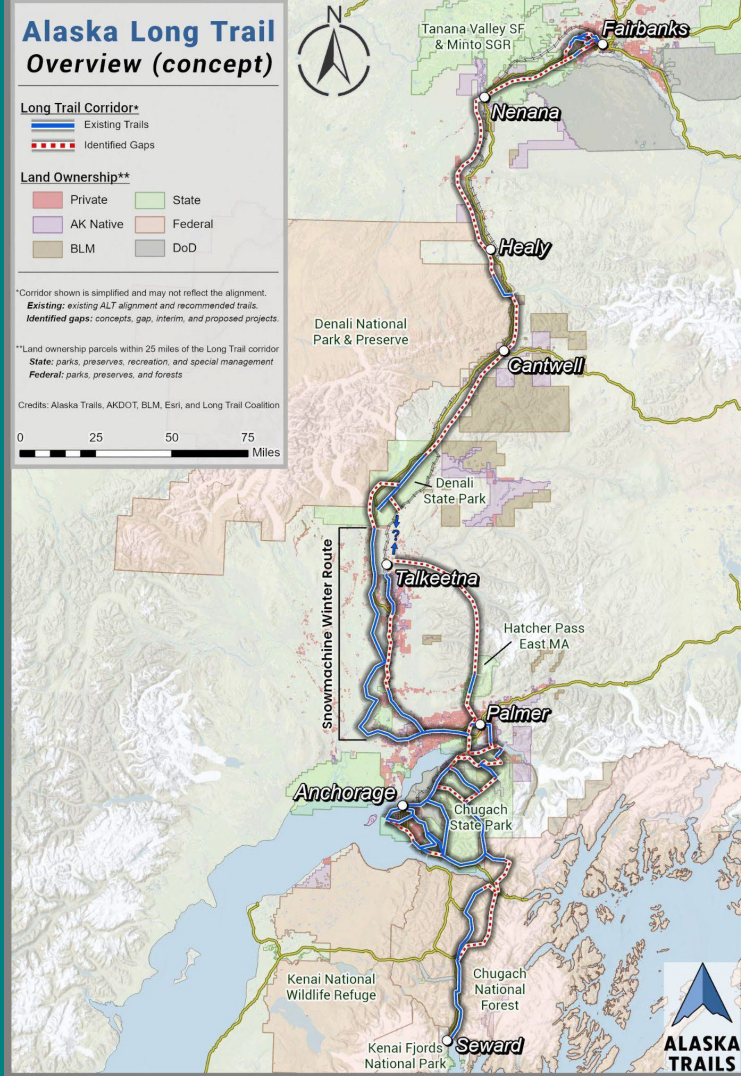


ALASKA LONG TRAIL

National Scenic Trail feasibility study



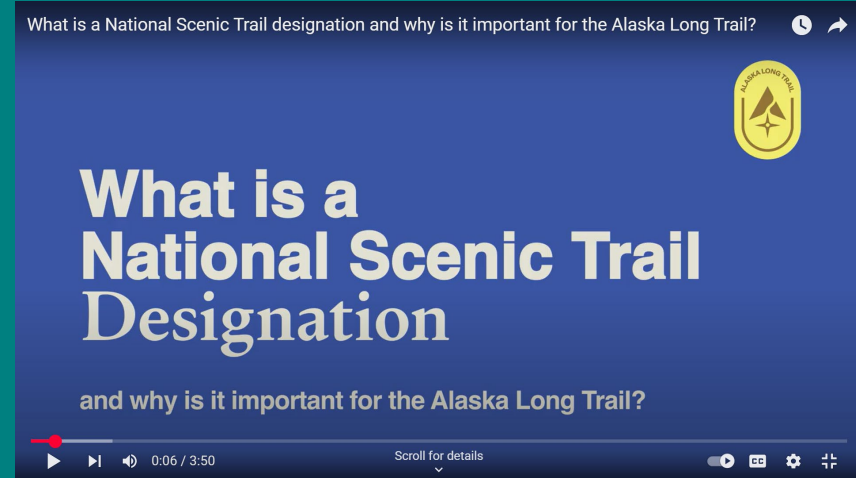
NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL (NST) DESIGNATION



- NSTs are **designated by Congress** to provide for "maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities".
- **NST system includes 11 trails** around the country, including the Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail
- Opens the door to **federal funding** (~\$1 million/yr)
- **NST feasibility study for the Alaska Long Trail:** BLM is working on it 2024 - 2025

How is Alaska Trails involved?

- Shared the proposed route data with the BLM in 2023
- Does **not** represent BLM and is **not** involved in the feasibility study writing
- Monitor the process, stay informed and share information with the public and stakeholders



NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL DESIGNATION TIMELINE

- ✓ **January 2023** - Appropriations bill included \$1M for the BLM to conduct feasibility study
- ✓ **Fall 2023** - BLM hires contractor (Logan Simpson) for study
- ✓ **Spring-Summer 2024** - Public feedback process with 5 in-person and 3 virtual meetings
- ✓ **Fall 2024** - Interviews with land managers
- ✓ **Spring 2025** - First draft study released for public feedback (closed April 14th)
- **Fall 2025** - Final study will be submitted to Congress
- **2026 - ???** Up to the Congress (and Alaska congressional delegation) to designate



IF TRAIL IS DESIGNATED AS NST

- Congress appoints a federal administering agency
- Federal administering agency puts together Advisory Council
- Comprehensive Trail Management Plan within 2 years



<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2030342/510>



Alaska Long National Scenic Trail (NST) Feasibility Study



Introduction & How to Engage

Study Background

Tour the Alaska Long Trail

Explore the Alaska Long Trail

Frequently Asked Questions

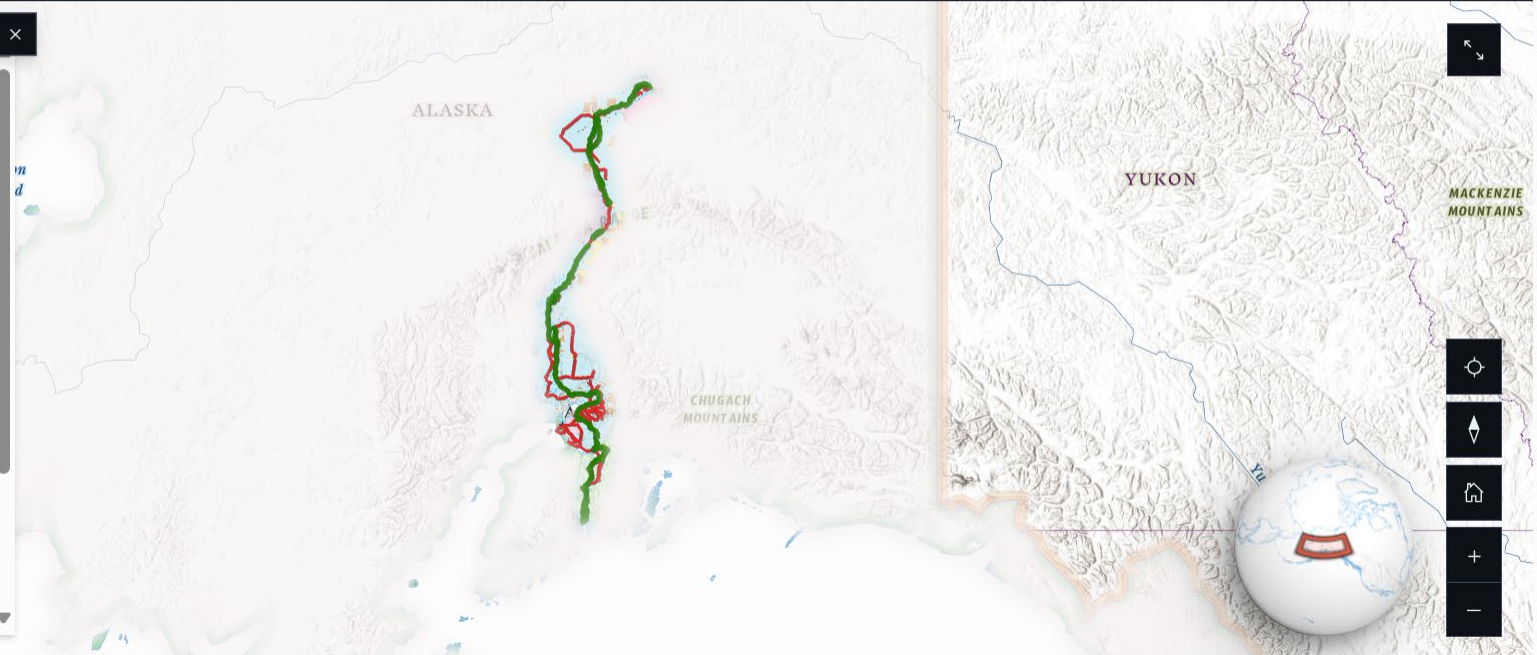
AK Long Trail Suitability

Suitable

- Yes
- No

Administered Lands

- Bureau of Land Management
- Department of Defense
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Forest Service
- National Park Service
- State
- Native Allotment
- Native Lands



9 OBJECTIVES THE STUDY EVALUATES

1. The proposed route of such trail (including maps and illustrations).
2. The areas adjacent to such trails, to be utilized for scenic, historic, cultural, or developmental purposes.
3. The characteristics which, in the judgment of the appropriate Secretary, make the proposed trail worthy of designation as an NST or National Historic Trail (NHT).
4. The current status of land ownership, as well as the current and potential use along the designated route.
5. The estimated cost of acquisition of lands or interest in lands, if any.
6. The plans for developing and maintaining the trail and the cost thereof.
7. The proposed federal administering agency.
8. The extent to which a state or its political subdivision and public private organizations might reasonably be expected to participate in acquiring the necessary lands and in the administration thereof.
9. The relative uses of the lands involved.

KEY FINDINGS IN THE DRAFT STUDY

OBJECTIVE 4 “The current status of landownership and current and potential use along the designated route” was not met due to:

- 1) Resolution of Mat-Su Borough Assembly that “specifically opposes the designation of the Alaska Long Trail as an NST on Borough-owned land because of the use restrictions and loss of local control over the trail”
- 2) Letter from Ahtna, Inc opposing the study route “where it crosses Ahtna lands.”

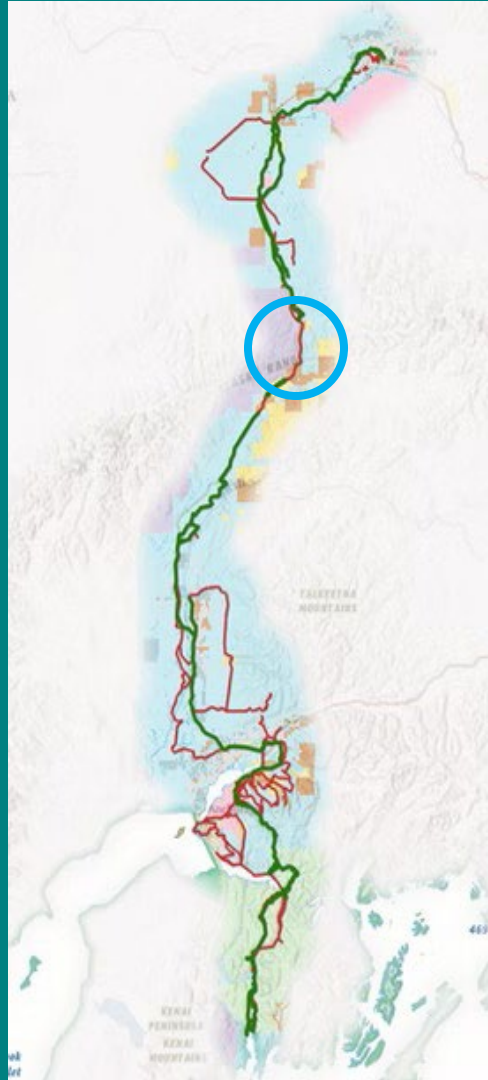
Resolution 24-099 refined the previous resolution further by stating that the Assembly “specifically opposes the designation of the Alaska Long Trail as an NST on Borough-owned land because of the use restrictions and loss of local control over the trail.”

Feasibility, Desirability, and Evaluation of Findings

Matanuska-Susitna Borough has been informed that a potential NST designation does not change the ownership of the land the trail crosses, that all trails would continue to be owned and/or managed by the respective landowner or agency after designation, and that a subsequent comprehensive management plan would be designed to develop cooperative relationships with corresponding easements necessary for long-term management. As described in Section 1.3 Study Approach cessation of state or local government authority is not an option in establishing or protecting the proposed trail system. Yet while the establishment of an NST designation under the NTSA neither extends federal authority over private, local, state, or tribal lands, nor imposes use restrictions, nor restricts existing rights or authorities, except through voluntary cooperative agreements, Matanuska-Susitna Borough specifically opposes designation of an NST through their jurisdiction.

KEY FINDINGS IN THE DRAFT STUDY

- A suitable end-to-end route has not been identified between Fairbanks and Seward
- Two suitable end-to-end route networks greater than 100 miles in length were identified:
 - From Seward to Ahtna lands near Summit Lake for a length of 435.3 miles.
 - From Ahtna lands near Denali Park to Fairbanks, for a length of 204.8 miles



KEY FINDINGS IN THE DRAFT STUDY

Suitable routes omit Anchorage, north Chugach State Park and Talkeetna mountains.



KEY FINDINGS IN THE DRAFT STUDY

Suitable routes cross 3.9 miles of private land.

- “It is assumed that condemnation [eminent domain] would neither be authorized by Congress nor necessary for the suitable routes to be completed.”
- “Where on private land, willing owner access agreements could be led by a nonprofit organization, the state, or local jurisdiction with authority.”



KEY FINDINGS IN THE DRAFT STUDY

Financially Feasible

- The total estimated cost for the 233.1 miles of suitable identified gaps routes between Seward and Fairbanks:
\$16,317,000 (low) to \$34,965,000 (high)

KEY FINDINGS IN THE DRAFT STUDY

USFS or BLM are recommended as the federal administering agency



ALASKA TRAILS KEY COMMENTS

1. Include a Talkeetna Mountains Route as a Suitable Route from Palmer to Talkeetna
2. Reconsider an Option for a Suitable End-to-End Route Connect Seward to Fairbanks
3. Include Routes in Anchorage and Chugach State Park north of Eagle River as Suitable Routes
4. Address Concerns about Local Authority, Land Use and Federal Overreach



IF TRAIL IS DESIGNATED AS NST

- Congress appoints a federal administering agency
- Federal administering agency puts together Advisory Council
- Comprehensive Trail Management Plan within 2 years



NEXT STEPS FOR AKLT

- Designation may or may not happen
- Alaska Trails and partners keep working on the Alaska Long Trail!



ALASKA LONG TRAIL



Learn more and stay in touch!

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Alaska Trails

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