

Project Title: Flattop Safety Realignment

TPS Number: 67983

Priority: 1

Agency: Natural Resources

FY2024 State Funding Request: \$2,700,000

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Flattop Mountain Trail is one of the most popular hiking destinations in all of Alaska, for both residents and visitors. This realignment is necessary because the condition of the trail has deteriorated to the point that it poses a significant safety hazard for hikers and a search and rescue burden for Chugach State Park and other emergency responders.

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost:	\$2,700,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$0)
FY2024 State Funding Request:	(\$2,700,000)
Project Deficit:	\$0

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

By many accounts, Flattop Mountain (accessed via the Flattop Mountain Trail) is the most climbed and hiked peak in all of Alaska. The trail provides quick access to the alpine environment and sweeping views of the Anchorage Bowl, the Kenai Peninsula, Cook Inlet and the Alaska Range. The trail is featured prominently in hiking guides, tourism and travel information, blogs, websites and articles.

In recent years, the trail has deteriorated to the point of danger in several sections. Likely due to a combination of this deterioration and the trail's popularity, Flattop Mountain is the number one location of emergency response for Chugach State Park (CSP) rangers. In 2022 CSP responded to numerous safety incidents on this trail.

Trail condition hazards along the route include exposed rebar, damaged stairs, eroding tread, loose and falling rocks, general steepness and slippery footing. The existing trail was never designed - sustainably or otherwise. Instead, it is a social trail which follows the most direct line - often straight up loose rock - to achieve the summit.

This Flattop Safety Realignment will create a safer trail alignment through some or all of the following: design and construction of a switchbacking trail through steep sections, clear markers of trail routing, a rebuild of wooden and stone stairs and leveling of the grade in eroded sections of trail.

The existing Flattop Mountain Trail is included in the Chugach State Park Trail Management Plan (as trail ID #434) and thus was a part of the public review process associated with the crafting of that document prior to its adoption.

Project Timeline:

This project will be completed in two to three field seasons. With the requested funding, Chugach State Park will first complete initial reconnaissance and assessment of the trail corridor, followed by design and layout. These activities will be completed in one field season. Construction will occur the following season.

BUDGET

Reconnaissance - \$30,000

Layout and Design - \$50,000

Construction Costs (trail) - \$2,620,000

Total Budget: \$2,700,000

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

DPOR - Alaska State Parks, Chugach State Park

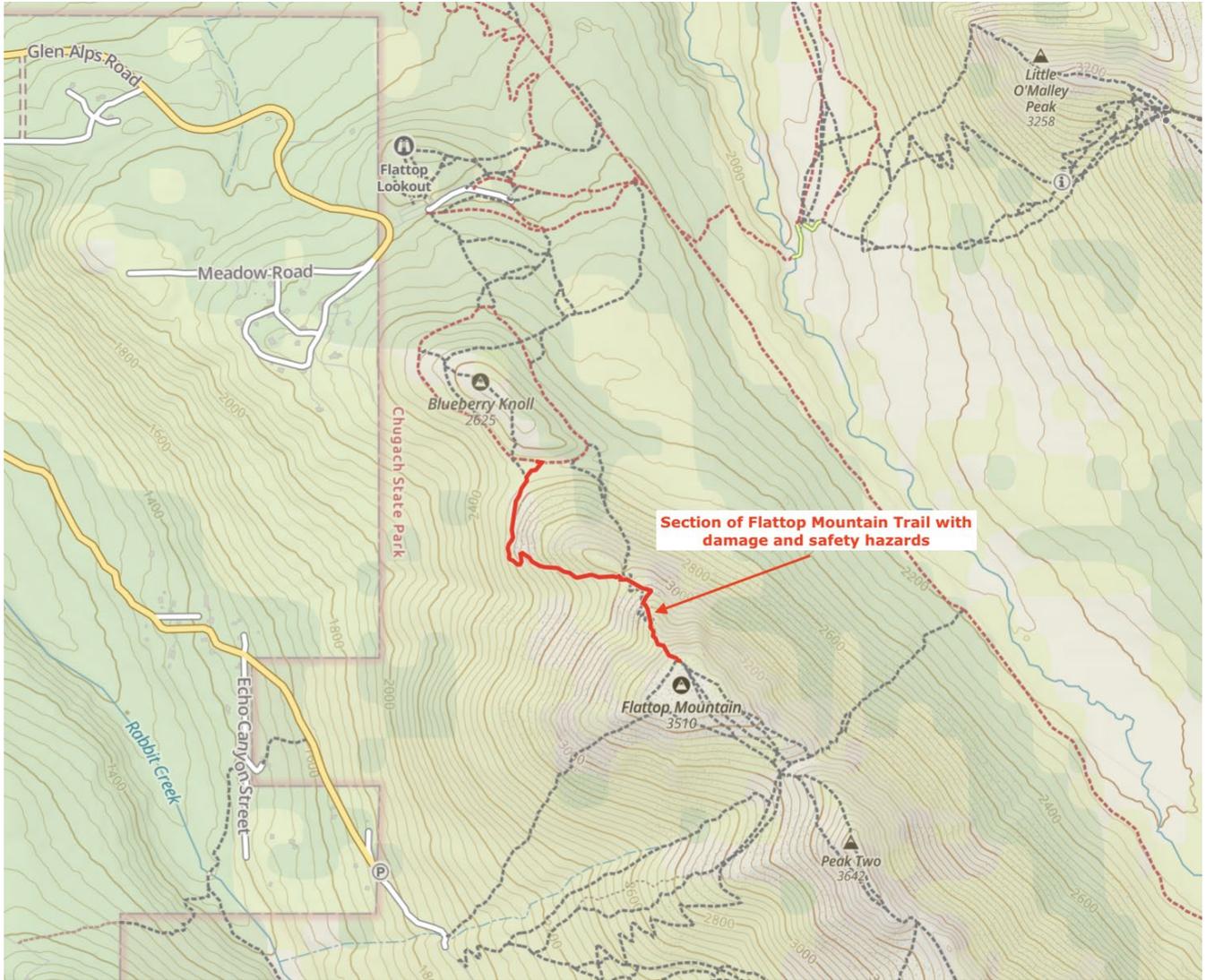
Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Name: Ben Corwin
Address: 550 West 7th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone Number: (907)269-8700
Email: ben.corwin@alaska.gov

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

Flattop Safety Realignment - Maps





Section of Flattop Mountain Trail with damage and safety hazards



CHUGACH STATE PARK CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD

18620 Seward Hwy, Anchorage, AK 99516 Phone: 907-345-5014 Fax: 907-345-6982

Dear Alaska Legislators:

We seek your support for the Flattop Safety Realignment project submitted into CAPSIS for inclusion in the FY2024 state capital budget.

By many accounts, Flattop Mountain (accessed via the Flattop Mountain Trail) is the most climbed and hiked peak in all of Alaska. The trail provides quick access to the alpine environment and sweeping views of the Anchorage Bowl, the Kenai Peninsula, Cook Inlet and the Alaska Range. The trail is featured prominently in hiking guides, tourism and travel information, blogs, websites and articles.

Flattop Mountain Trail is one of the most popular hiking destinations in all of Alaska, for both residents and visitors. This realignment is necessary because the condition of the trail has deteriorated to the point that it poses a significant safety hazard for hikers and a search and rescue burden for Chugach State Park and other emergency responders.

Investment in this project will create needed construction jobs in the near term and provide lasting benefits to Alaska's economy, communities, health, and our unique outdoor recreation lifestyles. It will also be a huge benefit to Alaska's tourism operators and economy.

We ask that you support the inclusion of the Flattop Safety Realignment project in the FY2024 capital budget as a necessary safety improvement of this popular destination.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Trond B Jensen

Chair
Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board

Alaska Mountain Rescue Group
P.O. Box 241561
Anchorage, Alaska 99524
www.amrg.org



A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION
AFFILIATED WITH
MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION
EMPLOYER I.D. #92-0084973

To Whom it May Concern in the Alaska Legislature,

Alaska Mountain Rescue Group is writing in support of the Flattop Trail Safety Realignment Project. The trail to Flattop Peak in Chugach State Park receives heavy use from users with a wide variety of experience levels, and realigning and rebuilding this trail would greatly improve visitor safety.

Alaska Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG) is a nonprofit volunteer search and rescue organization based in Anchorage Alaska, dedicated to providing search and rescue services across Alaska. AMRG is accredited with the Mountain Rescue Association and acts under the direct control of the Alaska State Troopers. Our focus is on assisting injured and lost persons in Alaska's backcountry, especially where high-angle and mountaineering skills are required.

AMRG has responded over the years to many injuries and incidents on Flattop, of varying levels of severity. We are also aware of many more incidents where AMRG does not get called out. Preventive Search and Rescue is part of our strategy to improve public safety in Alaska's backcountry, and improvements to the Flattop trail could lower search and rescue calls to Chugach State Park.

We recommend that the Alaska Legislature funds the Flattop Trail Safety Realignment Project.

Sincerely,

Mark Miraglia

Vice-Chair
Alaska Mountain Rescue Group



P.O. Box 243561, Anchorage, Alaska 99524-3561

February 8, 2023

To our State Legislators and to all whom it may concern,

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska is a 501(c)(7) organization which was established in 1958 and currently serves 680 members by “promoting and improving the exercise of skills and safety in the art and science of mountaineering.” We were recently notified of a request for funding submitted to the Alaska State Legislature by Alaska Trails for four specific projects located in the Chugach State Park. The Board of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska would like to voice our support for the proposed projects and for Alaska Trails as the organization best suited to complete them, and we encourage the Legislature to provide the requested funds.

As a club which was founded and which primarily operates in the vicinity of Anchorage, we can attest that each of the four projects proposed by Alaska Trails represents a legitimate, longstanding need and serves multiple subgroups of the local non-motorized recreational community. Each project also serves to improve trails which, due to their location and difficulty level, would be enjoyed by both local residents and tourists with a wide variety of physical fitness levels.

- Ram Valley drew mountaineers, hikers, campers, berry pickers, and backcountry skiers prior to the access challenges which developed in 2020 and which Alaska Trails proposes to seek resolutions for.
- The Eklutna Lakeside trail is popular with hikers, mountain bikers, nordic skiers and winter ‘fat bikers,’ all with a broad range of skill levels. It is also a popular access route to the Eklutna Glacier for mountaineers and backcountry skiers.
- Flattop Peak is likely to be the most-summitted mountain in the entire state, and is enjoyed every day of the year by recreators including entire families, tourists, paragliders, and mountain runners.
- Indian Valley Trail offers year-round access to the center of the Chugach State Park. It is one end of the nordic ski route known as ‘Arctic to Indian,’ which follows a historic winter mail trail which linked Seward and Anchorage at the beginning of the 20th Century. The trail is also an attractive destination close to Anchorage for horseback riders.



Along with the value of the proposed projects, we would also like to note the dedication and professionalism of Alaska Trails and endorse them as an excellent choice to perform the proposed work. The MCA has occasionally partnered with Alaska Trails for trail work, most recently in October 2019 for work clearing and rerouting damaged sections of the Eklutna River East Fork Trail. We have witnessed their leadership in other projects we have not contributed to, such as rerouting efforts on the Middle Fork Hiking Trail in the Chugach State Park near Anchorage. Their skill at planning and executing projects similar to the ones they are proposing and their adherence to modern standards and best practices for the construction of sustainable, low-maintenance trails give us confidence they can effectively complete each of these proposals. Please consider supporting their requests.

Sincerely,

The Board of the Mountaineering Club

Gerrit Verbeek, President
Donell Irwin, Secretary
Peter Taylor, Treasurer
Heather Johnson, Director
Andy Kubic, Director
Andrew Holman, Director
Matt Nedom, Director
Tom McIntyre, Director
Scott Parmelee, Director