



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



ALASKA
TRAILS

Our Mission:

Building trails for Alaska's people, communities, and economy.

Alaska Trails' office is located within Dena'ina Ełnena, the traditional homelands of the Dena'ina Athabascan people. We recognize that we recreate on the traditional and current homelands of many Alaska Native peoples - from the Koyokon of the Brooks Range to the Tlingit and Haida of Southeast. Alaska Native people have been stewards of these lands for thousands of years and we would like to give our recognition and show our appreciation to them, their land, and their continued stewardship.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Alaska Trails is looking forward to a bright 2024, and much of that is due to what our team was able to accomplish in 2023. Alaska Trails celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 2023 and we are gearing up for more decades of trail advocacy. Thanks to your support, we made great strides toward making trails better, safer and more fun. We hope you were able to get out and explore some new trails and that you have big plans for the new year.

Our big plans for the new year are to continue our progress on the Alaska Long Trail. Alaska Trails worked together with partners to secure funding for the Alaska Long Trail in the FY2024 state capital budget and in federal funds. AND - the Race Across Alaska Winter Challenge (RAAWC) has raised over \$120,000 for the Long Trail in just three years! You can learn more about the Long Trail on pages 7-8.

Alaska Trails is ready to continue the work of securing the rest of the funding to be able to connect 500+ miles of Alaska via a sustainable and exceptional trail system. Alaska Trails will continue to work with its partners to highlight the great trails on the Long Trail route that already exist and to connect the dots to make this expansive vision a reality.

We are excited to be part of the community that is building, maintaining and promoting trails across our great state - both with our paid crews and volunteers. In 2023, our three paid crews worked with the Chugach Park Fund and Chugach National Forest, with crews in Girdwood and Moose Pass, Eagle River, and Cordova. Our volunteers accomplished incredible trail work, with over 47,000 feet of trail built or maintained by hand!

We are prepping for a great 2024. Alaska Trails staff have been meeting with land managers to plan projects both for our paid trail crews and our volunteer events. We are excited to continue helping land managers build and maintain sustainable trails.

We are grateful for your support and look forward to making more strides for more trails in 2024 and beyond. Thanks again.

Happy Trails!



Steve Cleary
Executive Director
Alaska Trails



2023 Paid Trail Crews

This season, Alaska Trails took on its largest seasonal workforce to date: 16 crew members and leaders distributed among three dedicated crews. Each of these crews contributed to making Alaskan trails better for all trail users.



One crew was stationed in Cordova for 12 weeks. They replaced aging and damaged trail structures with fresh lumber milled on site, logged out trails, and brushed out campgrounds and a landing strip, ensuring the safety and accessibility of these routes and areas for outdoor enthusiasts. These projects were conducted in close collaboration with Cordova Forest Service staff, emphasizing the importance of partnerships in preserving our natural landscapes.

Another crew had a productive season in the Chugach National Forest, working in conjunction with the Glacier and Seward Ranger District crews. During this time, they dedicated their efforts to improving major segments of popular trails, such as Winner Creek, Beaver Pond, and Johnson Pass Trails.

Our third crew was stationed in the South Fork Eagle River Valley and was made possible through generous support from the Chugach Park Fund. The crew operated out of a remote spike camp near their worksite and accomplished significant trail work, constructing 2,600 feet of natural surface reroutes, installing 1,040 feet of wood running plank, and incorporating natural drainage features to ensure the long-term sustainability of the trail. Their efforts will contribute to the enjoyment of hikers for years to come, highlighting the dedication of Alaska Trails to maintaining and enhancing the state's scenic trails and natural resources.



Alaska Trail Stewards Volunteer Successes

In 2023, the Alaska Trail Stewards volunteers completed 21 events on trails from Seward up to Eagle River. Over 100 volunteers put in a total of 1235 hours of work, amounting to \$39,273 in volunteer labor! Volunteers brushed alder and other shrubs and trees away from the trails, improved drainage, and even built new sections of trail.



Thanks to their hard work, 47,150 feet of trail was built or maintained in Chugach State Park, Chugach National Forest, and the Municipality of Anchorage!

In Chugach State Park, volunteers worked on the South Fork Eagle River Trail, Mt. Baldy, Gasline Trail, Eklutna Lake Access Trail, Falls Creek, Hidden Lake, McHugh Lake, Powerline Pass, and Near Point. In Chugach National Forest, volunteers made great improvements to the Horsetail Falls Connector Trail, Ptarmigan Creek INHT Access Trail, and Hope Point Trail.

In the Municipality of Anchorage, volunteers helped with construction of the new mountain bike trails at Russian Jack Springs Park!



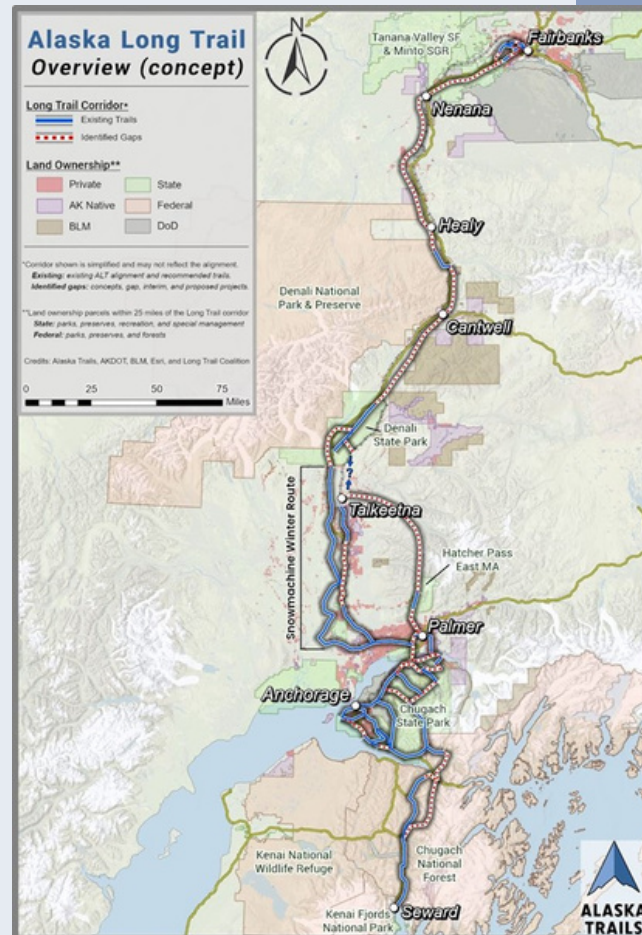
Curious about how to be a trail steward? Contact our Volunteer and Communications Coordinator:

maya.kaup@alaska-trails.org

Another year of successful funding for the Alaska Long Trail projects!

Three trail projects in Chugach State Park received a total of \$1.4M through the state capital budget FY2024, continuing the trend from the previous year. The funded projects will repair the Eklutna Lakeside Trail system, plan access to Ram Valley, and build a sustainable reroute of the Indian Valley Trail. We are grateful to the state legislature and Governor Dunleavy for supporting these projects and recognizing the value of the Alaska Long Trail for the Alaskan economy and communities.

Additionally, Senator Murkowski once again secured funding for the Alaska Long Trail project through FFY2023 federal appropriations.



Chugach National Forest: \$2.348 million to construct and improve recreational trails and access on the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

Denali Borough: \$2.18 million for design and engineering of a section of pedestrian pathways along the Parks Highway corridor in the Denali Borough to provide safe pedestrian access to Denali National Park and Preserve and Denali front country.

BLM: \$1 million to complete a National Scenic Trail feasibility study to connect Seward and Fairbanks via the Alaska Long Trail.

Work is underway on the projects funded through both state capital budget and federal appropriations in 2022.

In addition to the capital projects and planning funding secured in 2023, we are grateful for the grants and donations received for our Alaska Long Trail operational expenses.

Thank you to:

- ConocoPhillips Alaska
- Rasmuson Foundation
- Anchorage Park Foundation
- Race Across Alaska Winter Challenge
- Direct donors

Map Portal

The Alaska Long Trail map portal is now available on the Alaska Long Trail page and features interactive maps and information about proposed segments. Feedback forms are available to provide input – we hope to hear from you!

map-portal-alaska-trails.hub.arcgis.com



Alaska Long Trail in the News

The project has been featured by several media outlets in 2023, even making it to the cover of Alaska Business Magazine's November issue!

Anchorage Business Magazine:

digital.akbizmag.com/issue/november-2023

Trails Initiative

In 2023, the Trails Initiative program continued to pursue its mission to create more and better trails in Alaska, to help build a stronger Alaska economy, and to expand year-round opportunities for everyone to be active, healthy, and happy outside. Notable work included:

- The Tongass Sustainable Trails Strategy was completed in Spring 2023 after over two years of collaborative work with communities, nonprofits, individuals and the Tongass National Forest. The recommendations in that report will impact local trail and recreation planning, maintenance and construction for years to come.
- Trails Initiative staff engaged with a variety of planning and public processes as the much-needed voice of Alaska's trails. These included the Chugach State Park Access Service Area, the Turnagain Pass Management Plan, Denali Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee, the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, and the Tongass National Forest - Forest Management Plan Revision. Alaska Trails is the consistent voice for pro-trail policies and trails funding in Alaska.
- Since its publication in 2020, multiple projects in the Trails Investment Strategy have received funding for planning or construction, necessitating an update. Trails Initiative staff began revisions to the Kenai region chapter of the strategy with plans to expand revisions to encompass the entire state.
- Trails Initiative staff traveled to Juneau to educate legislators about the need for legislative support of trails and outdoor recreation. In addition to numerous one-on-one meetings with legislators about the Alaska Long Trail, Alaska Trails also gave a well attended update on trails, outdoor recreation, and progress on the Alaska Long Trail.

Meet Our Team

Staff



Executive Director
Steve Cleary



Trails Program Officer
Ben Ervin



Trails Initiative Manager
Haley Johnston



Alaska Long Trail Project Coordinator
Mariyam Medovaya



Alaska Long Trail Mat-Su Coordinator
Sam Dinges



Volunteer and Communications Coordinator
Maya Kaup

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Thank You To Our Sponsors and Funders Who Value Sustainable Trails For All Alaskans!



REVELATE DESIGNS



Thank You To Our Donors Who Strengthen Trails Across Alaska!

And thank you to all those who donated silent auction items for our Fall Fundraiser!

Sustaining Trail Advocates

Blaine Smith, Bob Gorman, Brian Meissner, Brittani Clancey, Chris Beck, Dan Oberlatz, Dana Drummond, Diane Moxness, Eric Troyer, Gary Kuehn, George Fenderson, Heather Helzer, Jeff Ripley, Jessica Horwatt, Joe Meyer, Judy Caminer, Julie and Randy Bladel, Lilan Smith, Lynette Veelman, Madeleine Grant, Mark Spano, Melissa Hamp, Michelle Crowl, Mike Morganson, Nancy Meade, Suzanne & Michael Wheatall, Victor Shen

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office@alaska-trails.org

907-334-8049