

Project Title: Alaska Long Trail - Kesugi Ridge Trail Upgrades

TPS Number: 68763

Priority: 11

Agency: Natural Resources

FY2025 State Funding Request: \$1,500,000

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

The project will conduct an overall condition assessment and trail tread upgrades to the Kesugi Ridge Trail to accommodate the increased visitor use that has occurred over the past decade.

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost:	\$1,500,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$0)
FY2025 State Funding Request:	(\$1,500,000)
Project Deficit:	\$0

Explanation of Other Funds:

Limited funds have been used to clear the trail over the past decade, but no substantial trail tread work has been completed, nor additional needed upgrades done.

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

The Kesugi Ridge Trail remains one of the most iconic, impressive backcountry trails accessible from the road system. Due to its relatively easy access, it has seen a dramatic increase in recreation use over the past decade. Each year, the trail hosts a grueling backcountry race, multiple large groups that traverse the trail, as well as thousands of other backcountry hikers. As a result, the trail needs attention, to create a more sustainable trail tread, create new as well as improve existing campsites, address increased human waste issues arising from increased traffic, as well as repairs needed to ensure a smooth connection between the Kesugi Ridge Trail and the newly completed Curry Ridge Trail.

The Kesugi Ridge Trail is also a key segment of the Alaska Long Trail, serving as a lynch pin for connections south and north of Denali State Park.

There are two phases of this project:

1. Contract out for trail assessment to be completed with detailed prescription for improvements and upgrades.
2. Contract out for all work to be completed which may take up to two years to complete given the length and logistics for backcountry work to be completed.

The trails within Denali State Park would be incorporated through the public process to adopt the current management plan. The plan calls for rehabilitation of trails as necessary to ensure continued public access and enjoyment.

Project Timeline:

This project would be completed in two phases over two seasons (2024-2026):

Phase I: Trail assessment and reporting, planning and developing trail repairs, etc.

Phase II: Contractors would complete all required trail rehabilitation, campsite improvements, facility upgrades (latrines) as necessary.

Phase II will most likely take two seasons to complete.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

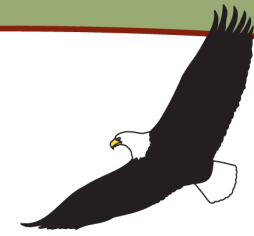
Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Name: Stuart Leidner
Address: 7278 East Bogard Road
Wasilla, AK 99654
Phone Number: (907)745-3975
Email: stuart.leidner@alaska.gov

This project has been through a public review process at the local level and it is a community priority.

Guide to

K'esugi Ridge Trail System South



in Denali State Park

Ermine Hill Trail:

Allowable Uses: Hiking

Distance: 3.7 miles

Elevation Gain: 1300 feet

Difficulty: Moderate

K'esugi Ridge Trail:

(Ermine Hill Trail jct. to Cascade Trail jct.)

Allowable Uses: Hiking

Distance: 11.2 miles

Elevation Gain: 2000 feet (north to south)

Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult

Cascade Trail:

Allowable Uses: Hiking

Distance: 2 miles

Elevation Gain: 1800 feet from Byers Lake

Difficulty: Difficult

Byers Lake Trail:

Allowable Uses: Hiking, Biking, Skiing

Distance: 5.3 miles

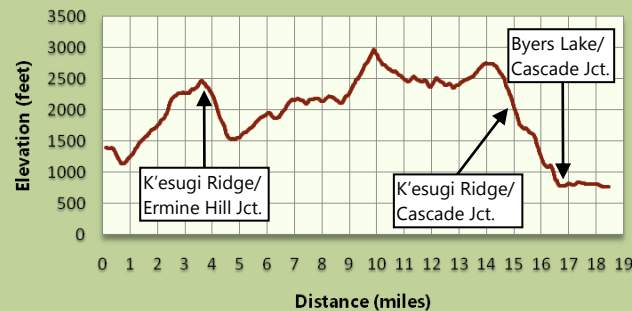
Elevation Gain: Less than 100 feet

Difficulty: Easy

Connecting the Trails:

18.5 mile traverse from Ermine Hill Trailhead to Byers Lake Campground. 26.6 mile traverse from Ermine Hill Trailhead to Upper Troublesome Creek Trailhead.

K'esugi Ridge Trail System South



Special Features:

This trail system offers popular multi-day backpacking trips in south-central Alaska. Hiking is through rolling alpine and sub-alpine terrain with outstanding views of Denali, and numerous small glacially scoured lakes. Lower elevations are forested.

Planning Your Route:

Most people hike from north to south because of less total elevation gain. Hikers can start from the Little Coal Creek Trailhead or Ermine Hill Trailhead and finish at Byers Lake Campground or Upper Troublesome Creek Trailhead (See Guide to K'esugi Ridge Trail System North & Guide to Upper Troublesome Creek Trail for more information). These are all one-way trips, so pick-up or drop-off arrangements must be made prior to departure. Day-hikes to timberline and around Byers Lake are also popular.



Safety and Considerations:

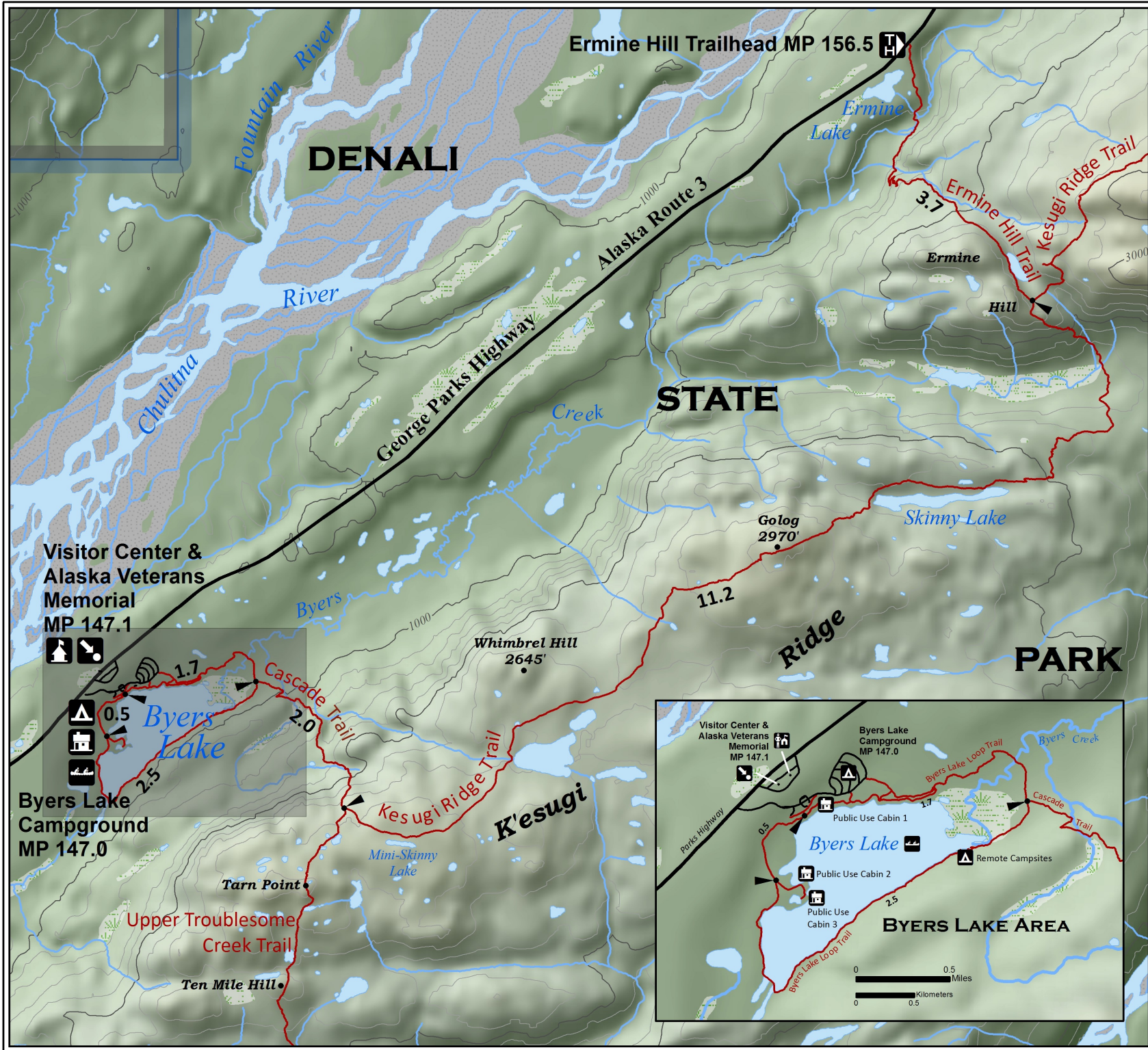
Weather on K'esugi Ridge can change fast. Be prepared with proper clothing and navigation tools in case low clouds move in. Some trails may experience seasonal closures due to high bear concentrations. Please respect closures and always be bear aware while traveling Denali's trails.

Park Rules:

Open fires are prohibited, please use designated fire rings or a camp stove. Pets must be on a leash while in the trailhead parking lot, and under voice control on trails or in the backcountry. For more information, please contact the Mat-Su Area Parks Office at (907) 745-3975, or visit the following web address:

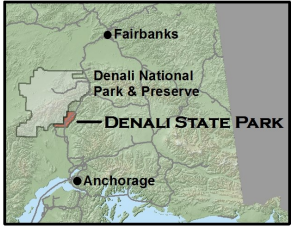
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/denali1.htm>





Denali State Park

K'esugi Ridge Trail System South



■ Denali State Park Boundary
■ State Recreation Areas
■ Denali National Park Boundary
— Trails
— Roads
+ Railroads
— Rivers/Lakes
■ Gravel Bars
— Streams
- - - Wetlands
▲ Trailhead
▲ Campground
▲ Interest Point
▲ Visitor Center
▲ Public Use Cabins
▲ Non-Motorized Boating

N
 0 0.5 1 Miles
 W E
 S 0 0.5 1 Kilometers

Produced by: Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Date Printed: January 2, 2016. Cartographer: Justin Wholey.

This map represents differential GPS data collected during the Alaska State Parks Trail Inventory Project that was conducted in conjunction with National Park Service (NPS) Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program, Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) Land Record Information Service (LRIS), Department of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR), and Denali State Park.

Denali State Park: (907) 745-3975. Fax: (907) 745-0938. Alaska State Parks: www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks. Emergency: 911.

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