



This area sees a lot of non-motorized use already, but the shoulders along Yankovich are practically non-existent. There is no parallel route along side streets. As more houses are built in a new Magoffin Highlands subdivision between LARS and Dalton Trail, more people will be driving along Yankovich and using it for running, walking, and biking. The path needs to be finished to improve the safety of existing users and to encourage more

people to get out and exercise. The project would also rebuild Yankovich and Miller Hill roads, improving visibility and adding shoulders from Sheep Creek to Ballaine roads.

The state plans to continue the path along Yankovich. The exact routing hasn't been decided, but it would connect to the already existing bike/pedestrian path along Farmer's Loop Road. However, funds to complete the project haven't been found yet. FMATS had hoped to complete the project with state funds, but considering the current state budget climate, chances of that are doubtful. The project is eligible for federal funds, but it has to compete with other local projects also eligible for federal funds. That's where the advocacy effort comes in.

The Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) oversees coordination and funding requests in the area. One of the main committees of FMATS recently took testimony about local funding projects and completion of the Yankovich path got strong support. Five people spoke at the meeting and more than 30 people sent in comments supporting the path.

You can hear a KUAC story on the meeting here (it starts at 1:40 and runs about two minutes): <http://fm.kuac.org/post/02-18-16-kuac-morning-news>

But it's not over. The project must be included on the local Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendment to qualify for federal funds. FMATS will release the TIP amendment at its March 16 meeting for a 30-day comment period, and vote again at the April meeting to accept or reject it. The project must also be scheduled high enough on the list to realistically have a chance at getting funding, so advocates will need to keep an eye out for opportunities to comment again. This may seem unnecessarily bureaucratic to some, but these layers are put into place to make sure there is plenty of time and opportunity for public comment.

If you would like to be alerted to other opportunities to comment please contact Eric Troyer (fbxtrails@gmail.com) or Erik Schoen (erik.schoen@gmail.com).

(Photo of runners along Yankovich Road by Erik Schoen.)

FACEBOOK A GOOD PLACE TO SPREAD TRAILS INFORMATION – OR NOT

Facebook is an interesting place. Two recent conversations about trails in the Fairbanks area have illustrated how it can be a useful way to spread good information – or bad information.

Ski Trails Only For Skiing?

A heated conversation recently on a public Facebook page called “Fairbanks, Alaska” started off reasonably enough. A fellow by the name of Shaune Moore put in this post:

*Can someone share with me the trail etiquette in and around Fairbanks? Daily I walk and run with my dog and we like trails. So we end up running on all of the back trails. Some of these trails have ski tracks on them. We stay away from them and run on the outside of the trail to not disturb the skiers and tracks. But twice now in the last month we have been b****ed out by skiers for just being on the trails and if we're not b****ed out, we are always getting crusty looks. Do cross country skiers own these trails, is it only exclusive to them? I don't know whats going on with it?*

Lots of people chimed in. Some made reasonable comments. A lot commented off the top of their heads without a clear understanding of the facts. Some back and forth conversations got nasty. A lot of misinformation was tossed about.

The confusion is understandable. A couple of trail systems are for groomed skiing only in winter and have rules against pedestrians and/or dogs. The two main ones are the trails at borough's Birch Hill Recreation Area (not the downhill ski area) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). The rule at Birch Hill is a “facility rule.” Just as any borough facility has rules about what can and can't be done, so does Birch Hill. For example, both the Big Dipper skating rink and Mary Siah pool have rules about what type of activities can be done at certain times.

The UAF rules are set by the university administration, just as it sets the rules for the rest of its facilities and property. UAF has trails for a variety of activities including skiing, walking, and dog walking.

Pearl Creek ski trails are groomed for classic skiing and on land called Pearl Creek Park. However, there are no “rules” that limit their use to skiing. Rather, traditional use has dictated that the trails are for skiing in winter, though that tradition is changing as use patterns are changing. More people are wanting to walk and bike on the trails in winter.

So, be careful when reading things on Facebook. Not everyone who joins in knows what they are talking about. If you want to read the conversation you will need to be logged onto Facebook to access the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/5337433675/permalink/10154221006163676/>

Trail Closure

The other conversation has taken place on a Facebook page called “Ester Dome Recreational Users.” This page is closed, so to read and join in this conversation you have to be invited by one of the administrators.

This conversation regards a fairly well-used trail near Ester Dome. It runs along a powerline that stretches from Ester Dome Road to the intertie powerline near where it intersects Gold Hill Road. Several other trails connect to this trail. Recently someone put up No Trespassing signs along a section of the powerline trail. Several people have been involved in the conversation discussing whether powerlines have public access easements (they usually don't), if the trail has a public access easement (it doesn't appear to), the differences between civil and criminal trespass, and who the landowners are so they can be asked about their concerns over use of the trail.



The conversation has been civil and many of the answers have been well-researched, often with links to reliable Internet sources. Hopefully, with a group effort by trail users, the landowners can be persuaded to keep the trail open.

The page address is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EsterDomeUsers/permalink/872807812836079/>

(Map of affected trail by Don Kiely)

FAIRBANKS ROADSIDE PATHS PLOWED FOR SAFETY OF USERS

Bike/pedestrian paths in the Fairbanks area are often plowed during winter. One trail user (the editor of this newsletter) wondered about the reasoning, having been told at one point that it was a federal requirement. However, that's not the case. Below is the response from the state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) maintenance staff:

During the winter, DOT plows sidewalks and a few bike paths as funding allows.

In the spring, we plow all the paved bike paths in our system. This is driven by safety, not just for the walking or biking public, but also for the safety of drivers - so there is some separation between the two users.

There is no federal requirement to plow the snow off bike paths. We plow to provide a safe route for walkers and bikers in the winter.

The majority of our calls about bike paths are requesting that we plow all of the bike paths in the winter, but funding is limited and we are not able to. Leaving bike paths unplowed invites the illegal use of motorized vehicles.

We work hard to balance the needs of all of our users.

Sounds reasonable, but I wondered about the "illegal use of motorized vehicles" part. Meadow Bailey, DOTPF spokesperson, found this citation under state law 13 AAC 02.455 "Operation on highways and other locations."

(g) No snowmobile or other off-highway vehicle may cross or travel on a sidewalk, a location intended for pedestrian or other nonmotorized traffic, an alley, or a vehicular way or area which is not open to snowmobile or off-highway vehicle operation, except as provided in (f) of this section.

The (f) section refers to a snowmobile or an off-highway vehicle being able to cross a highway under certain circumstances. DOTPF considers all sidewalks and paths to be limited to pedestrians and other nonmotorized users.

So, if anyone else was wondering why bike/pedestrian paths were being plowed in winter in the Fairbanks area, that's the reason.

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- A new running event will be held on the UAF trails this summer: <http://www.alaskaendurancetrailrun.org>
- Staying safe on Interior trails: <http://tinyurl.com/juyk5km>
- Sub-Arctic Bikepacking In Alaska's White Mountains: <http://tinyurl.com/jftt6lu>
- Donations down for trails at Birch Hill: <http://tinyurl.com/hk2rvos>
- Oatley finishes thousand-mile Yukon Quest trail bike ride: <http://tinyurl.com/zu5nu92>

NATIONWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM AWARD NOMINATIONS DUE IN APRIL

Nominations are due April 4 for the Coalition for Recreational Trails Annual Achievement Awards.

The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT), a federation of national and regional trail-related organizations, presents the annual awards to recognize outstanding trail projects funded by the national Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

The awards are presented in Washington, D.C., during Great Outdoors Month in June each year as part of the coalition's ongoing effort to build awareness and appreciation of this highly successful program, which has

greatly enhanced the quantity and quality of trail experiences available to the public. An awards ceremony will be held on Capitol Hill to honor the outstanding achievements.

As an additional benefit, American Trails makes a web page for each winning project. See the over 100 award pages created since 2003.

(From American Trails: <http://www.americantrails.org/awards/CRTawards.html>)

VIDEOS HIGHLIGHT ARIZONA, APPALACHIAN, BAY AREA RIDGE TRAILS

REI Co-op's campaign "Every Trail Connects" recently released three videos that showcase three very different trail experiences on three different trails.

"Fast Forward" features Lael Wilcox, a bikepacker and ultra-long-distance racer, and her attempt to take on the more-than-800-mile Arizona Trail.

"Trail Angel" features Ponytail Paul and how his life was changed after he decided to help hikers on the Appalachian Trail.

"The Pleasure and the Pain" features Errol "The Rocket" Jones, a 65-year-old ultrarunner, and his "story of pain, perseverance and self-discovery on the Bay Area Ridge Trail."

See the videos at: <http://tinyurl.com/jmdxzwd>

RECREATION COALITION HAS TWO UPCOMING CONTEST DEADLINES

The American Recreation Coalition has two contests with upcoming deadlines. One is the Great Outdoors Month Video Competition. The other is a competition to do a RECx presentation at Partners Outdoors 2016. The submission deadline for the video contest is in April. The presentation contest deadline is in March. For dates and guidelines for each competition, follow the links below:

- Video competition: www.funoutdoors.com/files/Video%20Competition%20Guidelines.pdf
- Presentation competition: www.funoutdoors.com/files/RECx%20Submission%20Guidelines.pdf

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
- Sustainable Trails Conferences (Mar 4-11, Nov 16-18): <http://www.trailbuilders.org/training/>

RECENT TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS/MAGAZINES

- American Trails (February): <http://tinyurl.com/js47rfh>
 - President Proposes Large Funding Boost for National Parks
 - Quad Cities introduces new interactive trails website
 - President Obama designates three new national monuments in California's desert
 - Proposal would allow motorized vehicles on one of the nation's longest rail-to-trail paths
 - Revitalized trail system turns small town into "Adventure Capital of New Mexico"
 - Featured National Recreation Trail: Danny On Trail, Montana
 - and more...
- Conservation Volunteers International Program (February): <http://tinyurl.com/hbendep>

TRAIL GUIDES

- Hike It: Washington, D.C. – Area Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/gv6gtwj>

ADVOCACY

- American Hiking Society Spring Break Volunteer Vacations: <http://tinyurl.com/htccv4c>

STUDIES

- Group Releases Research Summary of Active Travel Health Benefits: <http://tinyurl.com/jll7pwo>
- FHWA Releases Summary of Pedestrian, Bike Research and Program Activities: <http://tinyurl.com/hykdv2y>
- Why a walk in the woods really does help your body and your soul: <http://tinyurl.com/jbzqxpz>
- Changes in mode of travel to work: a study of new transport infrastructure: <http://tinyurl.com/hx7tdzy>

TRAIL GUIDES

- 10 Date-Worthy Hikes for You and Your Sweetheart: <http://tinyurl.com/zply9cv>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- Safe Routes to School Partnership launches Safe Routes Learning Center: <http://tinyurl.com/jqzycw9>
- Shouldn't snow cleanup include trails?: <http://tinyurl.com/hraxbwk>
- We need to accept urban trails as part of the commuter network: <http://tinyurl.com/zuc4nff>
- President Obama Proposes Permanent Reauthorization Of America's Best Conservation Program: <http://www.outdooralliance.org/policy-news/2016/2/4/ava7y5c3qzssyyybschrn70vyv33bs>
- American Hiking needs your hiking stories and photos for a new book: <http://tinyurl.com/he7a97l>
- Taking the wilderness debate (about bikes) to washington d.c.: <http://tinyurl.com/gp6shfa>
- How I Made It: He's blazing a Web trail for hikers: <http://tinyurl.com/zt2tqve>
- 10 Tips For Getting Your Teenager Outdoors With You: <http://tinyurl.com/jsmfru8>
- American Hiking Society has a Hike 40 challenge this year: www.americanhiking.org/join-donate/hike-40/

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

- 30 Terrifying Trails (Anchorage's Rover's Run makes the list): <http://tinyurl.com/gl5a4ef>
- Why I am often the only black person hiking the trails?: <http://tinyurl.com/jovttgy>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL:

- What Are The Differences Between National Parks And National Forests?: <http://tinyurl.com/hdovae8>
- 14 Most "Instagram-able" National Forests: <http://tinyurl.com/gwyw2u4>
- These Rescue Drones Search Forest Trails Like Robot Rangers: <http://tinyurl.com/j3qnxwe>
- Mad geniuses have created the ultimate camping gear: A hot tub hammock: <http://tinyurl.com/j3y7zvm>

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