

2024 Alaska Trails Statewide Conference Presenters (in order of appearance)

Thursday, April 11



Amy Kapp, Editorial Director and Editor-in-Chief, Rails to Trails

Amy Kapp joined the Rails to Trails Conservancy team in 2014 and focuses on telling the story of America's trails and their impact as editorial director, and editor-in-chief of Rails to Trails magazine and the TrailBlog. Over the past two decades, she has served as a writer and editor, communications strategist, and print and digital content creator for various entities, including the National Recreation and Park Association and Parks & Recreation Magazine, and YouthBuild Philadelphia/YouthBuild USA.

Kapp is currently the vice president and Conference Committee chair for the Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA), and is a former co-chair of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee.

She holds a bachelor's in economics/theater from Baldwin-Wallace University, a master's in economic and social development/environmental management from the University of Pittsburgh, and a master's in communication from American University.



Beth Nordlund, Executive Director, Anchorage Park Foundation

Beth Nordlund is the Executive Director of the Anchorage Park Foundation. A lifelong advocate for public spaces and civic engagement, Beth has served as Executive Director since Anchorage Park Foundation's inception in 2004. Many of her greatest joys come from convening with community leaders and working with volunteers, working together to make something magical out of an idea. Beth lives with her husband Jim and daughter Ella next to a great sledding hill at Balto Seppala Park.

Alan McClain, Outdoor Recreation Trail Specialist, Mat-Su Borough



Alan has been working with the Mat-Su Borough Trail Crew since 2016 and has been the Outdoor Recreation Trail Specialist since 2017. In the summer, he oversees a Crew of 12 hardworking people as they build and maintain trails managed by the Mat-Su Borough. In the winter he helps to snowplow the trailheads, grooms trails, removes downed trees, and plans for the summer season. In addition to working for the Mat-Su Borough, he has been the Program Director for an indoor climbing gym in Wasilla, served on the Mat Su Ski Club Jr. Nordic Advisory Committee, and oversaw the Recreation and Student Leadership Development programs at the Alaska Job Corps Center in Palmer.

Alan has a Bachelor of Science degree from Indiana University in Outdoor Recreation and Resource Management, where he specialized in Adventure Education. He has had his Wilderness First Responder certification since 2002 and has his S-212 Wildland Fires Chain Saw certification. When not at work, Alan enjoys spending time with his family exploring the outdoors and experiencing all that Alaska has to offer.



Stuart R. Leidner, Superintendent, Mat-Su/Copper Basin Region

Stuart Leidner is the Superintendent for the Mat Su | Copper River Basin Region for Alaska State Parks. He has the pleasure to work with 14 state park colleagues in the region who are committed to maintaining these resources for the enjoyment of Alaskans and visitors alike. He has been with the state for three years, previously working in the non-profit sector for the majority of his career. His career and passions have focused on advocating for the protection of rural working landscapes, wild and scenic rivers, historic preservation, trails, and building capacity for rural communities to thrive. He has called Alaska home for the last nine years.



Ian DeLack, Outdoor Recreation Parks Specialist, Mat-Su Borough

Ian DeLack started his career with the Mat-Su Borough in 2012 as a Trail Maintenance Tech-1. In 2015 he came back to work for the Mat-Su Borough as a Parks Maintenance Tech-2 Winter assignment and worked in the Parks Department until he became The Outdoor Recreation Parks Specialist in 2021. Ian oversees employees year-round in many capacities to ensure facilities are well maintained, grounds are kept in great shape, and outdoor recreational opportunities are accessible, enjoyable, and available for all age groups in the Mat-Su Valley.

Ian was born and raised in Palmer Alaska and has spent much of his life in Alaska. He briefly lived in Bozeman Montana and worked for Simms Fishing Products in the factory making custom high end fishing waders for 5 years, before his return to Alaska in 2012. Ian grew up being mostly raised around industrial equipment, welding and fabricating, carpentry, and leadership training with the help of his Grandfather Dave Hendrickson. Dave taught Ian from an early age the way of everything mechanical and how to repair it all, but more in depth he was taught snow grooming and snow-science. From a very early age Ian was operating and repairing mountain Snow groomers such as DeLorean 3500, Bombardier 400+, and currently operates a PistenBully 160D for the Matanuska Susitna Parks department and has groomed Mountains and Trails all over the Mat-Su valley for over 20 years.

When not at work, Ian enjoys cross country skiing snowboarding, fishing, hiking, running and overall, just getting out into the woods to enjoy the silence of Alaska's vast wilderness!

Michelle LaRose, Treasurer and Public Relations Officer, Curry Ridge Riders

Michelle LaRose is the Treasurer and Public Relations Officer for the Curry Ridge Riders and has been since 2018 (CRR member since 2007). She is a skier (both downhill and nordic) and snowmachiner. Michelle has been an Alaska resident since 2003 and is a retired homeowner in Wasilla.



Pete Probasco, Lake Louise Snowmachine Club

Alaska has been Peter J. Probasco's home, growing up in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley near the community of Palmer. He later attended the University of Alaska, Fairbanks where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Fisheries Biology. His career in fisheries/wildlife management started in 1975 as a fisheries technician for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, progressing to area and regional management positions and retiring in 2000 as the Commercial Fisheries Regional Supervisor for the Westward Region of Alaska.

In August of 2000, Pete and his family moved from Kodiak where he started his Federal career with the USFWS, Region 7, overseeing first the Office of Subsistence Management and then the Migratory Birds/State Programs. He retired from the FWS in 2018.

Pete and his wife Eileen currently live in a rural area outside of Palmer, Alaska. They are both retired and enjoy traveling, developing their property, helping raise their 12 grandchildren, hunting and fishing, gardening, and when time allows just goofing off.

Pete and Eileen are actively involved with the Lake Louise Snowmachine Club, serving in a variety of capacities to include grant writing, trail maintenance, grooming, fund raising, and club merchandising design and ordering. They have a beautiful cabin on the Tyone River referred to as the "Tyone Hilton".



Bill Shary, Willow Trails Committee Chair

Bill Shary was born and raised in Anchorage Alaska and made a lifelong career in the Systems/IT industry. He started building a new home in Willow Alaska several years back (we won't say how long that took) and moved to Willow in 2022. He has had a passion for using the trails in the Willow area since the early 1970's, so it was an easy progression to start going to the Willow Trail Committee meetings. Low and behold, you ask a lot of questions, and make suggestions, and now I'm the new WTC Chairperson.



Michele Stevens, President, Alaska Snowmachine Alliance

Michele Stevens is the president of the Alaska Snowmachine Alliance (ASA). ASA worked with the DOT commissioner to transfer the SnowTRAC program from State Parks to the DOT. This year is the first year that all the clubs in the state of Alaska were fully funded. The ASA worked with State Parks for 3 years to improve the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). This year the program improved by showing what is allowed in the program according to the programmatic agreement, better transparency by showing the trails project score sheet.

The ASA alongside other clubs in the lower 48, such as United Snowmobile Alliance (USA) worked on getting the Federal Highways to allow a waiver for the Buy America Build America (BABA) act for small grants under \$500,000. Thus providing opportunities with RTP grants to purchase badly needed grooming equipment for all the grooming clubs in the State. At the request of the ASA the commissioner of DOT sent a letter of support for this project.

In 2023, ASA was deemed the Alaska Outdoor Council Member Club of the year. This winter due to several accidents with dog teams vs snowmachines on the trails the ASA teamed with Light Up Your Lead Dogs to campaign for dog mushers to light up their lead dogs, with the goal is to educate both motorized and non-motorized user groups that our trails are multi-use trails, though they are groomed by the snowmachine clubs.



Patrick Simpson, Alaska Plastic Recovery LLC

Patrick Simpson has deep roots in Alaska. He was born in a small fishing community on the Prince William Sound and while growing up he worked with his family on fishing boats, starting as a crew member and working his way up to captain. He earned a BA in Computer Science at the University of California San Diego. Over the past thirty years, Simpson has built several companies, including technology development firms, government contracting companies, a non-profit organization, real-estate holdings, marine vessel operations, and a natural product supplement company. Recently Patrick completed a multi-year effort developing and permitting a large oyster farm outside of Sitka. Patrick has a long history of securing federal grants and contracts including several Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) awards, one of the better opportunities available today in a public-private partnership. Currently Patrick is dedicating the majority of his time to Alaska Plastic Recovery, a company focusing on converting plastic waste into useful construction products.



Mary Green, Treasurer, Kenai Peninsula Back Country Horsemen of Alaska

Mary is the Treasurer of the [Kenai Peninsula Back Country Horsemen of Alaska Association](#) and has been since the starting in 2016. She has been involved with the Kasilof Equestrian Trails and many other projects that KPBCHA has been involved in. She is the contact person with the DOT for the Sterling Hwy 45-60 Project with working for a better parking lot that includes equestrian horse trailers. Also, she has been working with Chugach National Forestry, Seward for the betterment of other parking lots that will include horse trailer parking and to reestablish the horse areas at the Resurrection Trail Cabins after the fire of 2019. She and her husband own a General Contracting company in Soldotna and have been in business since 1976, working on the Kenai Peninsula. She also strives to keep trails open for use by historically designated users, and to promote the significance of horsemen in the historic development of trails in Alaska.



Colleen Fisk, President, Mat-Su Back Country Horsemen of Alaska

Colleen Fisk is the President of the Mat-Su Back Country Horsemen of Alaska (BCHA) and an Alaska director for the National BCHA. She is a life-long Alaskan and horseback rider from Wasilla, but also enjoys trails for hiking, biking, camping, and more.



Mike Shields, Trail Consultant

Mike Shields started working on trails in 1960 at Olympic National Park, in the days of axes, misery-whips, and 90-lb loads in a Trapper Nelson pack. A graduate of the University of Idaho, in his NPS career he's been a Crew Leader, Ranger, Roads Foreman, Maintenance Mechanic, Trails Foreman, and Facility Manager, but primarily and always a trailman, and has worked trails in Olympic, Big Bend, Canyonlands, Natural Bridges, North Cascades, Kings Canyon, Rocky Mountain, and Denali. Two of those parks (Canyonlands, North Cascades) were brand new and he helped "invent" the trail systems in both. He became adept at timber felling, log and rock construction, mule packing, rigging, using explosives as a precision tool, disposing of unstable explosives, suspension bridge and tram design, and contract administration. Since his retirement as Denali's Chief of Maintenance in late 1996 he has been a small contractor providing training, trail layout, and technical consulting services from Alaska to West Texas and California to Ohio. In 2010 he received American Trails "State Trail Worker Award" (Alaska) for his efforts at training and mentoring younger folks, and in 2015 the Professional Trail Builders Assn "R.H. Bell Lifetime Achievement Award" for excellence in trail design and construction.



Claire LeClaire, Chugach Park Fund

Claire started working for Alaska State Parks in 1983, serving as a Park Ranger in Delta Junction and Kodiak and as Division Operations Manager in the Director's office. She retired in 2016 and is now a member of the Chugach State Park Citizen's Advisory Board where she serves on the board's [Chugach Park Fund](#) committee.



Haley Johnston, Deputy Director, Alaska Trails

Haley Johnston joined the staff of Alaska Trails in January 2021 as the Tongass National Forest Sustainable Trail Strategy Project Manager and has since moved into the Deputy Director role. Haley comes to Alaska Trails with extensive experience in outdoor recreation as a long-time wilderness guide and outdoor educator. She also brings significant nonprofit expertise having served on several nonprofit and citizen advisory boards and working as the Business Specialist at the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage. Haley passionately believes recreation is critical to the quality of life in Alaska, the mental health of our communities and the resilience of the Alaskan economy. Haley spends her non-working hours trail running, backpacking, Nordic skiing, packrafting and backcountry skiing with her partner, friends and dog.



Steve Cleary, Executive Director, Alaska Trails

Steve Cleary has been with Alaska Trails since 2012. He is a graduate of St. John's University in Collegeville MN. He received a bachelor's degree in Political Science in 1993. Steve then volunteered as a teacher for three years, teaching pre-school in Chicago for a year and high school in Belize for two years. He was then awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study paper recycling and economics in Panama. Steve first came to Alaska by bicycle from Minnesota in 1998. He worked for the Anchorage Daily News, the Red Cross and as a Spanish tutor. Steve was the development director at the Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG) from 2000 to 2003. In 2003, he took over as Executive Director of AkPIRG, where he stayed until his son Liam was born in 2008. Steve was a stay-at-home dad for many years while doing part-time work for non-profits. He was excited to move back to full-time work with Alaska Trails. Steve and his family are avid bikers, hikers and skiers and love to enjoy Alaska's trails. He is fortunate to be able to use his non-profit skills to work for Alaska Trails to continue to promote and maintain Alaska's world-renowned trails.

Friday, April 14



Michael Goodyear, Director, Policy & Stakeholder Relations, Trans Canada Trail

Michael Goodyear is the Director of Policy & Stakeholder Relations for the Trans Canada Trail. He brings more than two decades of experience in the trail sector to his role as Director, Policy & Stakeholder Relations with Trans Canada Trail. He works with local Trail groups, destination marketing organizations and government stakeholders to explore opportunities to improve the experience of Trail users and make the Trans Canada Trail more attractive to national and international visitors. He holds an Environmental Studies degree from York University, a diploma in Ecosystem Management from Fleming College, and a Certificate in Project Management from the University of Toronto.



Courtney Lyons-Garcia, Executive Director, Partnership for the National Trails System

Courtney Lyons-Garcia began her role as Executive Director for the Partnership in September of 2023. She is a nonprofit professional with more than twenty-five years of experience in public lands. Prior to joining PNTS, she served as the Executive Director of Big Bend Conservancy, the nonprofit fundraising partner of Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic River, in the Development Department at National Parks Conservation Association, and most recently as the Executive Director of Public Lands Foundation, a partner of the Bureau of Land Management in the responsible use of America's public lands.

Throughout her career, Lyons-Garcia has worked extensively on issues related to public land stewardship, trail development, coalition building, federal partnership, advocacy, fundraising and communications. She works to build and protect trails in her own community through the Great Springs Project and Comal Trails Alliance.



Kevin Keeler, Iditarod National Historic Trail Administrator, BLM-Alaska

Kevin Keeler has been the federal Administrator for the Iditarod National Historic Trail for 20 years and has worked on public lands and trails in Alaska for 37 years. He first became involved w/ the Iditarod National Historic Trail in the early 1990's when he led a community-based feasibility study of the development of the Iditarod NHT in Girdwood Alaska. In 2004 he became BLM's only National Trails Administrator in the country, later working on partnership projects to develop new public shelter cabins, design and install a waymarking signs along the Trail, and provide grant support to BLM's trail partner the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance. In the past 8 years he has worked numerous Type 1, 2 and 3 wildland fires as a Resource Advisor throughout the western US and Alaska, attempting to minimize or repair the effects of fire suppression on natural and cultural resources. He has served on Anchorage Historic Preservation Commission, on the Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Board, and is on the Board of Directors of the Anchorage Ski Club, which operates Arctic Valley Ski Area.



Jeff Kish, Executive Director, Pacific Northwest Trail Association

Jeff Kish's passion for the National Trail System was hewn over many thousands of miles on the ground; including completed thru-hikes of both the Pacific Northwest Trail (PNT) and Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). In 2015, he was appointed to the Department of Agriculture's Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Advisory Council (PNNSTAC), where he contributed to the development of the PNT comprehensive plan through 2023 and continues to engage on plan implementation. In addition to his work with the PNTA and PNNSTAC, Jeff also serves on the Partnership for the National Trails System Advocacy & Policy Committee and Trail Leaders Council. Jeff has previously served as a board member for the American Long Distance Hiking Association-West. Jeff has served as Executive Director of the Pacific Northwest Trail Association since 2016.



Christine Byl, Co-owner, Interior Trails

Christine Byl, co-owner of Interior Trails, is a writer and a trail builder of 27 years. After 12 years working on federal trail crews in Glacier NP, Chugach NF and Denali NP, in 2008 Christine and her husband Gabe Travis founded Interior Trails, specializing in sustainable trail design, layout, construction, consulting and training. Clients across Alaska include the Muni of Anchorage, State of Alaska's DNR, Alaska State Parks, Student Conservation Assoc., Alaska Trails, National Park Service, and many others. See www.interior-trails.com for more. Christine's first book, *Dirt Work: An Education in the Woods* is about trail crews, tools, wildness, and labor, and was selected in *Backpacker Magazine's* 20 Great Books for the Trail. Her new novel, *Lookout*, came out in March. She lives on Dene homelands, a few acres of tundra off Stampede Road north of Denali National Park, and spends as much time as possible in wild places by foot, bike, ski, boat and dog.



Gabe Travis, Co-owner, Interior Trails

Gabe Travis, co-owner of Interior Trails, has been a professional trail builder since 1996. Gabe has led trail crews in Glacier National Park, Chugach National Forest, and Denali NP; in 2008 Gabe and his wife, Christine Byl, began Interior Trails to address the need for specialized trail expertise in Alaska. In addition to design and layout, assessment and prescription, and hand and mechanized construction for clients statewide, Gabe has taught introductory and technical trails courses in the Lower 48, Canada & Argentina. An avid skier, biker, and runner, Gabe is also a visual artist who brings his eye for design and detail to the trail layout and construction process. He lives with his family in a yurt north of Denali National Park on Dene homelands. For more information visit www.interior-trails.com.



Blaine Smith

Blaine Smith started doing trail work in 1976 as a Boy Scout working with Chugach State Park Rangers to reopen the Turnagain Arm Trail. From that point on, he has maintained an active interest in trails, becoming the trails manager for Chugach State Park, a job from which he retired in 2016. Since then, he has occupied his time by working and volunteering for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Chugach State Park, Alaska Trails, and the Student Conservation Association.



Jessie Doherty, Alaska Active Transportation Coalition

Jessie Doherty is a Public Health Specialist with the State of Alaska's Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Unit and is focused on active transportation activities. Prior to starting at PAN in early 2022, she was a Program Coordinator for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and brings that experience forward to this current work. Jessie currently lives in Eagle River and attended the University of Alaska Anchorage for a BA and an MPH, and is studying for a DrPH at Walden University. In her spare time, she enjoys outdoor activities, woodturning, reading, baking, and fiber-crafts.



Julius Adolfsson, Active Transportation Planner, Alaska DOT&PF

Julius Adolfsson is an Active Transportation Planner and Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for Alaska DOT&PF's Division of Project Delivery. Julius implements strategies and policies to make Alaska a safer place to walk and bike. Recent accomplishments include managing the implementation process of the Department's Complete Street Policy and starting up an active transportation counting program. He has extensive work experience in community development project management and holds an MA in Leadership for Sustainability. In his free time, he enjoys recreating in Alaska's wilderness on a bike, skis, or on foot.



Will Taygan, Alaska Mountain Bike Alliance

Raised in Minnesota, Will and his family have lived in Chugiak for nearly 20 years. Will serves as the Executive Director of the [Chugach Mountain Bike Riders \(CMBR\)](#). Over the past seven years, Will has led the development of the Mirror Lake Singletrack, Ben's Bike Playground, and has written dozens of grants bringing over a million dollars into Chugiak-Eagle River for trail development. Will has spearheaded a coalition of Chugiak-Eagle River trail groups to more effectively advocate for local projects, and is looking forward to empowering mountain bikers with a new statewide Alaska Mountain Bike Alliance.



Diana Rhoades, Director of Programs, Anchorage Park Foundation

Biking, hiking and advocating for parks and trails as a path to health and happiness has been a lifelong passion for Diana Rhoades. Diana's career has taken her to Capital Cities and City Halls from Juneau to Washington DC and Anchorage to Tucson, Arizona. She has worked on issues as diverse as downtown revitalization, active transportation, forest bathing, organic farming and wrestling a 58-pound King Salmon from the world-famous Kenai River. She is excited to focus on improving and growing Anchorage's park and trail system and providing more opportunities for diversity and inclusion.



Will Brennan, Trail Program Manager, Chugach National Forest

Will Brennan is the Trail Program Manager for the Chugach National Forest. He has worked in trails management with the US Forest Service since 2005, on national forests in Wyoming, California, and Alaska. Much of his current work focuses on completing the buildout of the Iditarod National Historic Trail – something he's been dreaming of since first moving to the area for a trail crew position in 2007. He lives in Girdwood with his wife and two kids, and when not working can be found getting laps in at Alyeska or riding his bike on his favorite area trails.



Jordan Mandregan, Intern, Alaska Trails

Jordan Mandregan was born and raised in Anchorage, AK. He grew up playing many sports but was particularly fond of basketball and football. Jordan has always had a passion for the outdoors, particularly hiking peaks all over Alaska, since it was instilled in him from his dad at an early age. He graduated Dimond High School in 2010. After high school, Jordan moved to Tucson, AZ and attended the University of Arizona to study at the School of Government and Public Policy. He enjoys many of the recreational opportunities Alaska has to offer and that was a big reason he decided to move back to AK in 2017. Jordan currently spends much of my time hiking and mountain biking in the summer and feeds his snowboarding addiction in the winter time, mostly resort riding, but he has really started to get into backcountry this season. After a couple career changes in the sales and finance fields, Jordan is currently finishing his last semester at the online U of A School of Government and Public Policy with a Bachelor of Science in Public Management and Policy.