

## ALASKA TRAILS NEWS AND NOTICES

### SUPPORTERS MAKE FUNDRAISER FOR ALASKA TRAILS A BIG SUCCESS

Thanks to all the businesses and individuals who donated to make the Alaska Trails "Making Our Own Trails" fundraiser such a success. More than 60 supporters showed up to hear live music, see great slide shows, bid on wonderful trips, gear and prizes – all to raise money for Alaska Trails. The hard work of the Alaska Trails Board of Directors helped make the evening a success. From set-up to clean-up and everything in between, it was a great team effort.

More than \$4,000 was raised and we hope to make it even bigger and better in years to come.

Thanks to all the donors to the Alaska Trails Fall Fundraiser:

Skinny Raven / New  
Sagaya / Jen Aist / REI  
/ Martin Buser / Chris  
Beck / Jack Mosby /  
Harry Brod / Alaska  
Railroad / Paul Clark /  
TREK Store / Eagle  
River Nature Center /  
Surveyor's Exchange /  
The Bicycle Shop /  
Side Street Espresso /  
Arctic Roadrunner /  
Bass Pro Shops /  
Paramount Cycle /  
Anchorage Yoga and  
Cycle / Mooses Tooth /



Music, friends and Fun at the Alaska Trails Fall Fundraiser in November.

Alaska Wild Child / McCarthy River Tours / Great Harvest Bread Co./  
Anch Park Foundation / John Lucking

## STATE PARKS DIRECTOR TAKES A PIE IN THE FACE FOR ALASKA TRAILS

A while back Ben Ellis, director of Alaska State Parks, participated in a silly fundraiser and raised almost \$400 for Alaska Trails. Thanks Ben! The silliness was captured on video: <http://tinyurl.com/o4ys73m>

## 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.

To find out more about what Alaska Trails has accomplished recently, please see our 2014 Annual Report at: [www.alaska-trails.org/about\\_us/documents/reports/2014\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.alaska-trails.org/about_us/documents/reports/2014_Annual_Report.pdf)

## 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.)

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.goodsearch.com) and be sure to enter Alaska Trails as the charity you want to support.



## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Steve Cleary, Executive Director

### Doing More With Less

Less is more – or so said the t-shirt I wore too often in college. As the state budget continues to shrink, we are hearing the refrain of having to do more with less. As oil prices and production drop, the state is compelled to trim its budget – and that includes trails.

At Alaska Trails, we are seizing it as an opportunity to get people involved. Our Adopt-A-Trail program seeks to train citizen stewards across the state to maintain trails on all public lands – municipal, borough, state and federal. We believe this will not only reduce costs, but it will engage Alaskans in the care of the trails they love.

In late November, Alaska Trails convened a stakeholder meeting to layout and plan how to implement the Adopt-A-Trail program. This meeting and much of the planning will be aided by the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (NPS – RTCA) program. Alaska Trails applied for and will receive expert help from the RTCA to develop a comprehensive plan and a team of individuals, groups and agencies around the state who will help to make Adopt-A-Trail truly do more. At the meeting, twelve different entities put their heads together and came up with a framework they will all continue to work on with the goal of implementing several project in the summer of 2016. To do more with less, everyone needs to pull.

One great example of that can-do spirit is the Chugach Trail Volunteers (CTV). CTV started as a loosely affiliated group interested in

maintaining trails in Chugach State Park (CSP). Volunteers are gathered through the Anchorage Adventure Meet-up site. Since its inception less than a year ago, CTV has organized 8 evening work parties that have resulted in over 50 volunteers logging more than 100 hours of trail maintenance. In addition, more skilled volunteers have spent over 30 hours removing downed trees. A collaboration between Alaska Trails, CTV and CSP on National Public Lands Day in September brought 15 more volunteers out for a full Saturday of work.

Alaska Trails and CTV recently received a grant from the Alaska Conservation Foundation to buy tools that will increase their efforts to maintain the great trails in Chugach State Park. While one size won't fit all parks or public lands, we hope that on-the-ground experiences and pilot projects in several areas will help to hone the Adopt-A-Trail project into a model that can be adapted around the state.



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Volunteers help move bridge timbers in Chugach State Park in September.

Happy Trails,  
Steve Cleary

## STATEWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

### AVALANCHE INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR EASTERN ALASKA RANGE

A new group has started distributing information on avalanche conditions in the Eastern Alaska Range. The Eastern Alaska Range Avalanche Center has a page (<http://www.alaskasnow.org/eastern-alaska-regional-avalanche-center/>) on the Alaska Avalanche Information Center website (<http://www.alaskasnow.org>). The group also has a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Eastern-Alaska-Range-Avalanche-Center-169580213240277/>).

The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner has a story on the new center: <http://tinyurl.com/pznm39y>

### MAT-SU GREENBELT FINDS WOOD TREATMENT CHANGE CORRODES SIGNS

Managers of the Matanuska Greenbelt ran into a problem with corrosion of their trail signs and have a little hard-earned wisdom to pass along. Below are excerpts from a report written by Dot Helms. To see the full report email Dot at [aktrailrun@matanuska-greenbelt.org](mailto:aktrailrun@matanuska-greenbelt.org).

*Typically aluminum signs fastened to pressure-treated wood have had life expectancies of 20-30 years, so when we observed little bubbles and small accumulations of blue-green junk behind a couple signs, we didn't think too much about it. Then a couple got really corroded. We had followed what we considered fairly standard procedures – go to this shop to get pressure treated wood (no specs), go there to get stainless steel fasteners, and go here to get aluminum signs. However, about 10 years ago (2004), the usual pressure-treated wood chemistry changed from CCA (chromated copper arsenate) to ACQ (alkaline copper quaternary) with about 2-3 times as much copper. This change for environmental reasons, however, was highly corrosive to many types of metals – like aluminum signs. Galvanic corrosion resulted from aluminum against the copper (electrolyte) in the wood, and moisture.*

*After Googling and asking questions of local suppliers and knowledgeable people, we decided to insert a sealant into the screw hole (reduce probability of corrosion inside the hole), apply a self-sticking rubber sheet against the back of the sign, and attach to the ACQ post with 304 stainless steel Torx screws- one in each corner. (However, we are still waiting for our signs to be finished by the vendor, so have no idea how well this will really work.)*

*When I showed pictures of our corroded signs to vendors and suppliers, none had seen corrosion like that. Since we thought we were doing what had been done for an eternity, we never asked any of the three vendors about compatibility of their products with one another.*

*Lesson learned: just because something has worked for a decade or more, doesn't mean it will work today if the materials have changed. And it may take 5 yrs for the issues to appear, like these did. If starting a new project, ask about compatibility of the components that are adjacent to each other. Don't be surprised if the person at the counter can't answer your question. Even a more experienced person might need to contact their supplier.*



Follow this link (<http://tinyurl.com/go3rsx3>) to see more pictures of the corroded Mat-Su Greenbelt signs. They are the four links at the bottom of the page. The first link on the page is to a study by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, which had a similar sign corrosion issue.

## STATE GROOMING FUNDS DISTRIBUTED BY SNOWTRAC

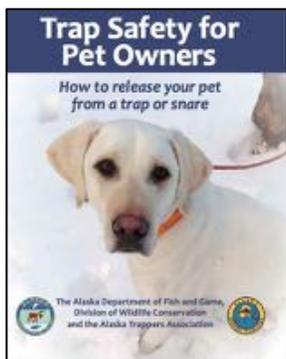
The table below shows the allocation of the 2015-16 state snowmobile grooming funds. Groups received about 77 percent of what they requested.

The Snowmobile Trail Grant Program's Grooming Pool uses snowmobile registration fees to support a system of groomed snowmobile trails in several regions of the state. Grooming Pool funds are used by snowmobile clubs, non-profits, and businesses to groom and mark trails. Trails must be legal and approved by the Snowmobile Trail Advisory Council (SnowTRAC). To see maps of the locations of the Grooming Pool trails throughout the state see: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/groompl.htm>

AREA	GROOMER / GROUP	FUNDS REQUESTED	FUNDS RECEIVED
Big Lake	Alpine General Services	\$10,000	\$7,693
Big Lake	Big Lake Trails	\$25,958	\$19,968
Caribou Hills – North	Cabin Hoppers	\$42,945	\$33,036
Denali Highway	Denali Highway Trail Club	\$19,335	\$14,874
Hatcher Pas	Hatcher Pass Contract	\$32,000	\$24,616
Juneau	Trail Mix	\$8,000	\$6,154
Lake Louise	Lake Louise Snowmachine Club	\$15,830	\$12,177
Lake Louise Trail / Crosswind North	Lake Louise Snowmachine Club	\$980	\$754
Lower Su / Lower Yetna	Dave Luce	\$19,080	\$14,677
Mid Su Valley	Mid Valley Trail Club	\$16,950	\$13,039
Montana Creek	Motor Musers	\$7,500	\$5,769
Chena River SRA	DPOR Northern Region	\$11,994	\$9,226
Petersville	AK Snowcat	\$67,100	\$51,617
Caribou Hills – South	Snomads	\$32,625	\$25,097
Willow	Willow Trail Committee	\$29,500	\$22,693
Upper Yentna / Lower Su	Yentna River Services – Phillips	\$7,014	\$5,396
Yukon Quest	Yukon Quest Int Ltd	\$15,000	\$11,539
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$361,811</b>	<b>\$278,326</b>

## 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/pan9fvk>. More information, including video footage featuring trap removal instructions, is found on the department's website at [www.adfg.alaska.gov](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov) (see "Sharing the Trails" under the "Trapping" tab), and on the ATA website ([www.alaskatrappers.org](http://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](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jk242jZwEAQ)). To order a copy of the DVD check the ATA store ([www.alaskatrappers.org](http://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.

## **FAIRBANKS CONTRACTOR LOOKING FOR TRAIL GRID ORDER PARTNERS**

A Fairbanks trail contractor is looking people or groups to join in an order of trail hardening grid.

Happy Trails, Inc., is organizing a cooperative order for a truckload of Right-way trail grid ([www.rightwaytrailsystems.com](http://www.rightwaytrailsystems.com)) for delivery in June 2016. Right-way trail grid is a geosynthetic tread reinforcement material that increases stability and protects against rutting and erosion. It is usually used on trails in areas with wet or otherwise unstable soils. The grid has been installed along portions of the Ester Dome (Happy Valley) Singletrack Trails in Fairbanks, the Mastadon Creek Trail (still under construction) in the Chena River State Recreation Area, and the Rippy Trail in the Mat-Su Valley.

The total order is 1200 panels, of which 700 are still available to anyone who would like to purchase. An order of this size ensures the best price on the grid and freight. The truck will be delivered to Fairbanks. If you would like to participate in this order, contact Jon Underwood at Happy Trails, Inc. ([happytrailsak@gmail.com](mailto:happytrailsak@gmail.com); [907-322-5834](tel:907-322-5834)). Order deadline is April 15, 2016.

## **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](http://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).

Also, be aware that a reduction in property tax is not guaranteed or may be minimal based on how the easement affects the property.

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

## **RIVER FORECAST SITE KEEPS TRACK OF SNOW DEPTH**



The National Weather Service's River Forecast Center has a website that tracks several things regarding rivers and precipitation, including how breakup is going, what river conditions are like, and snow depth. See the website (<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 (<http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/pubs/Presentations/boaterwebguide.pdf>).

## **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/](http://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.

## STATEWIDE TRAILS AND PUBLIC LANDS RELATED NEWSLETTERS

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- Eagle Watch, Alaska State Parks (October): <http://tinyurl.com/qxdcshg>
- Frontiers, BLM (Fall): [www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/frontiers.html](http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/info/frontiers.html)
  - *Fall in Love with Your Trails*

## STATEWIDE LINKS

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- Remember these tips for the upcoming trapping season: <http://tinyurl.com/pxfrjix>
- Ushering in winter: November memories: <http://tinyurl.com/om2owuj>
- Surviving the pain, anguish of bear spray in the face: <http://tinyurl.com/o9gab5e>
- Invitation to Participate in Annual Trends Survey on Healthy Rivers: <http://tinyurl.com/on7ht9c>
- On the Trails: Finding noise in the 'Quiet': <http://tinyurl.com/okb9xqv>
- Outdoor Explorer radio show: Public use cabins open in winter: <http://tinyurl.com/of2mzog>
- Adventurer crosses Alaska in attempt to trek around the world – twice: <http://tinyurl.com/q6ptqds>
- Early-season avalanches in Southcentral Alaska prompt warnings: <http://tinyurl.com/ncej45c>
- These 'ice road truckers' drive across North Slope trails on sea ice and tundra: <http://tinyurl.com/out4ymb>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Love letter to Fairbanks from an Anchorage resident smitten by winter: <http://tinyurl.com/pfa4zhw>
- Video: Skier survives 1,600 foot fall in Neacola range: <http://tinyurl.com/ow4m65s>
- Addressing the topic of pilot pressure: <http://tinyurl.com/p9azsn8>
- Outdoors Bookshelf: Brush and Bog full of backcountry tales: <http://tinyurl.com/zev6wck>

## SOUTHCENTRAL NEWS AND NOTICES

### COMMENTS DUE ON FISH CREEK TRAIL REHABILITATION IN ANCHORAGE

Comments are due by December 7 on a proposal to improve two sections of Anchorage's Fish Creek Trail within the Fish Creek Greenbelt. The two Fish Creek Trail locations are from Red Bridge Park to the intersection of Taft Street and Tudor Road, and Kiwanis Fish Creek Park to Barbara Street Park.

The purpose of this proposed project is to rehabilitate Anchorage areawide trails based on community-wide needs. Work may include: Resurfacing, reconstructing, or widening select sections the trail; Replacing bridges; Replacing and improving signage, striping, and lighting; Repairing root damage, including removing nearby trees; Improving trail grades, alignments, and drainage; and Vegetation clearing. Construction for the proposed project is anticipated to begin during the summer of 2017.

For more information, contact Kevin Jackson, Project Manager, at 269-0641 or email [Kevin.jackson@alaska.gov](mailto:Kevin.jackson@alaska.gov) or Drew von Lindern, Environmental Impact Analyst, at 269-0551 or email [drew.vonlindern@alaska.gov](mailto:drew.vonlindern@alaska.gov). Submit comments to Brian Elliott, Regional Environmental Manager, at [brian.elliott@alaska.gov](mailto:brian.elliott@alaska.gov).

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

## ANCHORAGE GROUP SEEKING COMMENTS ON TRAIL BRAND PLAN

The Anchorage Park Foundation is asking for comments on the brand for Anchorage trails and a series of neighborhood icons for neighborhoods that connect to trail systems. These icons are meant to reflect the character of your specific neighborhood and reinforce each neighborhood's unique sense of place. They are now working toward a signage and wayfinding plan to guide the implementation of these icons and logos on our trails that are used by all in Anchorage. Visit the project at

<http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/trails-initiative/signage-wayfinding-plan/> to view the icons (there are more than the examples above) and email your comments directly to the Anchorage Park Foundation at [Trails@anchorageparkfoundation.org](mailto:Trails@anchorageparkfoundation.org).

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



## WILD FILM FESTIVAL TO BE HELD AT ANCHORAGE'S BEAR TOOTH PUB

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival will be held at the Bear Tooth Theatre pub on December 12 at 2:30pm. The Wild & Scenic Film Festival works with groups and businesses across the globe to host the film festival as a way to engage local communities and unite diverse audiences. The goal is to connect people to place, and to use film to inspire action. You can learn more about the festival at [www.wildandscenicontour.org](http://www.wildandscenicontour.org) or email Eric at [Eric@inletkeeper.org](mailto:Eric@inletkeeper.org) for more information.

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

## GROUP HAS TRAIL-BASED FAMILY QUEST ON MAT-SU WEBSITE

The Valley Explorers website has a new Johnson Lake Loop Family Quest. The quest is described as "fun, educational, interactive activity for children and families to do while on the trail. It is a destination quest. Kind of like a treasure hunt!" Johnson Lake Loop Trail is on the UAF Experiment Farm in Palmer. See it on the Valley Explorers website: <http://valleyexplorers.weebly.com>

## LANDFILL MANAGER TO ADDRESS MATANUSKA GREENBELT GROUP

The next meeting of the Matanuska Greenbelt association is Wed, Dec 2, 5:30pm. It will be at the Matanuska Experiment Farm (most likely the Mess Hall / Distance Delivery room, but will confirm). Main topic will be presentation by the Solid-Waste Division Manager who will talk about the latest plans for the Central Landfill. We do have a map of the proposed Landfill sequencing overlaid on the trails map.

For more information email Dot at [aktrailrun@matanuska-greenbelt.org](mailto:aktrailrun@matanuska-greenbelt.org).

## ALASKA HUTS SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Alaska Mountain And Wilderness Huts Association (Alaska Huts) is actively recruiting new board members. Alaska Huts is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that currently operates and maintains a single backcountry hut and has a planning permit to establish a separate, interconnected, three-hut system. The organization works to bring people together for wilderness education, enjoyment and stewardship of wild public lands. The existing site is Manitoba Cabin, a hut facility (main cabin, yurts, sauna) located on state land within Chugach National Forest. The Alaska Huts board meets monthly; board members do not need to be a resident of Anchorage and remote call in to board meetings is possible. For more information on board member duties please visit [www.alaskahuts.org/board](http://www.alaskahuts.org/board). Applicant should submit a resume and/or brief letter of interest to Alaska Huts Executive Director Tom Callahan via email [Tom@alaskahuts.org](mailto:Tom@alaskahuts.org). For more information contact Tom Callahan at [907-306-3908](tel:907-306-3908).

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

## MAT-SU TRAILS AND PARKS GROUP SEEKING BOARD APPLICANTS



The Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation is currently accepting applications for its board of directors. Its mission is to fund quality trails and parks in the Mat-Su Valley, which promotes healthy lifestyles, enriches residents' quality of life, and provides economic value by enhancing recreation, tourism, and business opportunities for all. Prospective candidates with fundraising and development experience are encouraged to apply. For more information, contact Executive Director Kim Ryals at 907/746-8757 or [kimryals@matsutrails.org](mailto:kimryals@matsutrails.org).

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

## GREAT LAND TRUST HOLDING 20-YEAR CELEBRATION

Great Land Trust, a protector and creator of trails, will celebrate 20 years of conservation in December.

The celebration will take place December 10 from 6 to 8pm at the Williwaw, 601 R Street. Enjoy good food, drinks, live music and raven art auction. This is a family friendly event. For more information and to RSVP email [Shannon@greatlandtrust.org](mailto:Shannon@greatlandtrust.org) or go to <http://greatlandtrust.org/20th-anniversary-party/>.

From Anchorage to Talkeetna, the trust has conserved priority salmon and wildlife habitat, protected open space close to home, and created new trails and public access for fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation.

## SOUTHCENTRAL LINKS

- Outdoor Explorer radio show: Nancy Lake State Recreation Area: <http://tinyurl.com/psych716>
- Chugach State Park opens trails to fat-tire bike riding in winter: <http://tinyurl.com/osdv6e5>
- Pausing for Reflections: Exploring Palmer Hay Flats on foot, from above: <http://tinyurl.com/nkh6zfm>
- Chugach ridge hike elicits memories and yields a discovery: <http://tinyurl.com/pgdzfcm>
- Is this round two of the Kenai bark beetle invasion?: <http://tinyurl.com/nuvjkak>
- Anchorage citizen group prepares appeal to block U-Med road project: <http://tinyurl.com/o5ghr2u>
- (Kodiak) Island Trails Network *Trails Update*: <http://tinyurl.com/nv8ab42>
- Why Anchorage Parks Matter! (video): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCoVYvPhXho](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCoVYvPhXho)

## INTERIORWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

### CHANGES TO SKARLAND SKI TRAIL CAUSE CONTROVERSY

A volunteer effort to improve the Skarland Ski Trail hit a bit of a snag when some neighborhood residents complained about the work.

Local trail advocate Stan Justice has worked with several volunteers to make two big changes to the trail.



One change, moving the trail from its historic route into its legal easement, has been generally applauded. However, work by the volunteer group to create a bench-cut trail using a four-foot-wide trail dozer has received mixed reviews. Some like the changes, citing that it makes the trail easier to use and to groom for skiing. Others feel it changes the informal nature of the nonmotorized trail and makes it more attractive to motorized vehicles.

While moving the trail to its easement has been generally well-received, it has also been a bit of a surprise to many trail users. The trail was built in the 1960s as a rough, ungroomed ski trail. Over the years two major developments

have affected the trail, which led to the current situation. First, a subdivision was developed around the trail. An easement was created for the trail across the subdivision lots, but the easement didn't always follow the path of the trail. Second, volunteers started grooming the trail for skiing as grooming equipment became available. Justice, who recently became a volunteer trail groomer, started researching ways to make the grooming easier and discovered that large portions of the trail were out of the easement.

Justice looked at several options including doing nothing and moving the easement to fit the trail. He didn't want to do nothing because portions of the current trail are quite difficult to groom. Also, the trail has no legal protection where it is out of the easement, which has caused problems in the past. Justice found that moving the easement would be very expensive and time-consuming. In addition, some landowners opposed such a move.

Justice decided to head up a volunteer effort to move the trail. He publicized the effort and talked to owners of land that had the easement. Things remained quiet until local trail contractor Jon Underwood donated his time and trail dozer to make a bench-cut trail along a portion of the trail that cuts perpendicularly across a slope. Several neighborhood residents became angry or concerned about the work.

People opposed to the bench-cut trail have voiced three main concerns: the bench-cut changes the nature of the trail, using a trail dozer causes too much impact, and motorized vehicles might start using the nonmotorized trail.

Justice and Underwood and their supporters have argued that the dozer-built bench-cut trail will make it easier and safer to use and that vegetation will grow back in within a couple of years. They say they have used sustainable techniques, such as out-sloping and grade reversals, in order to minimize erosion. They have also installed signs and split-rail fences to dissuade motorized vehicles.

Discussion over the issue has also dominated the Skarland and Pearl Creek Park Trail Users Facebook page. The Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks Board of Directors passed a resolution in support of the bench-cut trail at its November meeting.

Justice gave a presentation at the November 10 Fairbanks North Star Borough Trails Advisory Commission meeting. More than a dozen people attended the meeting either to comment or to just listen to the presentation and comments. Besides the actual trail work, people of both sides expressed concern that no clear public process has been outlined that explains how the public can be involved if someone wants to work on a trail. People were also unclear on what work a person can do in a trail easement that crosses private property.

The commission took no official action, but commission members did say they plan to find out the answers to several questions, including if a public process requirement can be put in place and what the rights landowners and trail workers have when a trail is being built across private property in an easement.

*(Photo of new fence and gate on Skarland Ski Trail by Stan Justice.)*

## **BOROUGH TO REPAIR DAMAGED SKYLINE PARK TRAIL**

A trail on Skyline Ridge should become easier to use once a project to improve it is completed this coming summer.

The main ridge trail in Skyline Ridge Park has degraded over the years due to a combination of erosion, poor drainage, and use by heavy motorized vehicles. The trail has ruts and deep holes that form large ponds after snowmelt and heavy rains. Trail users have created braided trails around the ponds, which widens the footprint of the trails in the area.

Large motorized vehicles are no longer allowed in the park, but the damage remains and the trails still do not have the proper design elements to avoid future damage. In an effort to improve the trails, the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Parks and Recreation Department has secured funding to repair portions of the damaged trail, called Skyline Ridge Trail, and add design elements to help reduce damage in the



future.

“This multi-use trail is the major corridor for visitors to access the park and serves as a trail hub allowing access to hundreds of miles of public trail networks including the Goldstream Valley trail system and the Skarland Trail,” Luke Kline, project coordinator, wrote in an email.

Restoration will begin by addressing erosion issues on a steep section of trail. New surface material will be added to it and several grade reversals, which shunt water to the sides, will be added. Next, the trail ponds will be addressed. They will be filled and the trail tread will be raised and hardened. Drainage features will also be added to divert water away from the trail. The work will be done by a licensed independent contractor after a bid process.

A majority of the funding for this work is coming from a \$50,000 Recreational Trails Program grant. The RTP grant requires matching funds, which the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly authorized in October with an ordinance appropriating \$12,500 for the project.

Skyline Ridge Park is a 470-acre parcel located in the Farmers Loop Area just north of Fairbanks. The property is composed of mixed vegetation with a variety of terrain that provides an outstanding landscape for trail-focused recreation. Several trails exist in the park.

Work on developing the park started in the 1980s, when the land was owned by the federal Bureau of Land Management. The land was first transferred to the state before it was officially transferred to the borough on May 13, 2011.

*(Photo of ponding on Skyline Ridge Trail courtesy of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department.)*

## INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- UAF places 15th in outdoorsy school contest: <http://tinyurl.com/oxul7y6>
- Interior trails are highlighted in “Seasonal Splendors,” an article about Fairbanks in the Oct 2015 *Alaska Beyond*, the Alaska Airlines magazine: <http://www.paradigmcg.com/digitaleditions/abm-1015/index.html>
- Tanana Lakes may get offroad park: <http://tinyurl.com/oucaqvqk>
- Christine Byl, author of trail-building book “Dirt Work,” wins Alaska Literary Award: <http://tinyurl.com/ndw6vjtt>
- Hot springs smooth out rough parts of winter camping trip: <http://tinyurl.com/opt2bq4>
- Trip Report: Group hikes from 23.5 Mile to Lee’s Cabin: <http://tinyurl.com/qe6pfbf>
- Badger Road Bike/Pedestrian Path Resurfacing call for bids: <http://tinyurl.com/nvl2bxy>
- Trappers Association guest speaker giving GPS presentation (Dec 1): <http://tinyurl.com/qbwrjzx>
- Creamer’s Field dog reminder: <http://tinyurl.com/nfhfp5y>
- The White Mountains: Seeing through New Eyes with BLM Artist-in-Residence: <http://tinyurl.com/q534us5>

## SOUTHEAST NEWS AND NOTICES

### SITKA’S CROSS TRAIL COMPLETED AFTER SLIDE REPAIRED

The Cross Trail in Sitka has been finally been completed.

The slide that occurred by Cascade Creek has been repaired so now the Cross Trail is in great shape and ready for walkers, runners, hikers, bikers, strollers, and anyone who wants to enjoy a wonderful trail.

The project was a joint operation of the City of Sitka and Sitka Trail Works. The city earlier received a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant award to pay for the design and pre-construction of phase 6 of the Sitka Cross Trail from Kramer Avenue/Benchlands all the way to the AMHS Ferry Terminal and Starrigavan Recreation Area. The funds were awarded in October.

Sitka Trail Works asks that any trail users who come across any trail problems contact the group through email ([sitkahikes@gci.net](mailto:sitkahikes@gci.net)), phone (907/747-7244, or visit us on Facebook (Sitka Trailworks not Sitka Trail Works).

*(From Sitka Trail Works website: <http://www.sitkatrailworks.org>)*

## SOUTHEAST LINKS

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- Getting lost in (Juneau) Alaska: Adventures in nature and parenting: <http://tinyurl.com/qjz8m8h>
- Tongass National Forest proposal up for public comment: <http://tinyurl.com/o5jh9qj>

## NATIONWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

### CONGRESS EXTENDS TRANSPORTATION FUNDING, LOOKS TO FUTURE.

On November 5 the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act, a new multi-year transportation authorization bill. The bill, which was supported by both parties, keeps funding for trails and bike/ped programs intact.

More than 80 amendments had to be debated, including at least two that would have eliminated eligibility for funding of bikeways, trails, and other “non-highway” purposes. However, the ongoing problem for transportation is finding a long-term funding solution, which is not addressed by current bills.

The Senate previously passed a six-year surface transportation reauthorization bill which maintains “Transportation Alternatives” funding, including trails and bike/ped programs, at \$850 million a year, up from the current \$819 million. The Recreational Trails Program continues as a “set-aside” fund within the Transportation Alternatives.

The next step is that the House and Senate must reconcile the differences between their two versions and pass a compromise bill. The Coalition for Recreational Trails commented that “since the RTP was included in the legislation already passed by the Senate, we have every reason to expect that the Recreational Trails Program will be in the final version of the legislation that emerges from the House/Senate conference.

(From: <http://www.americantrails.org/support.html>)

- *The American Hiking Society also has a story on the subject:* <http://tinyurl.com/ojt2l9h>

### AMERICAN TRAILS CONTEST DEADLINE APPROACHES

American Trails is sponsoring the 2015 National Recreation Trails Photo Contest.

The entry deadline is December 15, 2015. The contest has several categories. Its goal is to highlight the diversity of the trails and to make more Americans familiar with these great trails.

For more information on the photo contest see: <http://tinyurl.com/p5ku38v>

## NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

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### 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](http://www.americantrails.org/Calendar.html)

### RECENT TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS/MAGAZINES

- American Trails (November): <http://tinyurl.com/njdl9u6>
  - Congress extends transportation funding, looks to future
  - Debate continues over future of Land & Water Conservation Fund
  - Report cites strong participation trends in outdoor recreation
  - and more...
- Outdoor Alliance (November): <http://tinyurl.com/ngks7vs>
  - Why Slacktivism Matters
  - How much is the outdoor economy really worth?

- Plan to sell off public lands becoming a major election issue
- Last Chance for the Land and Water Conservation Fund
- and more...

### TRAIL GUIDES

- Best Rivers to See Fall Foliage: <http://tinyurl.com/ppdghg9>
- 5 backcountry ski trails in the Adirondacks worth exploring: <http://tinyurl.com/oq3fwun>

### OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- Meet the Blind Man Hiking the Country's Toughest Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/qywn5gz>
- 'Frankenbike' Maps Problems On Seattle's Bike Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/oy46q2a>
- Hit The Trails — And Then Hit The Hot Springs In Idaho: <http://tinyurl.com/p3ws836>
- Video: Why All Women Should Try Solo Backpacking: <http://tinyurl.com/pxanrjy>
- On the Longest Hiking Trails, a Woman Finds Equal Footing: <http://tinyurl.com/q2uqs9x>
- How to Hike Safely During Hunting Season: <http://tinyurl.com/ocn9seb>
- Five Cold Weather Myths And Misinformation: <http://tinyurl.com/q42hnhx>
- 'Legal monkey-wrenching' on Western trails: <http://tinyurl.com/qajgl18>
- Bellingham council bans smoking in city parks, trails: <http://tinyurl.com/nl9gfbq>
- National Guard helps DNR construct UP (Michigan) multi-use trails: <http://tinyurl.com/pcf5pgn>
- Whorton completes 303 miles of SUP in Tennessee: <http://tinyurl.com/ou9ppmz>
- Representative proposes major changes to popular conservation fund: <http://tinyurl.com/po2bqyw>
- A 600-Mile Run Through the Mountains: <http://tinyurl.com/nv8fq1t>

### INTERNATIONAL LINKS

- Tracking the popular walking trails in Thiruvananthapuram, India: <http://tinyurl.com/oawu4h4>
- Explore Austria's Underwater Hiking Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/ocrb7v9>
- Take a Hike: Top Hiking Trails to Explore This Fall & Winter: <http://tinyurl.com/q2bnhax>
- Canmore Nordic Centre to limit fat biking for 2015-16 season: <http://tinyurl.com/jtrtlj1>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- A Side Route To Solitude (backcountry downhill skiing): <http://tinyurl.com/q4ep1cj>
- 22 Camping Hacks From REI Experts: <http://tinyurl.com/puboz58>
- Expecting a warm embrace, REI chief is harangued in online forum: <http://tinyurl.com/nh4towo>
- The great thaw: Climate change has profound effects in Glacier National Park: <http://tinyurl.com/hjtct16>

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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](mailto: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](mailto:eric.troyer@alaska-trails.org)