

2024 Statewide Trails Conference Sessions

Thursday, April 11th

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM

Keynote: Creating Impact for Your Project With Authentic Storytelling
Amy Kapp, Rails to Trails

Creating Impact for Your Project With Authentic Storytelling

- Capturing and inspiring people's hearts and minds—that's what it takes to bring a grand trail vision to life.

This session examines effective and impactful strategies for using storytelling to engage decision-makers, funders, partners and the public and build support for trails and active transportation projects.

A focus will be on how authentic storytelling and strategic communication can help communicate the impact of trails on communities across America in terms of economic and small business development, active transportation, social equity and the environment; help captivate and expand audiences; and expand support. In addition, Kapp will share strategies and tactics for lifting up the voices of individuals—including local leaders and community supporters—who are critical to and would be most impacted by a project, to help drive it forward and create meaningful impact for everyone it serves.

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

Indigenous Place Name Project

Beth Nordlund – Executive Director, Anchorage Park Foundation
Aaron Leggett – President of Native Village of Eklutna (Invited)

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Winter Grooming Panel

Trail Clubs across the state do a tremendous amount of grooming with volunteers on a shoestring budget. These trails stretch into amazing areas of Alaska, with views of many mountain ranges – as well as serving as a transportation network to cabins, road houses and other amenities. Presenters will share their experiences on what has worked for grooming, the challenges they have had, new equipment and fun activities their clubs do.

Presenters:

- Alan McClain and Ian Delack - Mat-Su Borough Grooming Crew
- Stuart Leidner – Alaska State Parks - Mat Su | Copper River Basin Region

- Michelle LaRose—Treasurer Curry Ridge Riders, Friends of Denali State Park
- Bill Shary - Willow Trails Committee
- Pete Probasco – Lake Louise Snowmachine Club
- Michele Stevens - Alaska Snowmachine Alliance

12:00 PM – 12:45 PM – Lunch Provided

12:45 PM – 1:15 PM

Recycled Plastic Wood and its uses on Trails

Patrick Simpson, Alaska Plastic Recovery LLC

Grizzly Wood is a potential game-changer in trail rehabilitation. Originating from the pristine wilderness of Alaska, Grizzly Wood is a unique type of recycled plastic lumber, crafted entirely from 100% recycled plastic. A portion of this plastic is sourced directly from Alaskan beaches, turning potential environmental hazards into valuable resources. This transformation into Grizzly Wood offers a multitude of benefits for trail rehabilitation. Unlike traditional wood, Grizzly Wood sidesteps common issues like moisture absorption, rot, and wood creep under load. Its resilience against environmental stressors such as high humidity and variable temperatures makes it an ideal material for trail structures, especially in challenging landscapes. Choosing Grizzly Wood for trails not only contributes to preserving the environment but also ensures the longevity and durability of our beloved outdoor spaces.

1:15 PM – 1:30 PM

Back Country Horsemen of Alaska (Kenai Peninsula and Mat-Su Borough)

Mary Green

Colleen Fisk

Hear an update from the group dedicated to resurrecting and maintaining the historic horse trails in the State of Alaska so future generations may enjoy them.

1:45 PM – 3:15 PM

How to Break Rock

Mike Shields, Trails Expert

A quick overview of rock mechanics (formation, types, density, strength and hardness, uniformity, dis-continuities, weathering and pre-fracturing) whether as a boulder or bedrock; what kind of breakage do you want (wall slabs vs gravel); the various means of obtaining that breakage (hammers, jackhammers, rock drills, non-explosive “busters”, high explosives, expansive cements, and wedge-and-feathers); and how does rock react to those means.. If you’ve ever hammered on a “boulder” to no effect, this class will explain why that happens.

3:30 – 4:45 PM

Trail Project Lifecycles

Three trail projects will be showcased to show that there are multiple avenues to successful trail projects.

- South Fork Eagle River – Claire LeClaire, Chugach Park Fund
- Ram Valley Planning and Design – Haley Johnston, Alaska Trails
- Russian Jack Bike Trails – Steve Cleary, Alaska Trails

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Friday, April 12th

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

KEYNOTE: Trans Canada Trail

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

As the longest trail network in the world, the [Trans Canada Trail](#) (TCT) connects Canadians and visitors to nature and to one another, from coast to coast to coast, through accessible and inclusive outdoor activities. Through collaboration and partnerships, TCT maintains and stewards Canada’s national trail, a unique system of connected urban and rural trails. Hear about the economic and health benefits this trail generates and lessons learned from their 30 year history.

10:15 AM – 11:30 AM

Alaska Long Trail and the National Trails System

The Alaska Long Trail is currently being considered for the National Scenic Trail designation through a feasibility study directed by the BLM. There are 11 National Scenic Trails in the country, including the Appalachian, Pacific Crest and Continental Divide trails. Will the AKLT join their ranks? This session will explore what it means to become a national trail, share lessons from other national trails, and give an overview of the feasibility study.

Presenters:

- Courtney Lyons-Garcia – Executive Director, Partnership for the National Trails System
- Jeff Kish – Executive Director, Pacific Northwest Trail Association
- Kevin Keeler – BLM, Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) Administrator

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

When Getting it "Exactly Right" isn't Exactly Right: Trail Sustainability & Compromise

Trails often bring up "perfect as enemy of the good" scenarios. How do we balance the sustainable elements with on-the-ground factors? How do we think of "the rules" as a flexible system rather than a rigid template, while not throwing out hard earned wisdom? Join a lively conversation with real examples from around the State.

Presenters:

- Christine Byl – Co-owner, [Interior Trails](#)
- Gabe Travis – Co-owner, [Interior Trails](#)
- Blaine Smith – Trails Specialist

12:30 PM – 1:15 PM – Lunch Provided

1:15 PM – 2:15 PM

Trail Organization Updates

Hear updates from a variety of trail groups and organizations on the exciting work that they are up to.

Presenters:

- Will Taygan – Alaska Mountain Bike Alliance – Will Taygan
- Erik Boraas – Haines Huts and Trails Association – Erik Boraas
- Diana Rhoades – Anchorage Park Foundation – Investing in Trails
- Jessie Doherty, Julius Adolfsson – Alaska Active Transportation Coalition

2:30PM – 3:30PM

FUNDING – Making sense of new and existing federal programs for trails

There are a lot of acronyms in the federal funding world and something of them involve funding for trails. Alaska Trails is working with other entities, like the Alaska Municipal League, to help identify the current possibilities with the hope of turning them into realities on the ground across the state.

Presenters:

- Jordan Mandregan – Alaska Trails Intern
- Andrea Jacobs – Fairbanks North Star Borough
- Julius Adolfsson – State of Alaska – Complete Streets
- Steve Cleary – Alaska Trails

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM – Trail Projects in 2024 and Beyond

- Will Brennan – USFS – Iditarod National Historic Trail
- Ben Corwin – Chugach State Park
- TBD