



NEWSLETTER

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ALASKA TRAILS NEWS AND NOTICES

PANDEMIC AFFECTS TRAILS IN ALASKA AND ALASKA TRAILS

The coronavirus pandemic has affected just about all parts of life across the globe, including trails.

Fortunately, here in Alaska (as of press time) we are still allowed to get out on trails, although with certain restrictions. (See "LATEST STATE SOCIAL DISTANCING ORDER ALLOWS FOR TRAIL USE" in the "Statewide News and Notices.") We've also got some tips for staying safe. (See "HOW TO STAY SAFE ON THE TRAILS AMID THE PANDEMIC" on page 2.)

So, what part of trails in Alaska are being affected? Mainly events that are held on or because of trails. Read about some of those changes in the following pages.

Alaska Trails is not immune. Below is a letter from Alaska Trails Executive Director Steve Cleary explaining how the pandemic has affected our operations.

Stay Safe Alaska

Alaska Trails is committed to safety and public health, and we join Gov. Mike Dunleavy in urging people to stay home to slow the spread of COVID-19, and to maintain a good social distance when you do go outside.

While we are uncertain what the 2020 season holds, we are hopeful that our public lands will remain a safe, healthy, and enjoyable outlet for all Alaskans.

Despite the unknowns, we are continuing to look ahead and plan projects with our partners and funders. We know that those plans and schedules may need to shift.

We have canceled our April Trail Tales event and shifted our Statewide Trails Conference to an on-line virtual format. Stay tuned for more details on that.

The health and safety of our employees, volunteers and partners is utmost on our minds. We wish you health during this trying time and urge you to follow the measures that your local officials, the Governor and the CDC (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) recommend.

Together we can all help slow the spread of COVID-19 and save lives.

*Keep well,
Steve Cleary*

How to Get Outside (during a pandemic)

01 Make the health of others your number one priority.

The COVID-19 pandemic is life and death for many people. Please conduct yourself in every respect with that in mind.

02 You can go outside. Cautiously.

Don't go out if you're sick or have been in contact with those who have. Keep a safe distance from others. That includes in the car. Groups are out. Consider avoiding busy areas and times of day. Wash your hands. Follow CDC guidelines carefully.

03 Stay close to home.

Like, as close as possible. Far away places or that recreation town an hour down the road are wonderful, but the further you travel, the more potential you have to spread illness. Shop and recreate in your neighborhood.

04 Keep it chill.

It's not a good time to get hurt. Healthcare systems are overwhelmed, or soon will be. Please do not add to the burden.

05 Respect closures and be a good steward.

If parks are closed, don't go. If parks are open, be mindful that areas might have limited maintenance. Pack out your trash, use the restroom before you leave the house. Check state guidelines and closures.



OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

HOW TO STAY SAFE ON THE TRAILS AMID THE PANDEMIC

Trails are a great way to get out and stay healthy while social distancing, but all the social distancing rules still apply while you're out there. There are a number of specific recommendations for advising the public to keep safe social distancing when in parks or on trails:

- Follow CDC's guidance on personal hygiene prior to heading to trails — wash hands, carry hand sanitizer, do not use trails if you have symptoms, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, etc.
- Observe at all times CDC's minimum recommended social distancing of six feet from other people. Practice it and know what it looks like. Keep it as you walk, bike or hike.
- Warn other trail users of your presence and as you pass to allow proper distance and step off trails to allow others to pass, keeping minimum recommended distances at all times. Signal your presence with your voice, bell or horn.
- Note that trail and park users may find public restrooms closed — be prepared before you leave and time outings so that you are not dependent on public restrooms.
- Bring drinks — public drinking fountains may be disabled and should not be used, even if operable.
- Bring a suitable trash bag. Leave no trash, take everything out to protect trail and park workers.
- For more info, see this National Recreation and Park Association article: <https://tinyurl.com/vh5wzrs>



WE ARE HIRING, PLANNING FOR SUMMER, DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

APPLY We're hiring! While we are uncertain what the 2020 season holds, we are hopeful that our public lands will remain a safe, healthy, and enjoyable outlet for all Alaskans this summer. Despite the unknowns, we are continuing to look ahead and plan projects with our partners and funders. If working outside on public lands sounds like your ideal summer, we encourage you to indicate your interest by filling out our Trail Crew application and staying in touch with us this spring as we learn more. Check out our website for more information: <https://www.alaska-trails.org/jobs>

ALASKA TRAILS HAS INFO TO HELP GET ALASKANS ON TRAILS

Trails are a great way to get outside while social distancing, and these longer days mean you'll have more light for your adventures. Need help finding the right trail? We've compiled a list of trail maps and other resources from around the state on our website. If we missed anything, please let us know!

<https://www.alaska-trails.org/trail-resource>

SPRING TRAILS ARE VULNERABLE, PLEASE USE WITH CARE

TREAD LIGHTLY Alaska Trails asks that you please keep in mind how your trail activities might affect other trail users, especially in the spring.

As snow melts and the ground thaws, the trails become extremely muddy. Using really muddy trails at this time can result in ruts that stay all summer when the trails dry out. Those ruts can make the trails difficult to use all summer and into the next winter. They help create erosion by keeping water on the trails.

Early season damage of trails is a recurring problem. Many people are chomping at the bit to get outside once the snow melts. And some people love to get as muddy as they can while out on the trails. But with a little thought this problem can be greatly reduced.

- **Try to be patient.** Stay off the trails if you can. If you are unsure if a trail is ready to be used, check it out with the commitment to turn back if you are doing too much damage.
- **Choose low impact.** If you use the trails in several different ways, choose the method of travel that will cause the least amount of damage if you do run into some muddy sections.
- **Pick your trails carefully.** Use well-drained trails with lots of southern exposure. They typically dry out the quickest. If you just have to get muddy, please limit your activities to trails that are already thrashed. A little more damage probably won't make a big difference, but a trail in nice shape can be damaged for a season in a hurry.



An alternative to using trails in the spring is to get out on foot or by bike and go explore quiet subdivision roads new to you. You get to be outside, be active, and probably find out new things about your community. For additional ideas see this Fairbanks Daily News-Miner story: <http://tinyurl.com/jfsq5b5>

(Constantine Khroulev photo of a badly rutted Trail Creek Trail in the White Mountains National Recreation Area.)

ALASKA TRAILS HAS TOOL TRAILERS READY FOR TRAIL PROJECTS



As you start planning trail building and maintenance projects, remember that Alaska Trails has mobile tool caches available to loan to organized trail groups in Southcentral and Interior Alaska. One cache is in the Fairbanks area and the other is in Anchorage/Mat-Su Valley area.

The trailers have a bunch of trail tools including McLeods, Pulaskis, rakes, gloves, and much, much more. If you would like to borrow one of the caches, please contact us (info on masthead).

STATEWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

LATEST STATE SOCIAL DISTANCING ORDER ALLOWS FOR TRAIL USE

On March 27 Gov. Mike Dunleavy ordered stricter “hunker down” orders. Please abide by this and other orders. Fortunately, this doesn’t mean you have to stay in your residence all the time.

The “social distancing” order is a bit confusing (see link below). The first part of the order states that people not engaged in essential services “are mandated to remain at their place of residence and practice social distancing.” However, if you read farther you see that you can still go out on the trails. (Assuming you are healthy and practice social distancing.) The third point of Part I of the governor’s order is as follows:

“Outdoor activity (e.g., walking, hiking, bicycling, running, fishing or hunting) is permitted when a distance of six or more feet can be maintained between individuals not in the same household.”

So, get outside and get some physical activity. Just stay six feet from anyone not in your household. We’ve got lots of trails across the state, so it shouldn’t be too hard to find the space you need. If you live in a more urban area, try to avoid the more popular trails so that you can keep that 6 feet of distance.

(All this assumes you are healthy. The fourth point of the governor’s order states that if you are exhibiting signs of illness you “must not leave their home, including to work, except as necessary to seek or receive medical care.”)

See Gov. Mike Dunleavy's March 27 “social distancing” order here:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/AKDHSS/bulletins/283a713>



STATE PARKS RESPONDS TO CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The letter below was issued on March 20 and is posted on the Alaska State Parks page:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/>. Please check there for any updates.

Dear Alaska State Park Users,

Alaska State Parks are open so Alaskans can get outdoors and spend time in nature to get fresh air and exercise. Regional headquarters in each area are open by appointment and you can make an appointment by calling the regional headquarters office in your area.

As always, we have the safety and well-being of our visitors and staff in mind. We continue to monitor the situation with COVID-19, and we **DIRECT YOU TO THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION AT THE COVID-19 INFORMATION WEBSITE** <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>. While we encourage park visits, we do ask that if you are sick and/or experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 that you please refrain from visiting. Visitors to our parks are encouraged to follow social distancing guidelines at all times by keeping a distance of 6 feet or more between you and others.

We are committed to keeping our public use cabins open throughout Alaska. The public use cabins do not pose a distinct public health threat, but do note that the cabins are not sanitized on a regular schedule do to the remoteness of their locations. The public is advised to follow guidance by keeping group sizes small (no more than 10 people) and bringing supplies to wipe down surfaces before and after use; this will help us keep them open for everyone to enjoy. To check cabin availability, go to our cabin page: each cabin has a direct link to the Reserve America booking window. Stay safe and get outside!

- Social distancing and safety essential for parks to remain open: <https://tinyurl.com/r86ejpr>

RESEARCHER SEEKS PHOTOS OF WOODS FOR FIRE FUEL MAPS

TAKE A PHOTO Trail users across Alaska can help with a study that will help wildfire responders get a better handle on the amount and types of fire fuel around the state. Read Chris Smith's request letter below.

I am a Graduate Student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks working on a project called Mapping Detection of Boreal Vegetation (MaDBoV). The goal of this project is to involve the community in the data collection process in return helping me produce more accurate fire fuel maps of the Alaskan boreal forest to help predict fire risk.

Anyone in Alaska can participate, and it is a great reason to get outdoors while actively participating in applicable research (in accordance with state social distancing policies). All participants have to do is get out in the woods behind their homes, on trails, or any naturally wooded area and take a geotagged photo on their smartphone and send it to mad.bov2020@gmail.com.

Would you be willing to spread our flyer around and/or our Facebook page?

www.facebook.com/mad.bov2020/

Thank you for the help!

If you would like to help with the study, follow these steps:

1. Find a spot in the Alaska forest (anywhere outside with natural vegetation).
2. On your smartphone make sure location is turned on (this geotags the photo for analysis) and then snap a picture of the ground vegetation and tree trunks so we can identify plant species.
3. Send the geotagged pictures to mad.bov2020@gmail.com.

The goal is to keep this project running as long as possible because data and vegetation are constantly changing, so there is no deadline date.

CANDIDATES SOUGHT FOR STATE RECREATIONAL TRAILS BOARD

APPLY The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation is seeking multiple candidates to fill volunteer positions, representing both motorized and non-motorized trail users, for the Outdoor Recreational Trails

Advisory Board (ORTAB). The primary role of the ORTAB is to assist in evaluating grant proposals for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Applicants should have knowledge, experience, and interest in outdoor recreational activities and grant-funded programs.

For more information on how to apply, please visit: <http://notice.alaska.gov/197487>

The last day to submit applications is **Friday, May 15, 2020**.

If you know anyone who supports trails, works well in a collaborative environment, and has knowledge or experience with trails, please encourage them to apply.

(From Alaska State Parks email)

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY COMING UP THE FIRST SATURDAY IN JUNE

ORGANIZE AN EVENT National Trails Day is happening June 6. If you are interested in leading or organizing an event, visit <https://americanhiking.org/national-trails-day/> for information on how to host an event and where to register an event. National Trails Day is the country's largest celebration of trails. Events will take place in every state across the country and will include hikes, biking and horseback rides, paddling trips, birdwatching, geocaching, gear demonstrations, stewardship projects and more. *(It is uncertain as of press time if and how group events for National Trails Day will be affected by the pandemic.)*

APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR PITTMAN-ROBERTSON GRANTS

APPLY The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for the Hunter Access Grant Program. Program funds utilize Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson) funds, which are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a pass-through grant to the DWC.

Program funds are used to improve opportunity and access to Alaska's public lands for hunters, trappers, and other recreational users. Eligible applicants include public and non-profit organizations who are eligible to do business with the federal government and must be able to provide the required 25% non-federal match. If selected for award, the Hunter Access Grant Program will reimburse 75% of total eligible costs.

In 2020, the DWC anticipates that approximately \$1.5 million in federal funds will be available. Proposals with a federal budget exceeding \$30,000 are preferred, though those with smaller budgets may still be considered for funding on a case-by-case basis. Future funding availability may vary from year to year depending on the federal appropriation and State of Alaska legislative authorization.

Proposals must develop or enhance public access to wildlife resources for hunting, trapping, and other recreation to be considered for funding. All proposals will be evaluated, ranked, and scored using established criteria that can be found on the Hunter Access Grant Program website along with the application package, FAQ's, and more at: <https://tinyurl.com/wqtzxhk>

The deadline for proposal submission is **4:30 p.m. Alaska Daylight Time on Monday, April 20, 2020**. Background information and more about the Hunter Access Program can be found online at www.hunteraccess.adfg.alaska.gov.

(From Alaska Department of Fish and Game press release)

STATEWIDE LINKS

PANDEMIC-RELATED LINKS

- Alaska State Parks Public Use Cabins remain open: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspcabins/index.htm>

- It's important for Alaska kids to get out and play while social distancing, but follow these recommendations: <https://tinyurl.com/vlbq4ej>
- Outdoor Explorer: Exercising in a time of social distancing: <https://tinyurl.com/rcvjrax>
- Get outdoors to escape the stress of coronavirus: <https://tinyurl.com/tnapcrx>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Saved by the (tree) well: <https://craigmedred.news/2020/03/07/saved-by-the-well/>
- Essays about biking in Alaska sought: <https://tinyurl.com/t6dm64e>
- Denali Borough Assembly supports removal of McCandless bus: <https://tinyurl.com/s2srwtc>
- Tired of 'Into the Wild' rescues, Healy locals want bus removed: <https://tinyurl.com/ru27rs5>
- After a slow, sluggish start, contentment strikes out of the blue: <https://tinyurl.com/sqzxnn8>
- Opinion: It makes sense to develop outdoor recreation: <https://tinyurl.com/t93gggh>
- Second annual Alaska Walk and Bike Conference postponed: <https://tinyurl.com/wrttwnz>
- Student Conservation Association crew applications **due April 17**: <https://tinyurl.com/rc2kj4q>
- **ENTER** Alaska State Parks 50th Anniversary Photo Contest (run **monthly**): <https://tinyurl.com/gnssp93>
- Outdoor Alliance newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/ur3j5hp>

SOUTHCENTRAL NEWS AND NOTICES

PROPOSITION 5 WOULD SUPPORT ANCHORAGE TRAILS, PARKS

VOTE Anchorage Park Foundation supports Proposition 5, the Parks Bond in the upcoming municipal election! Your parks and trails make Anchorage a great place to live, work, and play. They attract a talented workforce, stimulate the economy, and set Anchorage apart from other cities. The Parks Bond helps ensure that these public assets remain clean, green, safe, and secure into the future.

The last day to vote and turn in your ballot is April 7. See a list of projects included here: <https://tinyurl.com/tmnqrs3>

From Anchorage Park Foundation newsletter

ANCHORAGE PARKS AND REC HAS COVID-19 INFO PAGES

The follow is posted on the Anchorage Parks and Recreation website:

Latest news: Parks and Recreation public facilities are closed until further notice to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please visit www.muni.org/covid-19 for the latest information. To view parks, trails and facilities updates visit: www.muni.org/Departments/parks/Pages/covid-19_updates.aspx

SEEN RECENTLY ON THE SOUTHCENTRAL FACEBOOK PAGES

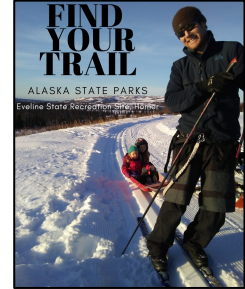
ALASKA STATE PARKS

March 24: Independence Mine SHP ~ Trails Got Touched Up! The Mat Su Ski Club was out grooming on March 23rd 2020. Trail conditions were looking great! If you go up, please for everyone's sake....practice SOCIAL DISTANCING! We have seen a lot of cases where this isn't being done. We can't stop you, but it sure won't help the overall situation. Enjoy your parks responsibly!

March 25: This week's FIND YOUR TRAIL: Eveline State Recreation Site in Homer, Alaska is the perfect trail for the whole family any season. Strap on your skis or snowshoes in the winter, or your hiking shoes in the summer and venture out with no worries.

Eveline State Recreation Site is located in Homer, out East End Road. It offers beautiful wildflowers in the spring and summer, cross country ski trails in the winter, and year-round panoramic views. For more info:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspunits/kenai/evelinesrs.htm>



March 4: This Weeks FIND YOUR TRAIL is the ever-beautiful Grace Ridge Trail in Kachemak Bay State Park, near Homer. This trail is ideal in the spring, summer and fall and begins on the left side of gravel beach at Kayak Beach Campsite.

Just under 18 miles round-trip, it makes for an excellent day hike. Pack your layers, food and emergency bag, and definitely bring your camera. The views are outstanding!

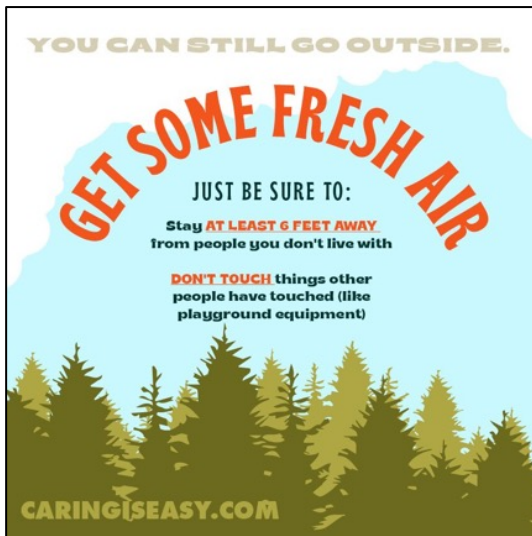
More info here: <https://tinyurl.com/vbgvndy>

ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION

March 16: Natural areas offer social distance. Anchorage parks and trails are still open. Being in nature is an excellent way to get out of the house, breathe some fresh air, and stay the recommended six feet away from other people. Our staff is working remotely -our Anchorage office is closed due to COVID. Please leave messages at our main office at (907) 274-1003 and we will respond. And check back to this page for ideas about getting outside during this very difficult time.

ANCHORAGE PARKS AND RECREATION

March 24: We know many people are maintaining or increasing their use of Anchorage parks and trails right now in response to the Emergency Order-03 to hunker down. Parks and trails remain open their normal hours, 6am-11pm unless otherwise posted, and we encourage you to use public land as a way to engage in physical activity, connect with nature, take mental breaks, and spend time with loved ones.



As you enjoy the outdoors, please be mindful that touching shared surfaces such as dog park gates, playground equipment, and benches may increase your risk of exposure to covid-19. Please make sure you are giving other park and trail users at least six feet of space, only recreate by yourself or with members of your household, stay home if you're sick, wash your hands before and after your trip, and keep interactions with passersby/friends brief and six feet apart.

Stay up to date with the latest personal hygiene recommendations by visiting the CDC's covid-19 webpage: <https://tinyurl.com/rzeqgh8> and learn what the Municipality of Anchorage is doing at www.muni.org/covid-19.

You can view what Alaska Health and Social Services recommends in regards to children's park and playground use here: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/PlayEveryDay/blog/default.aspx>

Image source: caringiseasy.com

March 21: Please review this message from Mayor Ethan Berkowitz about Emergency Order EO-03, directing our community to stay home as much as possible to slow down the spread of COVID-19. Trips for critical jobs, food, healthcare & outdoor recreation are OK. (Outdoor recreation is covered under #1.)

This order is effective starting Sunday, March 22nd at 10pm to Tuesday, March 31st at 11:59pm. <https://tinyurl.com/r4m3kku>

March 17: Looking to get outside? Find local parks nearby! 🗺️

- 1) Go to www.muni.org/parks
- 2) Click on the icon for "Maps & Apps Gallery"
- 3) Scroll to select "Park and Facility Information"
- 4) Explore the map or enter your address to find nearby parks!

Yes, it's really that simple. You can also check the grooming status of Nordic trails by selecting the "MOA Nordic Trails" map.

MATANUSKA GREENBELT

March 5: Hope you all are enjoying the trails with bright sunny white snow. 😊 Please remember to keep dogs on leashes on all properties of the MGT so everyone can enjoy the trails.

Heads up for upcoming changes in traffic.

The Farm will be closing off the Upper Bench trail to protect research plots from loose dogs. We will add that to the list of changes to make to signs and maps.

SOUTHCENTRAL LINKS

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Thousands of people weigh in on proposal to allow personal watercraft in Kachemak Bay: <https://tinyurl.com/vp4ymfs>
- Sophia Tidler's Winter Solstice Adventure: <https://tinyurl.com/qm5jtq9>
- Our natural areas offer social distance: <https://tinyurl.com/yx54o7lx>
- (Kodiak) Island Trails Network's "trails update" newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/sxvlt7>
- REI Anchorage classes and events: <https://tinyurl.com/yxz7x26k>

INTERIORWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

FAIRBANKS BOROUGH WINTER TRAILS CHALLENGE EXTENDED

PARTICIPATE The Fairbanks Borough Parks and Recreation Department has extended its Winter Trails Challenge.

The signs will remain up until winter trails deteriorate or May 1, whichever is earlier. The challenge had been scheduled to end April 1. The extension is happening in large part due to the pandemic because being out on the trails is something people can do and still maintain a distance of at least 6 feet. In fact, people are encouraged to get out to help stave off the effects of cabin fever due to pandemic restrictions. The extension is also due in part to Mother Nature, which appears to be giving interior Alaska a nice long

snow-covered spring (lots of snow with a blast of colder-than-normal temperatures). Read the message below from the borough.

Signs will be up as long as there is snow or until May 1st, whichever is earlier. But keep an eye on conditions- many trails will get tough to traverse very soon as warm weather continues. Especially the more challenging trails outside of our Borough recreation areas.

For the list of trails, maps and more information, click here: <https://tinyurl.com/u5hr9nf>

Share or send your photos by May 1. If you are sharing them on social media, EMAIL US Parks@fnsb.us!

We will still be giving out Trailblazer Awards later in the spring. We hope to have them ready tentatively by May 1. However, we will NOT be hosting a Trailblazer Awards ceremony/party this year. This is to comply with limitations on public gatherings. Instead, we suggest you browse through your photos, your friends' photos, and your personal memories to relish in all that you accomplished this winter!



And more regarding the Trails Challenge:

Please remember that even our vast, open public spaces where we go for solitude can be vectors for disease. Only go out if you feel you can use the trails safely and in compliance with regulations and guidance from the CDC regarding the corona virus. In particular:

- *Don't go out if you're feeling sick or exhibiting any symptoms!*
- *Follow good hygiene prior to and while visiting public parks and open spaces!*
- *If possible, be prepared to avoid facilities with lots of human contact like toilets and playgrounds.*
- *Keep that "social distance" from other trail users: 6 feet, a ski's length, or more!*
- *Drive yourself if meeting others- now is not the time to carpool!*
- *When taking your selfie, give that Trails Challenge sign and your fellow Challengers plenty of space! If the sign is a tiny dot in the background, THAT'S OK! We'd hate for our poor Trails Challenge signs to be spreading a virus. They're already stuck outside in the elements all winter...*

For more information on the Trails Challenge see:

- Trails Challenge page at <https://tinyurl.com/wgwlza>
- Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/463758124331854/>
- List of trails and directions to trailheads: <https://tinyurl.com/yx7r3zbb>

Photo courtesy of Angie Kabat through the Winter Trails Challenge Facebook Event

COMMENTS SOUGHT FOR AIRPORT WAY BIKE/PED PATH

COMMENT The state is holding an “online public meeting” for the Airport Way West Bicycle/Pedestrian Facility.

The “meeting,” being put on by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, started on March 20 and will last until April 17. Construction is planned for 2021.

This project would provide “access to the public to get from the Fairbanks International Airport to the neighborhoods West of the airport along Dale and Hoselton Roads.” According to the website: “Currently there are no bicycle/pedestrian facilities on the existing roadways leading to/from the airport, yet FAI has documented a large number of pedestrians and bicyclists using these roadways (primarily passengers walking to/from nearby hotels and airport employees walking/biking to work).”

Alternatives being explored include widened shoulders and a separated path. This portion of the project is basically from Pike's to the Airport. The path from the Chena River Bridge along Hoselton to Pike's, which is shown in one of the graphics, is part of the specific Airport Way West project. These two projects together will complete the path. They are both scheduled for construction in 2021.

To find out more and to comment, see the project website at:

<http://dot.alaska.gov/nreg/airportwaywest/path/>

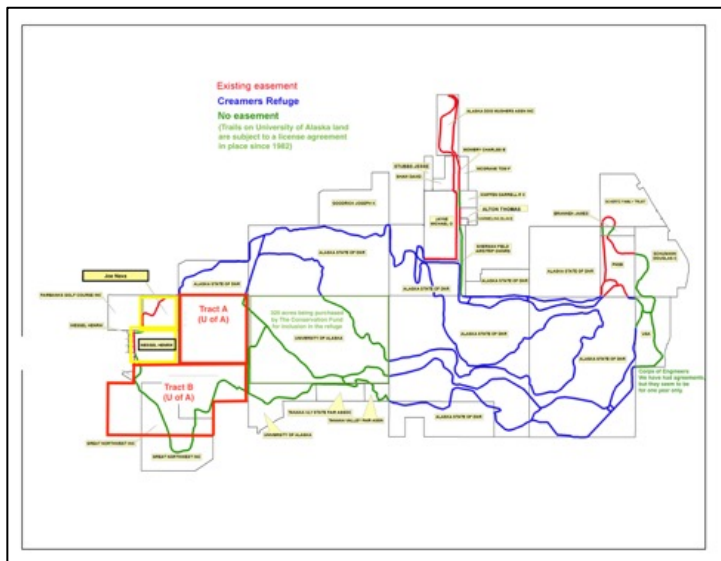
PANDEMIC AFFECTS LAND DEAL THAT WOULD PROTECT ADMA TRAILS

Efforts to increase the size of the Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, which would help protect a portion of the Alaska Dog Mushing Association trails, are on hold due to coronavirus/COVID-19 restrictions.

A request to subdivide a block of University of Alaska land, one portion of which would become part of the refuge, is tentatively scheduled for the April 15 Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Platting

Board meeting, according to George Stefan, FNSB platting officer. However, the borough administration is working on possible ways to allow for “virtual” meetings and public hearings. It is uncertain if group gatherings will be allowed at that time. The request to subdivide the land had been on the Platting Board's March 18 meeting agenda but that meeting was canceled.

The request to subdivide is a part of a series of events that must take place in order for the land to be purchased from the University of Alaska and transferred to the refuge, a deal being shepherded by The Conservation Fund. The most controversial



of those steps, allowing a variance request from dedicated trail easements on the UA land, was approved by the FNSB Planning Commission in February. Local trail advocates disagree on whether that decision was good for trails.

The issue is highly complicated and was outlined in three Interior Alaska Trails blog posts: December 10 (<https://tinyurl.com/r29c5vx>), February 7 (<https://tinyurl.com/wbh8xph>), and March 14 (<https://tinyurl.com/txh6kxm>). (The editor of this newsletter also wrote the blog posts.)

STUDY COLLECTS DATA ABOUT TRAIL USE IN CREAMER'S REFUGE

A study being conducted on winter trail use in Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge is collecting baseline data to "help inform and update" the refuge's management plan.

"Perceived conflict between user groups along with a lack of knowledge of the type and frequency of winter trail use prompted this study," according to Shelby McCahon, a researcher with the project. "Not understanding the type, frequency, or quantity of trail usage leaves us blind when it comes time to speak to trail use and possible issues surrounding trail use."

The study uses 22 game trail cameras deployed throughout the refuge that cover approximately 90 percent of refuge trail segments, according to McCahon. Steps have been taken to avoid individual identification of trail users in order to protect people's privacy. Each camera lens is covered by a plastic baggie that has been colored with a marker, McCahon wrote in an email. Signs were placed at several places around the refuge to let people know about the study. The study was also to have included four audio recorders, but that part of the study has been canceled due to equipment failure, McCahon wrote.

The project began the last week of November and will continue into the first week of April, when the cameras will be retrieved. McCahon, a senior in Wildlife Biology and Conservation at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), is helping conduct the study as part of her studies at UAF. The research is being funded by UAF's One Health Program.

For more information contact McCahon (smccahon2@alaska.edu), Todd Brinkman, UAF (tjbrinkman@alaska.edu; 474-7139) or Ryan Klimstra, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ryan.klimstra@alaska.gov; 459-7223).

To learn more about the refuge: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=creamersfield.main>

BORO TRAILS COMMISSION SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR VACANCIES

APPLY The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department is seeking applicants to fill four vacancies on the Trails Advisory Commission. The commission is still looking for representation from North Pole and Salcha and currently lacks any dedicated snowmachine riders. However, it's more important that commissioners have a general interest in trails and trail access than in one specific activity. Anyone who would be willing to serve or would like to know more should contact Bryant Wright, FNSB Trails Coordinator (BWright@fnsb.us; 907/459-7401)

SEEN RECENTLY ON THE INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

ALASKA STATE PARKS

March 12: Fairbanks and the Chena River State Recreation Area (CRSRA) are highlighted in this spectacular video created by Brand USA. They worked with some of our Alaska State Parks staff to get the shots of CRSRA. If you have been to Fairbanks and CRSRA, this will get you motivated!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ0pVF7NC5I&feature=youtu.be>

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH PARKS & REC

March 18: Although all FNSB Pools and the Big Dipper Ice Arena are closed and all programs are canceled through March 30th, there are still plenty of outdoor activities to enjoy during this difficult time. Here are some ideas:

- ~Ice skating at Tanana Lakes or the Big Dipper outdoor rinks (sorry, no skate rentals available)
- ~Walking at Pioneer Park
- ~Skiing or Snowshoeing to find a Winter Trails Challenge sign

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- Blog post: Eagle to Central on the Yukon Quest trail (on bikes): <https://tinyurl.com/w65hdlx>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Building a cabin from scratch (to be placed along Mastodon Creek Trail): <https://tinyurl.com/songg5e>
- Fairbanks North Star Borough leaders wonder about delaying action on 10-year public works plan (which includes several trail-related projects): <https://tinyurl.com/quheo3c>
- Outdoor activities while social distancing: <https://tinyurl.com/v8wxlv3>
- Fairbanks REI classes and events: <https://www.rei.com/events/p/us-ak-fairbanks>

SOUTHEAST NEWS AND NOTICES

SEEN RECENTLY ON THE SOUTHEAST FACEBOOK PAGES

ALASKA STATE PARKS

March 18: This week's FIND YOUR TRAIL is the Beach Access Trail at Eagle Beach near Juneau. It's a beautiful ski or walk this time of year and the views are spectacular any time of day.

You MAY recognize it as the place that we spotted Santa and his reindeer on Christmas Eve 😊 or the place we hold the Tiki Torch First Day event in January. Anywho-If you're in the Juneau area, it's a must visit. We also have public use cabins for rent here, so a great get away! Plan your adventure:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/.../aspunits/southeast/eaglebeachsra.htm>

March 11: This week's FIND YOUR TRAIL: Battery Point Trail to the top of Mount Riley in beautiful Haines, Alaska.

Find a breath-taking view of the quaint town of Haines after a leisurely 3.3 miles to the top of this trail. There is so much to see in this area between Chilkat State Park and Chilkoot State Park- most known for its bald eagle viewing. Find more details here and plan your spring or summer trip soon:

<https://tinyurl.com/rue2pyr>

TRAIL MIX, INC.

March 16: We typically cut a lot of blow down in the spring to keep our trails open and accessible. Today we cleared several trees from the Outer Point trail, and will continue to reroute around some big root wads!

Let us know if you see any other trees down this spring!



March 2: Do you enjoy working in the woods regardless of the weather? Do you love hiking and want to give back to Juneau's incredible trail system?

Consider joining our team! Trail Mix has a few openings on our 2020 field crew. Our field crews work 4 ten hour days, and are paid between \$14.50 and \$17 an hour. These are seasonal positions and run from May 1st to October 31st. Please visit trailmixinc.org, or send resume to info@trailmixinc.org to apply.

SITKA TRAIL WORKS, INC.

March 23: The release of our spring 2020 newsletter will be delayed. We usually release this newsletter in March & know some of you may be wondering where it is. However, due to public health concerns

surrounding the COVID-19 coronavirus, the hike schedule that we had planned may change significantly. Therefore, we are delaying the release of this newsletter until we know a bit more.

We hope to have the newsletter out sometime in April instead. Please stay tuned!

We are also delaying all off-island hike ticketing at this time.

JUNEAU PARKS & RECREATION

March 23: Have you been to the Rainforest Trail at the north end of Douglas Island? It is a nice, easy hike and the current trail conditions are good with just a few icy spots remaining. If you time your walk with a low tide, you can even walk out to Shaman Island. Check the tide tables here: bit.ly/3adN1Uv

March 22: Auke Lake has a Children's Interpretive Trail that is great for all ages! Enjoy the search for the hidden interpretive signs. The signs are small, and may be camouflaged, so look carefully. When you find one, look nearby for similar shapes and colors; you might find more signs on the same topic.👁️👁️

The trail is still icy through the trees, please be careful and wear appropriate footwear.



March 20: We support safe use of parks and trails during the COVID-19 outbreak. Get out in the beautiful weather and enjoy the fresh air if you can! 🌞🌲🌸

The National Recreation and Park Association reminds us all to:

- Refrain from using parks or trails if you are exhibiting symptoms.
- Follow CDC's guidance on personal hygiene prior to and during use of parks or trails.
- Prepare for limited access to public restrooms or water fountains.
- While on trails, warn other users of your presence and step aside to let others pass.
- Follow CDC guidance on the recommended size of social gatherings including outdoor picnicking, pick-up sports and other group hangouts, and maintain proper physical distance at all times.
- Observe CDC's minimum recommended social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals at all times. If this is not possible, find an alternate location or depart that space.

SOUTHEAST LINKS

- Sitka Trail Works welcomes board member Doug Osborne: sitkatrailworks.org/welcome-doug-osborne/
- Sitka Trail Works & COVID-19: <https://sitkatrailworks.org/sitka-trail-works-covid-19/>

NATIONWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

TELL SENATORS TO SUPPORT THE GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

ADVOCATE The American Hiking Society included this call to action in its most recent newsletter regarding the Great American Outdoors Act. If passed, this bill would benefit ALL trail users.

Congress is on the verge of passing a major piece of legislation that will drastically improve access to trails and public lands to conserve the places you love to hike and address the long overdue maintenance needs that have resulted in trail closures at our National Parks, Forests, Refuges, and

other public lands. American Hiking Society STRONGLY supports the bill and encourages every Senator to vote for it.

Tell your Senator to co-sponsor and vote for the bipartisan Great American Outdoors Act! The bill would:

Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund!

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), America's most important conservation and recreation program has protected, preserved, and expanded the places you love to hike in nearly every state and every county in the U.S. for 50 years, including nearly 1,000 trail projects. This legislation guarantees that funding is available for future generations to continue to conserve our public spaces.

Address the Maintenance Backlog at our National Parks, Forests, Fish and Wildlife Refuges, and on BLM lands!

There is a nearly \$22 billion backlog of maintenance projects across our public lands. When annual maintenance needs go unaddressed, long-term problems arise, seriously hampering the public's access to outdoor recreation. Closed trails, out-of-service restrooms, campgrounds in poor conditions, and impassable roads are only a few of the barriers that hikers face. These bills are a first step in addressing the backlog and we worked to ensure that the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management maintenance backlog were included in the bill!

To have the American Hiking Society send a letter for you (or to get ideas for how to write your own letter) see: <https://americanhiking.org/advocacy/take-action/>

NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

TRAILS AND THE PANDEMIC

- Hiking Responsibly: FAQs for Hiking During the Covid-19 Pandemic: <https://tinyurl.com/qq637n3>
- Guidelines For Those Who Choose to Ride During "Social Distancing": <https://tinyurl.com/r3emlep>
- What Coronavirus Means for Outdoor Recreation: <https://tinyurl.com/wkh3bya>
- Trails as Health and Safety Inspiration in the Age of Coronavirus: <https://tinyurl.com/gpwkqtx>
- Statement on Using Open Space While Maintaining Social Distancing: <https://tinyurl.com/wxtbvk3>
- **Questionnaire** - Help NOHVCC Understand How Your OHV Recreation Habits Evolve While Dealing With COVID-19: <https://tinyurl.com/ulchr7>
- Forest Service Coronavirus (Covid-19) Updates: <https://tinyurl.com/suvqcxy>
- Leave No Trace Recommendations for Getting Outside During Covid-19: <https://tinyurl.com/wzqkq95>
- Hatfield-McCoy Trails to close by midnight: <https://tinyurl.com/yxy8jqfo>
- National Park Service Public Health Update: <https://tinyurl.com/txolqag>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Hong Kongers hit hiking trails to escape coronavirus woes: <https://tinyurl.com/uwue794>
- Trekkers stranded on Nepal's mountain trails after coronavirus lockdown: <https://tinyurl.com/w5ghxvp>

WEBINARS, MEETINGS, CONFERENCES, TRAINING, ETC.

- For a listing of upcoming trail webinars workshops, conferences, and other meetings, see the American Trails calendar at: www.americantrails.org/Calendar.html

TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- American Trails "Trail Tracks": www.americantrails.org/communications/newsletter

ADVOCACY

- Trails Community Appropriations Recommendations (w/ sample letter): <https://tinyurl.com/spphy7n>

VOLUNTEER

- American Hiking Society's Volunteer Vacations: <http://tinyurl.com/ydh95kp8>
- American Trails Volunteer Portal: www.americantrails.org/connect/volunteer
- I Did Trail Work Once and Felt Smug for a Lifetime: <https://tinyurl.com/rmfen35>
- Conservation Volunteers International Program March newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/v6shbyx>
- Conservation Volunteers International Program cancels spring trips: <https://tinyurl.com/twknjpa>

FUNDING

- International Mountain Biking Association Trail Accelerator Grants (deadline May 31): <https://tinyurl.com/scg2fnu>
- North Face Explore Fund grant application (deadline April 8): <https://tinyurl.com/sp6h846>

TRAIL GUIDES

- 50+ Greenways Across America: <https://parade.com/1006699/nicolabridges/greenways/>
- Get outside with these 17 great West Michigan trails: <https://tinyurl.com/sc4jp8u>

TRAILS AND HEALTH

- 'Forest Bathing' Is Great for Your Health. Here's How to Do It: <https://tinyurl.com/venqfmx>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- NOHVCC **Scholarship Opportunity** for Future OHV Rec Managers: <https://tinyurl.com/t9y6a9u>
- US Forest Service Issues 10-Year Trail Shared Stewardship Challenge: <https://tinyurl.com/vkv89sv>
- Unifying the Trails Community: www.americantrails.org/resources/unifying-the-trails-community
- Motorized Advocate Explores the Common Ground Between All Trail Users: <https://tinyurl.com/refhfsa>
- Be a Good Steward of Public Land: 10 Tips for Equestrian Trail Riders: <https://tinyurl.com/vy9owk9>
- Four Bills That Could Mean \$2 Billion Annually for Trails, Walking, Biking: <https://tinyurl.com/ve2ty7a>

INTERNATIONAL LINKS:

- Where to find the world's best new coastal trails: www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/best-coastal-walks

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- 5 Things to Use Instead of Toilet Paper: <https://tinyurl.com/ve5a6k8>
- 9 Books That Will Change How You Look at the Outdoors: <https://tinyurl.com/wj9vpgg>

The Alaska Trails board meets via teleconference on the first Tuesday of each month from noon to 1:00 pm. If you want to hear more about Alaska trail topics, share trail information, or propose a trail project, join us for an hour. Members and the public are welcome. Call for more information and meeting details [907-334-8049](tel:907-334-8049).

A copy of this newsletter will also be posted to our web site. Newsletters come out at the beginning of each month. Deadline for articles is five days before the first of the month. Send stories to Editor Eric Troyer at fbxtrails@gmail.com