

## 2025 Statewide Trails Conference Sessions

**Wednesday April 23<sup>rd</sup> – Mike Shields DIRT WATER PEOPLE AND TRAILS**  
Separate sign up for this all day training - information at [this link](#).

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**Thursday April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 AM - 9:30 AM Keynote: A \$30 Million General Obligation Bond for Trails in Maine**

**Al Swett – Director of Operations, Maine Snowmobile Association**  
**Pete Didishiem – Natural Resources Council of Maine**

In November of 2024, Maine passed a \$30 million general obligation bond to repair and expand all types of trails statewide. The successful passage of the bond solidifies Maine’s position as a national leader in outdoor recreation to support local economic growth and expand access for all users. Starting in January 2025, the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands will initiate a new competitive grant program to provide \$7.5 million per year over four years to towns, organizations, and clubs. The funding will support design, maintenance, and construction of trails of all types, including non-motorized, motorized, and multi-use trails.

The campaign to pass the bond brought together a diverse array of outdoor recreation interests. More than 520 Maine towns, organizations, businesses, and clubs endorsed the bond, including the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, L.L. Bean, Maine Municipal Association, Maine Snowmobile Association, ATV Maine, Bicycle Coalition of Maine, New England Mountain Bike Association, Maine Tourism Association, and Maine Outdoor Brands.

**9:45 AM – 10:45 AM: Designing a Training with Picasso**

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

Training plans for a Trail Crew:

This session will delve into developing an effective training plan for seasonal Trail Crews. Challenges, considerations, tips, and different learning styles will all be addressed. Audience participation and input is encouraged.

**11 AM – 12:00 PM: Connecting with Business for Trail Events, Sponsorship and More**

**Lee Hart – Founder, Alaska Outdoor Alliance**  
**Natura Richardson – Executive Director, Island Trails Network**

Learn about ways that trail groups can better connect with local businesses for sponsorship. Hear the basics of setting up donation programs including the steps to take to encourage businesses to help support local trails in other ways as well. The 1st annual [Kodiak Mountain Series](#) will serve as an example of an event that is incorporating business and community collaboration.

**12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch Provided**

**1:00 PM – 1:45 PM: Sitka’s Multi-Jurisdictional Trail Maintenance Partnerships**

**Jess Deviche – Partnership and Volunteer Coordinator, Tongass National Forest**

**Meghan Chamberlain – Recreation Planner, Sitka Ranger District**

**Ben Hughey – Executive Director, Sitka Trail Works**

Sitka Trail Works and the Forest Service have long partnered to plan, build, and maintain a robust trail system around the island community of Sitka. This last year, the partnership reached new heights through one particularly challenging project. Four agencies, dozens of staff, extensive legal agreements, partnership funding, and explosives flown in by seaplanes were all required to address the community’s top maintenance request, on a jointly managed State Parks trail. Learn how we worked together and had a blast doing it.

**2:00 PM – 3:15 PM: Outcomes from the Alaska SCORP 2023 - 2027**

**Ricky Gease – Director, DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation**

**Gary Greenberg – Founder, Alaska Map Company, LLC**

**With the Alaska SCORP 2023-2027 in place, learn about next steps including:**

- **Alaska Office of Outdoor Recreation**
- **Alaska Partners in Outdoor Recreation**
- **Alaska GIS Hub for Outdoor Recreation**
- **Ground Truthing Alaska’s Trails**

DPOR Director Ricky Gease will discuss how the division’s new Community Engagement section is working to foster growth of a statewide advisory group and GIS Hub for Outdoor Recreation. GIS professional Gary Greenberg will discuss the path forward and options available to ground truthing the GPS data for the 13,500+ miles of trails in Alaska. The presenters will also report on the recent SCORP survey.

**3:30 – 4:30 PM: Round table of groups presentations from around Alaska**

**Randy Goodwin – Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation**

**Meghan Tabacek – Executive Director, Trail Mix**

**Brandon Drzazgowski – Stream Watch Coordinator, Kenai Watershed Forum**

## **Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup>**

### **9:00 AM – 10:30 AM: Successful Trail Layout: How to Get There from Here**

**Jon Underwood – President, Happy Trails Inc.**

You have a great idea for a new trail. You want to convey that concept to land managers, trail user groups, citizen advisory boards, politicians, and grant funding sources, but you don't think your back-of-the-napkin sketch will get you there. How should you proceed? What can you do on your own and where do you need professional help? This session will go through the steps to articulate, illustrate, and develop your vision into a construction-ready trail line.

### **10:45 AM – 11:15 AM: Alaska Long Trail: National Scenic Trail feasibility study**

**Zach Million – BLM Alaska Program Lead**

The Alaska Long Trail is being considered for the National Scenic Trail designation. The Bureau of Land Management has been working on the feasibility study for the designation since 2023, with the final study planned for the end of 2025. The presentation will give an update on the process and discuss frequently asked questions about the nuts and bolts of the potential designation.

### **11:30 AM – 12:15 PM: What is a National Scenic Trail?**

**John Cannella – National Program Manager, National Trails System & National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, Washington Support Office - U.S. National Park Service**

The National Trails System Act established the framework for national scenic and historic trails in 1968. What does a national scenic trail (NST) designation mean in the year 2025? This presentation will cover the implications of the NST designation for a variety of land managers, including federal and non-federal lands along the route. What are cooperative agreements, what does a trail administrator do, and what is the extent of "federal reach" with the NST designation?

### **12:15 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch Provided**

### **1:00-2pm – Exciting Economic Impacts of Trails**

**Lee Hart – Founder, Alaska Outdoor Alliance**

**Haley Johnston – Deputy Director, Alaska Trails**

You and your organization are an important part of Alaska's \$3.1 Billion outdoor recreation economy. In this session, we'll share the most current data, what it means and how to use the numbers to convince others to invest in your projects. We'll also discuss the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan data that demonstrates how and where users engage with the outdoor recreation economy and where investment is needed to meet the large and growing demand for outdoor recreation experiences by visitors and residents alike. Finally, we'll look at examples from across the country of where investment in outdoor recreation has correlated with economic and population growth as a blueprint for how Alaska might improve its economic future.

### **2:15 PM – 2:45 PM: Anchorage to MatSu Strategic MTB Trail Plan**

**Will Taygan – Executive Director, Chugach Mountain Bike Riders**

This regional mountain bike trail plan will engage community volunteers, land managers, and the general public from Anchorage and the Mat-Su to inventory existing mountain bike-optimized trails, assess mountain bike trails in current plans, and identify needs for future trail development. Working on a common plan will strengthen ties between existing regional trail nonprofits, in an effort to create lasting partnerships within the mountain bike community.

### **3:00PM – 3:30PM: Application of South-America Style Chainsaw Milling with an Electric Saw for Trail Building**

**Hig Higman – Executive Director, Ground Truth Alaska**

Freehand chainsaw milling using vertical cuts can be a quick way to produce lumber in the field with little more than a chainsaw. Hig will present a technique he has been refining for salvage logging and trail milling that uses an electric chain saw with a bubble level glued to it. A few tricks shorten the learning curve and greatly improve the speed and battery consumed per plank cut!

**Background video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qz64ELkxdA>**

### **3:30 PM – 4:00 PM: Tread Lightly!**

**Laura Butcher – Nevada Program Manager - Tread Lightly!**

Tread Lightly! is a non-profit organization that leads a national initiative to promote the responsible use of motorized vehicles when recreating outdoors. Their goal is to balance the off-road and off-highway vehicle (OHV) users' need for adventure with the need to conserve the places where they ride and explore. Hear what is happening with their work in Alaska.