



NEWSLETTER

Sept
2020

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www.alaska-trails.org

ALASKA TRAILS NEWS AND NOTICES

TRAILHEAD TUESDAY CELEBRATES TRAILS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

SUBMIT On our Facebook page we try to highlight a new trail every Tuesday. We'd love for you to submit a trail! This Google form has all the info we need: <https://forms.gle/4aTMouqo5yCc2AT28>. You can also message us on Facebook or send us an email to: steve.cleary@alaska-trails.org. (We'll need a photo and short description of the trail and why you like it. We'd also appreciate if you could include a link that leads to a website with more information about the trail.)

We'll keep including the Trailhead Tuesdays in this newsletter (for our non-Facebook members and everyone else). If you are on Facebook and want to see them sooner, just like our page. Check out these recent Trailhead Tuesdays!

August 18: It's #TrailheadTuesday and we're heading to the South Fork Valley Trail in Chugach State



Park, home of the Dena'ina people. Several amazing trails connect this trailhead to beautiful alpine areas in Chugach State Park. Hikers can venture up the steep trail to Hunter Pass, out to the Eagle and Symphony Lakes (5 miles one way) or to Hanging Valley Lake (5+ miles one way) and even the ambitious, difficult Eagle River overlook (7+ miles one way). Whatever the destination, this trailhead serves up great views of stunning peaks and beautiful valleys. Official guide: <https://bit.ly/313JJOc>

August 4: It's #TrailheadTuesday and we're heading to the Castner-Fels Divide. Thanks to Eric Troyer of Fairbanks (who also happens to be our newsletter editor) for this great description:

The Castner-Fels Divide is a little-known trek south of Delta Junction in the Alaska Range. This hike is not for those looking for easy access to alpine country. The access to alpine is relatively short, but you have to work for it. But once through the brush, you are rewarded with spectacular views that just keep getting better and better. To the north is Castner Glacier, unique in that it is a vegetated glacier (it has organic mat on portions of it). Very cool to see, especially from above. To the south are Fels and Canwell glaciers. From the divide you can see the mining road that accesses and parallels the Canwell (another possible adventure). Rainbow Mountain and Red Rock Canyon are also seen to the south. You are smack in the middle of the Alaska Range, so glorious peaks rise all around.

You can go as far as you like on this out-and-back hike. One possible destination is Triangle Peak (off one side of the ridge), but that's about 7 miles or so, one-way. A hefty dayhike. It won't be your highest point on the trek, but it's named on the map and so a magnet for some peak baggers. If you are lucky, you'll see some sheep or caribou up there. If not, you've still have the incredible views.



The Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District has a great trail guide to trails in the area. This page gives a guide to accessing the Castner-Fels divide: <https://www.salchadeltaswcd.org/castner-fels-divide/>. There's another access route from the Castner Glacier side, but it's not in the guide. If you want to try that, after about a half-mile hiking on the south side of Castner Creek, look for the large boulder sitting high on an old gravel bar. (It's got a cairn on it.) Then follow the cairns and cut alders to alpine country.

Here's a blog post that includes a recent description of the hike: <https://bit.ly/3grq82U>

SEEN RECENTLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

Aug 26: It's been a wet week, and more rain is likely, but Northern Trail Maintenance is working hard to brush trails in Chugach State Park so you can go enjoy them. Trails cleared recently include:

- White Spruce
- Upper section of South Fork Rim
- Golden Grass
- Panorama View
- Denali View
- Blueberry Hollow
- Upper Huffman Snowmobile Access

Aug 14: Northern Trail Maintenance is out brushing in Chugach State Park today on the Golden Grass Trail. It's just one of the trails that will be brushed thanks to funding from the CARES Act. We hope that will make the trails more enjoyable and fun.



Alaska Trails received a grant from the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) for this project. This program is supported by the citizens of the Municipality through an appropriation of CARES Act funds by the Anchorage Municipal Assembly. This project is made possible by the MOA's Public Lands Jobs program.

Aug 8: We recently upgraded the West Bluff Trail in Government Hill with a spiral staircase constructed by the Youth Employment in Parks program and our Trails Technicians, Kristen and Blaine. 📷: Steve Gerlek

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Steve Cleary, Executive Director



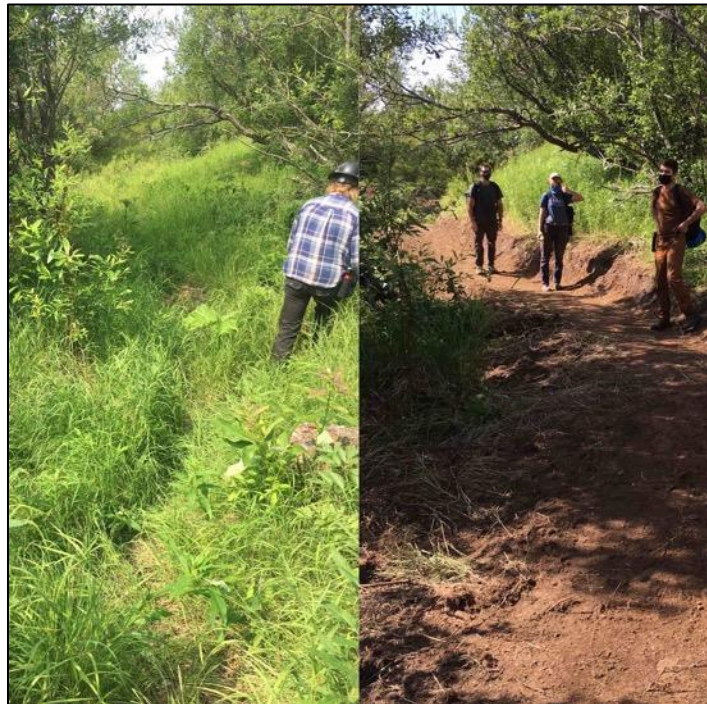
Trails Doing Well in Time of COVID

Trails continue to be a healthy and safe way for Alaskans to get outside. From hunting to mountain biking to strolling with family or running hard with friends – trails are giving us the outlet we need to maintain sanity during COVID times. It's important to remember to stay safe and following good COVID protocols while using trails. (See also "ADVICE FOR USING TRAILS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC" in Statewide News and Notices.)

Trail Crew Times Two

Alaska Trails received funding from the Municipality of Anchorage to employ 11 people through the CARES Act on two trail projects in Chugach State Park. The Anchorage Assembly approved this funding at its June 23 meeting. The funding is helping put people back to work during these hard times, through building enduring recreation resources that all residents and visitors can enjoy long after the jobs program is done.

Alaska Trails was excited to receive funding from the Chugach Park Fund for a crew on the Little O'Malley Peak Trail for five weeks early in the summer. That funding ran out right when the CARES Act funding came in, so we did not need to let those people go. And we were able to add another crew on the Middle Fork Trail to help continue work on that project. We are grateful for the win-win opportunity to put people back to work and to build more sustainable trails.



(Gemma Winston photo: Before and after trail building on the Middle Fork trail in Chugach State Park.)

Alaska Trails Initiative – Taking Off

The Alaska Trails Initiative (ATI) continues to make great strides to raise the profile of trails across the state, highlighting their economic and health benefits and showing how they build our communities. In late August, ATI advocates from around the state met with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan to update them on the exciting projects outlined in the Trails Investment Strategy and to solicit their help in unlogging the many complex federal funding sources that Alaskan could take better advantage of.

Director's Corner continued

The Alaska Long Trail

Long trails like the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails have captured the attention of travelers for decades. With some of the most stunning wilderness in the world, Alaska is long overdue in creating a world class long trail of its own. Long trails engage visitors in everything from simple day hikes to multi-week, bucket list lifetime accomplishments. Alaska Trails and its partners are proposing such a route connecting Fairbanks and Seward. Many sections of the proposed trail already exist or are currently planned, and the route is almost entirely on public lands, enormously reducing the complexity and cost.

Alaska Trails will continue to work with its partners to highlight the great trails on the route that already exist and to connect the dots to make this expansive vision a reality.

See you on the trails,



ALASKA TRAILS (IN THE NEWS) LINKS

- Anchorage's new hiking and biking trails should be complete before snow falls: <https://tinyurl.com/y2q7ufyv>
- A 500-mile hiking trail across Alaska? Advocates say the pandemic is a perfect time to start: <https://tinyurl.com/y63m7dq3>
 - Follow up letter by Tony Knowles: Show me the money! <https://tinyurl.com/y5jebqfm>

GETTING DOWN TO MONKEY BUSINESS, ER, CHIMP BUSINESS

This is the first edition of the Alaska Trails newsletter to be distributed via MailChimp. Newsletter editor Eric Troyer had pondered this change for quite a while, but it didn't happen until Volunteer Program Coordinator Lindsay Garrod offered to make it actually happen. (Thank you, Lindsay!) Pressure to make the change was increased when more than 70 email addresses rejected the August newsletter despite repeated attempts to send it. We hope this will solve that problem. To those of you who didn't receive the August newsletter, please accept our apologies. You can download it at: <https://tinyurl.com/y4adufjl>

ALASKA TRAILS HAS TOOL TRAILERS READY FOR TRAIL PROJECTS



The trails building and maintenance season is not over yet. Don't forget 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

ADVICE FOR USING TRAILS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The following was excerpted from an Anchorage Daily News article: Alaska coronavirus Q&A: How are people here getting COVID-19? And what's the deal with testing numbers?

The ADN offers COVID-19 articles free, without a subscription. To see the rest of the article, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/y3psvuvs>

How do you safely navigate Alaska's trails in the midst of a pandemic?

The state's epidemiologist, Dr. Joe McLaughlin, uses Anchorage's trail system, he said during a recent public video call. Navigating the outdoors comes down to personal choice, he said.

If someone tests positive for COVID-19, anyone who was within 6 feet of them for more than fifteen minutes is deemed a close contact, which means walking past someone on the trail doesn't fit that category.

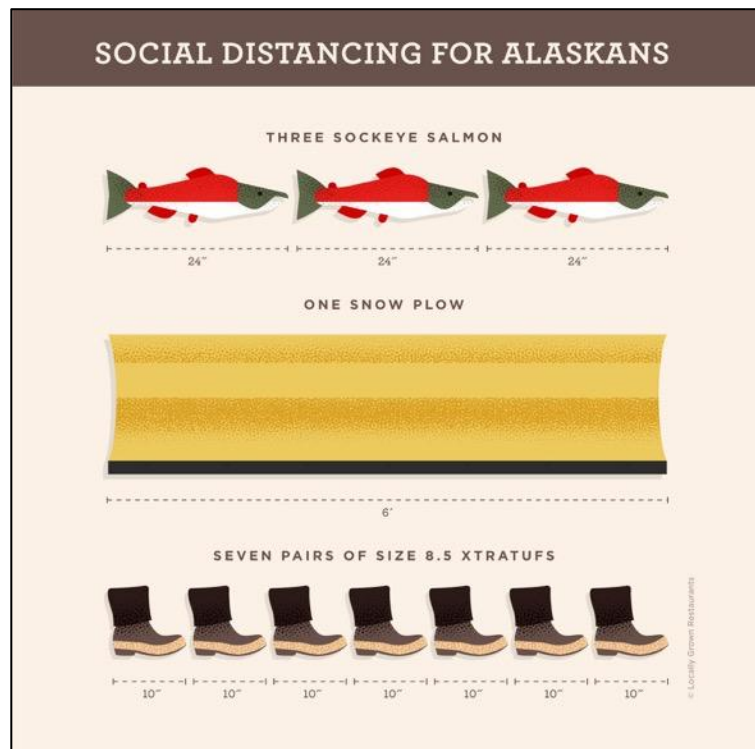
"Now, certainly, if the person is breathing hard and were to cough right on you, like give you a direct face shot of a cough, you might get exposed to COVID if they're infected," McLaughlin said.

When he's out hiking, McLaughlin said, he'll step off the trail, turn his head or will even hold his breath if he starts to get too close to someone.

But, if someone is at a higher risk for COVID-19, he said they should take more precautions.

Similarly, the state's chief medical officer, Dr. Anne Zink, said her kids use the "grumpy dog theory," meaning to stay away from people the way you'd keep a grumpy dog away from people along trails. They often "dive into the woods and go 6 feet off the trail," Zink said.

She also keeps a mask around for crowded trailheads and wears one if she goes blueberry picking by a trail where others might show up.



STATE SNOWMACHINE TRAIL GRANT APPLICATION PERIOD OPEN



APPLY The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) is accepting applications for the Snowmachine Trail Grant Program for FY2021.

People interested in applying for a Snowmachine Trails Program grant should visit the program's website at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/snowmotr.htm>

Applications are due by September 25.

The Snowmachine Trails Program provides reimbursable grant funds for trail easement acquisition, development and maintenance of trails and trail-related facilities for Snowmachine use.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the application process, please email us at parks.SNOWTRACapp@alaska.gov

STATE PARKS AND REC ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR RTP GRANTS

APPLY The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation is accepting applications for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) for FY2021.



The division will be accepting all categories of projects this year, including stipulation 1, 2, and 3 projects. Last year, due to staffing cuts and a short timeline, applications for projects were limited to stipulation 1 projects, which have either no or minimal environmental, cultural, and social, etc., impacts. Projects were almost exclusively limited to brushing and clearing trails and minor trail repair within an existing footprint.

Applications are due by October 23.

Both the RTP Application and RTP Budget Workbook have been updated for this year. If you are interested in applying for an RTP award, please visit the division's website at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm>

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation administers Alaska's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) RTP grant. The division offers competitive, reimbursable, matching trail grants for maintaining public recreational trails and related facilities, and for safety and educational projects.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the application process, please send emails to Parks.RTPGrantApp@alaska.gov

GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT: THE GOOD, BAD, AND UGLY

ADVOCATE Confluence Alaska, an outdoor industry support group, has this update and call to action on the Great American Outdoors Act:

The Good. We did it! With your help, Congressman Don Young co-sponsored and Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan voted yes on the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). In early August, President Trump signed the landmark conservation bill into law. GAOA will create jobs by funding projects that will restore recreation assets on federal lands.

It is also expected to significantly increase Alaska's share of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars which doubles available dollars to build trails, trailheads, bridges, river launches, cabins, playgrounds and more on state and local lands. The GAOA celebration is short lived, as there is more work to ensure federal monies that come to Alaska, stay in Alaska.

The Bad. When the Alaska state legislature adjourned early due to COVID-19, many vital capital appropriations were left dangling. Within the Department of Natural Resources alone, the state is in danger of forfeiting well more than a million dollars from the above-mentioned grant programs. Another example: at immediate risk is nearly \$615,000 of 2018 LWCF federal funds (effectively a loss of \$1.23 million that could have helped improve a local park or trail in your neighborhood) as well as 2019 and 2020 LWCF allocations (potentially more lost millions) if the problem is not fixed. There's a rumor that legislators are planning to hold a special session this fall to address this problem.

ACTION: Call your state legislature and urge them to hold a special session this fall to fix problems with receiving federal conservation and recreation funds that are so vital to jobs around the state on projects that will support a thriving outdoor recreation sector.

The Ugly. COVID-19 is forcing elected leaders across the state to tighten budget belts. Even before the pandemic, Alaska struggled to come up with its share of money to match federal grants like LWCF and others that sustain fish and game management. Since 2017, the state has reverted/forfeited more than \$6.6 million of federal Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act funds. P-R and its companion Dingell-Johnson Sportfishing Restoration Act funds, combined with hunting and fishing license revenue, is critical to fish and wildlife restoration, hunting and fishing access, education and safety programs.



So, hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, campers, hikers, bikers and paddlers share this common ground: we need to keep every federal dollar we get working to preserve Alaska's great outdoors.

ACTION: After you thank them for supporting passage of the Great American Outdoors Act (if you haven't already), please take a moment to tell Congressman Young and Senators Murkowski and Sullivan how much these federal funding streams matter to you, your business, or organization, then continue to press them to ease state match requirements for LWCF, Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Funds to a 90/10 federal/state split for the next five years while the economy recovers.

SEEN RECENTLY ON STATEWIDE FACEBOOK PAGES

FAIRBANKS TRAIL USERS OPEN GROUP

Aug 18: Some changes are planned for the shoulder and winter seasons at Denali National Park. Under the new plan, these are (the trail-related) visitor services that will be enacted at Denali National Park.

- Install a seasonal footbridge near Mountain Vista to facilitate access to traditional winter routes.
- Create a connector trail for mushing access at the Mountain Vista rest area.
- Groom trails in the park entrance area and potential trails in the Nenana River area.

(See also: Alaska's Denali National Park plans to expand winter access: <https://tinyurl.com/y67t8c5d>)

Aug 19: Craig Medred on a recent bear killing in Hope. The column has good info about bear spray and bears. <https://craigmedred.news/2020/08/19/bears-attack/>

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Outdoors Act offers Alaska \$3.6 million annual for state, local parks if funds can be matched: <https://tinyurl.com/y5fjdgby>
- A 500-mile hiking trail across Alaska? Advocates say the pandemic is a perfect time to start: <https://tinyurl.com/y63m7dq3>

BEARS

- Bear spray, cell phone credited with saving Kodiak trail runner's life: <https://tinyurl.com/y3wgclvt>
- 'Bear spray quite possibly saved his life': 71-year-old man survives brown bear attack in Kodiak: <https://tinyurl.com/yydzu7ay>

- Grisly death (Medred on a recent bear killing): <https://craigmedred.news/2020/08/01/grisly-death/>
- Spray failure? (Medred on bear spray): <https://craigmedred.news/2020/08/06/spray-failure/>
- Bears attack (Medred again): <https://craigmedred.news/2020/08/19/bears-attack/>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

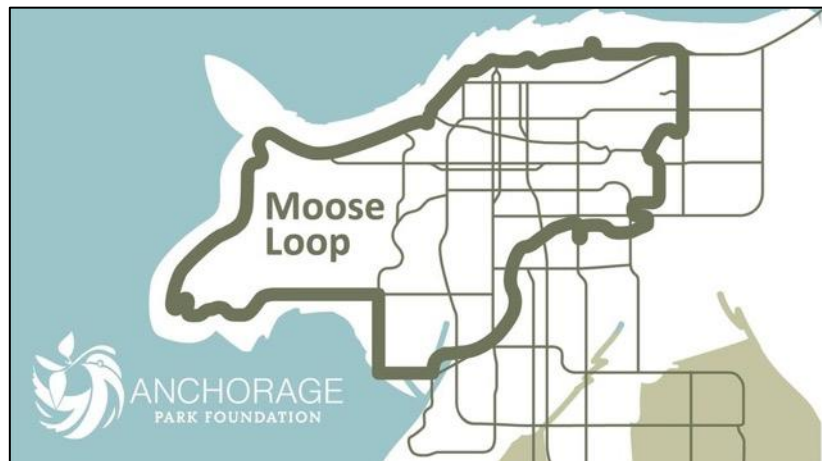
- Things to Luc At newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/y3ie26me>
- Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic 2020 (Jay Cable): <https://tinyurl.com/y45ka2pe>
- 2020 Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic (Luc Mehl): <https://thingstoluc.com/2020-summer-classic/>
- Arctic Refuge Road-to-Road (Luc Mehl): <https://thingstoluc.com/arctic-refuge-road-to-road/>
- **ENTER** Alaska State Parks 50th Anniversary Photo Contest (run **monthly**): <https://tinyurl.com/gnssp93>

SOUTHCENTRAL NEWS AND NOTICES

GROUPS ORGANIZE BIKE THE MOOSE ON BIKE YOUR PARK DAY

GO BIKING The Anchorage Park Foundation, Bike Anchorage and Adventure Cycling Association are encouraging people to **Bike the Moose on Bike Your Park Day, Saturday, September 26.**

Volunteers from Anchorage Park Foundation and Bike Anchorage will be at Campbell Park from 2 to 5 p.m. - halfway through the Campbell Creek Trail - doing a trail-use count. They will also be providing a COVID-friendly online survey (fill it out and pick up a free bike helmet from Bike Anchorage!), a petition to build a safe crossing at Lake Otis Parkway, and vote-by-mail applications. You can also pick up free moose stickers and other swag at Campbell Park. (Volunteers will be wearing masks - be safe!)



If you can't be there from 2 pm to 5 pm, the groups still encourage people to bike one or all of the many trails and parks along the 32-mile Moose Loop! Share pics by emailing them to Diana@AnchorageParkFoundation.org to get entered into a contest for \$75 (two prizes awarded for \$75 each).

Anchorage's four main multi-use paved trails – the Lanie Fleischer Chester Creek Trail, Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, Campbell Creek Trail, and Ship Creek Trail – are connected to each other through city streets to form a 32-mile bike loop in the shape of a moose. Navigate your moose-shaped journey using this map (<https://anchorageparkfoundation.org/moose-loop-trail/>) and follow the moose loop chalk stencils to connect the trails together.

You can also sign up at www.adventurecycling.org/ to Bike the Moose Loop and get entered into a contest to win a Salsa Cutthroat bike.

From Anchorage Park Foundation Facebook Event: www.facebook.com/events/699289140667769/

BIKE THE MOOSE VIDEOS

- Trek Cycling // Moose Loop Marathon // RISK SAVAGE in The Wild: <https://tinyurl.com/y2rtdv73>
- Bike to the Brew - Anchorage edition: <https://tinyurl.com/y5kmlc2u>

KENAI NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PHOTO CONTEST DEADLINE SOON

ENTER The deadline for the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm (KMTA) National Heritage Area photo contest is **September 30**. Amateur and professional photographers are invited to submit images that capture the essence of the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area (KMTA), which includes the area's trails, or speak to KMTA's role in preserving, promoting and protecting the national heritage area. All photographs must be taken within the KMTA area which include the communities of Indian, Bird, Girdwood, Whittier, Hope/Sunrise, Moose Pass, Seward and Cooper Landing. For more info go to <https://kmtacorridor.org/photo-contests/>

SEEN RECENTLY ON SOUTHCENTRAL FACEBOOK PAGES

ALASKA STATE PARKS

August 19: Have you ever thought about doing Crow Pass Trail or even a portion of it? Here is a good (Facebook) page to follow with current updates. Chugach State Parks is currently working on the crossings at Icicle creek and Thunder Creek, so those crossings will be easier to cross soon.

Check it out, you will not be disappointed!

<https://www.facebook.com/Crow-Pass-Trail-198410636940984/>

ANCHORAGE PARKS AND RECREATION

Aug 20: We have an idea of how school kids can log your miles (for the Healthy Futures Challenge)... walk or bike the Moose Loop! The loop is made up of four existing trails - so you can do it one at a time:

- Ship Creek Trail = 2.5 miles
- Chester Creek Trail = 4 miles
- Coastal Trail = 10 miles
- Campbell Creek Trail = 7.5 miles

Let's get healthy together! Free Healthy Futures Challenge: <https://tinyurl.com/y4pktry6>

Aug 20: Anchorage Parks and Recreation is currently installing adult fitness equipment along the Campbell Creek Trail as part of the South Gateway improvements driven by the Taku Lake Master Plan. We are honored to have been selected by the AARP Initiative in partnership with FitLot as recipients of this donated equipment and are aiming to finalize construction by mid-September.

To learn more about this initiative please follow this link: <https://fitlot.org/aarp-initiative/>

For more information about the South Gateway Improvements follow this link:

<https://www.muni.org/Departments/parks/Pages/TakuLakeParkSouthGatewayImprovements2020.aspx>

If you have any questions please get in touch with me via e-mail at taylor.keegan@anchorageak.gov or call 907.343.4518

ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION

Aug 26: Thank you to the team at Chugach National Forest for funds for Anchorage Parks and Recreation to remove dead and dying white spruce trees on Anchorage parks and trails. Crews were

hired to take down the trees, and we will also be working with Youth Employment in Parks next summer to plant new trees. Teamwork!

Aug 13: Today is the birthday of Margaret E. Webber, who lived just up the hill from Westchester Lagoon and whose memory is recognized on these park benches.

We are so grateful for the generous donation from the Webber Family Fund, established at The Alaska Community Foundation from kind and giving donors who want to make an impact in Alaska. Memorial benches are a great way to support parks and trails and keep loved ones in our hearts and minds. Thank you.



Aug 12: Interested in outdoor classrooms? Our Schools on Trails program helps teachers and kids get outside to improve learning. You can borrow a wagon with seats at Russian Jack Park, Anchorage. It is about a 3-minute walk from the Chalet. Email Meredith@Anchorageparkfoundation.org for more information.

SINGLETRACK ADVOCATES

Aug 24: We are excited about the new Hemlock Burn Trail and the Summit to Sea Connector trail! STA has received a grant from the Municipality of Anchorage for the construction of the project. This program is supported by the citizens of the Municipality through an appropriation of CARES Act funds by the Anchorage Municipal Assembly. This project is made possible by the MOA's Public Lands Jobs program. <https://tinyurl.com/y6csb8zt>

MATANUSKA GREENBELT

August 9: THEY'RE HERE!!

First of the trail survey flyers and sandwich boards were put out yesterday. More today. I'll catch up with writing and pictures during the week. Just letting you know what the new flyers are that are appearing.

Scan the QR code to enter data. The QR codes differ depending on which. Area you enter. So please don't swap with friends

THANK YOU EVERYONE WHO HELPED

MATANUSKA EXPERIMENT FARM & EXTENSION CENTER

Aug 3: Heavy Equipment Working Near Trails in the Matanuska Greenbelt System.

Starting this week, you may notice some heavy equipment working near trails in the Matanuska Greenbelt Trail System that pass through Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center property. The equipment will be there as part of a project to evaluate gravel resources on the property. The work will start on Aug. 4 and continue for a few weeks. An excavator will dig multiple test pits and a drill rig will test subsurface conditions in nine boring locations. Pits will be filled in after testing. Other equipment will include trucks with trailers hauling in the equipment for clearing testing sites.

The assessment work is being done in response to budget reductions and a request from the University of Alaska Board of Regents that universities find ways to generate revenue from their property. As part of that effort, UAF has decided to evaluate the gravel resources at the Matanuska Experiment Farm and Extension Center.

A contractor will assess two areas for potential future gravel extraction:

- An existing gravel pit in the core area of the farm. This work will not affect the public.
- A 70-acre area near the eastern property boundary. This work will be adjacent to frequently used trails.

Please keep safety in mind if you are using trails in the area. We ask that you yield to all vehicles using the farm roads, that you keep your dogs on a leash and that you avoid active work sites, which will be indicated by orange cones. No work is planned on the weekends.

Thank you for your support and we will let you know when the work is complete. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Julie Queen, vice chancellor for administrative services, at julie.queen@alaska.edu

WALK/BIKE ALASKA

Aug 19: From Tracy Kalytiak

ADVOCATE The Matanuska Greenbelt is a precious oasis where people of all ages and backgrounds in our Mat-Su community run, hike, swim, ride bikes, ski, sled, and connect with each other. It promotes health. Our residents having an unspoiled place to be active outdoors for free is *valuable* in Mat-Su and (for those in business who think about big-picture healthcare dollars) it also saves enormous amounts of money by preventing preventable/expensive conditions like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Being active is also therapeutic for the mind and soul.



I'm so disappointed that the UA leaders who approved a plan to bulldoze our lovely trails apparently don't understand that big-picture view of health, have vision that extends no farther than gouging out yet another gravel pit for short-term cash, and insulted our community by recklessly harming a magnificent resource they *know* we love.

Please write to the Board of Regents and let them know that they need to restore the damage and leave our Matanuska Greenbelt alone: <https://www.savethematanuskagreenbelt.org/>

Aug 27: Shared from: Kellie Okonek > Alaska Mountain Bike Group

As a bit of a passion project, I've written up a lot of trails this summer into a bit of a southcentral AK mountain biking guide . . . sharing here in case it's helpful! It's definitely a work in progress and I've recently added a bunch of new content 😊 What trails am I missing?!? Enjoy!

<https://www.kellieokonek.com/category/alaska-biking/>

Note: Kellie's site also has info and trip reports on packrafting, skiing and other wilderness trips.

MAT-SU TRAILS AND PARKS FOUNDATION

July 31: Nothing but beautiful views and fireweed blooms on the Reflections Lake Trail!

Download the free OuterSpatial mobile app to discover all the world-class trails and parks in the Mat-Su!

Download from the App Store -> <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/outerspatial/id1254161962>

Download from Google -> <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.trailheadlabs.outerspatial>

MAT-SU BOROUGH RECREATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Aug 17: Where did the summer go?? It has been a very busy season out on the trails and there is still lots of work to be accomplished before the snow flies. Last week was the last of the season with a full Trail Crew. A couple of the Crew members are teachers and they are the first of the team to leave. Next will be the students returning to further their education throughout August. That will leave about half of the Crew working hard until sometime in October.

Trails are not built or maintained by themselves. It takes a hardy group of people who are willing to put in long physical hours, in all weather conditions, to get the job done. This year's Crew was one of the best!

We hope you continue to get out and enjoy the fruits of their labor and if you see anything on the Mat-Su Borough trails that needs our attention, please contact us.



VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKERS AND HIKERS

Aug 15: We are as excited as you are to ride the new trails at GPRA, but PLEASE stay off the trails until they are officially opened. These trails have lots of contractor work left to be done before anyone should be on them, and that time will be extended (along with the cost) if they have to clean up messes like this.

Spread the word. Have patience. Stay off the trails.

ISLAND TRAILS NETWORK IS IN KODIAK




Aug 24: Thank you to the volunteer crew who came out on Saturday to help install a boardwalk on the Sharatin Red Cloud Trail!

Aug 19: This season we were grateful to be able to replace our old tool trailer with this one because of the financial support of the Kodiak Community Foundation (KCF), an Affiliate of the Alaska Community Foundation (ACF). Thank you KCF and ACF!

August 8: ITN board members, Eric Linscheid and Howard Valley, made and posted up 18 wood trail signs among the seven summits. As the trails are getting more traffic, we are sad to say there is more trash as well. As a friendly reminder, we will be posting hiking etiquette signs at each trailhead.



We will adopt some of @DiscoverKodiak "Like Where You Hike" guidelines which include:

-  -Do not litter and pick up any litter you find, leaving a negative trace
-  -Respect others and wildlife, giving them space
-  -Take care of our trails and stay on the path when you can



@DiscoverKodiak mentioned:

"We have such a wonderful thing going here with the challenge, let's keep it nice for all to enjoy!"

Here are some ideas and a video resource for you if you have to go –

- 1) Bury it
- 2) Use a dog poop bag for your own waste - we have them down here at Discover Kodiak and you can come pick some up and then use it to carry out your own waste
- 3) At the very minimum, please move away from the trail to do your business.

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/hygiene-sanitation.html>

Happy Hiking!”

SOUTHCENTRAL LINKS

- Road or trail? New JBER project surprises residents: <https://tinyurl.com/y2gu4arn>
- \$3 million in CARES funds will be used for Anchorage trails, beetle-kill spruce mitigation: <https://tinyurl.com/yyqb29gf>
- Anchorage’s new hiking and biking trails should be complete before snow falls: <https://tinyurl.com/y2q7ufyv>
- Voices of the Peninsula: Kenai refuge ditches trapping safeguards (opinion): <https://tinyurl.com/y42wf2eb>
- Check Out Alaska State Parks New Video about the Bird to Gird Bike Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/y695b449>
- UAF explores gravel resources on Matanuska Greenbelt trails in Palmer: <https://tinyurl.com/yxn86q4d>
- Risk of human-bear conflicts closes Eagle River’s Albert Loop Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/yx9cfdcj>
- Island Trails Network newsletter (Kodiak): <https://tinyurl.com/y3cjeym9>
- Bikepacking in a thunderstorm is a refreshing break from real life: <https://tinyurl.com/y4oxn5qu>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- On its 50th birthday, Chugach State Park is more essential than ever (opinion): <https://tinyurl.com/yy9swlrq>

INTERIORWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

CHENA RIVER REC AREA TRAILS GET WORK, BUT NOT MASTODON

Many trails in the Chena River State Recreation Area have been getting improvements this summer. Unfortunately, the Mastodon Trail is not one of them.

According to Ian Thomas, superintendent of the state parks northern region, Happy Trails, Inc., was awarded a contract to “dress up and repair” all 44 miles of motorized multi-use trails in the rec area. A crew was on the Stiles Creek Trail earlier, making repairs, including creating drains for the many deep puddles that have formed on the ridge.



However, the Mastodon Trail was still under construction last year and not included in that contract. The Mastodon Trail is a nonmotorized multi-use trail that was finished just last autumn after years of work and delays. It provides year-round access to the Nugget Creek Public Use Cabin. While the 11-mile trail

was passable last fall with just a few trees down in the last couple of miles, more trees have fallen across it, starting from about three miles in, where the trail crosses Mastodon Creek.

“The damage to the Mastodon Trail is due in large part to the forest fire event last summer which will cause blowdown problems for years to come,” Thomas wrote in an email.

Some of the Geoblock panels, used to provide a solid surface in wetter areas, have also started to jack up, which sometimes happens, especially when a trail is new.

Thomas says he would like to get someone out to clear the trail but simply doesn't have the staff.

“The simple fact is that I don't have anybody to send out there to undertake a maintenance project of that scope. Years of staffing reductions and funding cuts have pretty much emptied the bag of tricks that we once had in times that we considered to be tight yet were far better than the current state of affairs.”



The northern parks field staff is now down to five employees, which includes two rangers and one maintenance person. All the field staff are already busy with other tasks and can't be spared to clear the trail, according to Thomas.

“Even if I sent our 5 employees out there and completely neglected the entire rest of the Northern Region, which I can't, a project like that is beyond the scope of what a small hand crew can accomplish in any reasonable length of time.”

Thomas is trying to work with the state Department of Forestry to find funding to clear the downed trees using a contractor.

“That is an option because of the wildland fire damage that the trail suffered,” according to Thomas.

However, that probably won't happen this year. That solution also has possible complications. It would most likely be done with a piece of heavier equipment, which could further damage the Geoblock panels.

“I'm sorry that I don't have much good news,” Thomas wrote, “but we're just trying to get by and keep the front country properly maintained in the current staffing and budget environment.”

A map of the Mastodon Trail can be found at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/maps/mastadontrail.pdf>

Top photo by Eric Troyer: Corrine Leistikow and Ben Barton bike past a trail dozer on Stiles Creek Trail earlier this summer.

Bottom photo by Shery Reily: Geoff Orth works his way under a deadfall tree along the Mastodon Trail earlier this summer.

FAIRBANKS SUMMER TRAILS CHALLENGE ENDS THIS MONTH

The Fairbanks Trails Challenge ends on September 30.

The challenge, a popular event held twice a year by the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department, is free for anyone who wants to participate. Just find the signs and photograph yourself with the sign in the background. Then share your “selfie” photo on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram by typing “#FNSBtrails” in your post, OR post your picture on the FNSB Parks & Rec Facebook page, OR email your photos to parks@fnsb.us.

If you can prove you made it to at least 10 Summer Challenge Trails you will earn the elusive “Trailblazer Award” and be placed in a drawing for awesome prizes from our sponsors! To help find the signs, download the Fairbanks Trail Challenge booklet at:

<http://tinyurl.com/yx9buqnm>

Questions? Contact Bryant Wright at bwright@fnsb.us or 907-459-7401. For more info and how to register see:

- Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/334369447465250/>
- Trails Challenge webpage: <http://tinyurl.com/y3lq8rdn>

SEEN RECENTLY ON INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

FAIRBANKS TRAILS USERS OPEN GROUP

Aug 18: Figured out a new trails loop on Ester Dome. Fun, challenging trails and nice views in places! Here's a post about it with some photos: <https://tinyurl.com/y4dgg4ut>

Aug 11: If you've ever done the Bluff Cabin Lakes Trail(s) in Delta Junction but haven't been on them in a while, consider trying them again. The low-lying trails have been rerouted in the past couple of years and they have been transformed from muddy trails with no view to awesome ridge trails with great views!

Be warned that directional trail signs had not yet been put up as of two weekends ago, but plans are for them to be installed soon. The "trail" starts as a single trail from Tanana Loop Extension road, but it eventually breaks into several trails (a maze in some areas), so keep track of where you are.



The trail is mentioned in "Outside in the Interior" under the "More Adventurous" section of the "Highway Lakes - Harding, Birch, and Quartz" chapter.

Another description can be found on the Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District trails guide: <https://www.salchadeltaswcd.org/fourmile-hill-bluff-cabin-trail/>

Both guides have descriptions of the old trails, not the reroutes, but the descriptions will get you to the trailhead.

A map of the new, rerouted trails can be found here: https://www.interioralaskatrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BCTyouareheremap_final2.jpg

The trail is open to all non-motorized use and motorized vehicles up to 5 feet wide.

Photo by Eric Troyer: Great views from one of the rerouted Bluff Cabin Lakes trails.

FAIRBANKS AREA HIKING CLUB FAN PAGE



Aug 21: Trails Challenge #20 sign was vandalized, but now it's back in place! At least until another a-hole comes along.....

(This post by Don Kiely linked to another long post – too long for here – that described Don's adventure. In short, Trails Challenge Sign #20, the Mike Kelly Trail, was torn down and tossed into the woods. Don got it back up, so hopefully others will be respectful, and the sign will remain. All it takes is one disrespectful or misguided person to ruin enjoyment for many. But thankfully one person corrected the situation. Thank you, Don!)

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH PARKS & REC

Aug 8: Trails Challenge weekend update: Mastodon Trail is OUT, Angel Rocks Trail is IN! A new sign #17 can now be found on the Angel Rocks Loop! Mastodon Trail will have to wait for another year to join the Trails Challenge Angel Rocks map here: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/maps/angelrockstrail.pdf>

Thanks Alaska State Parks for 50 years of great parks and trails!

INTERIOR ALASKA LAND TRUST

DONATE August 6: We could use your help, Fairbanks! This 38-acre parcel along Ballaine Road in Goldstream Valley is a critical piece for connecting green space and trails across the valley. We are very close to our goal of purchasing this to establish continuity in our Goldstream Valley Greenbelt Project (\$40k of \$75k). We purchased the 80 acres below it and hope to get the third and final piece. For the rest, we are asking those who use and love Fairbanks trails and wild areas to please consider donating to our acquisition and conservation of this land. Any contribution helps!



The land is undeveloped wetland (see USFWS map) with the exception of a cabin structure near the road. This can be used as a parking area for trails, as we know that parking is limited further up Ballaine Road. As you can see, a large winter trail crosses through the parcel, and continues onto the east side of Ballaine Road. All donations are tax-deductible. Also, donations over \$200 gets you an IALT-shirt!

Thank you for all your support!

To donate, you can either mail a check:

Interior Alaska Land Trust; P.O. Box 84169; Fairbanks, AK 99708

OR

donate online: <https://interior-alaska-land-trust-624539.square.site/>

BLM-WHITE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Aug 17: White Mountains trail advisory: This week a BLM trail crew is improving drainage on the first 5 miles of the McKay Creek Trail. Please watch for equipment and people on the trail. Smokejumpers from the BLM Alaska Fire Service will also be clearing brush on the Summit Trail through Wednesday. They will mostly be working between the trail shelter and the junction with the Wickersham Creek Trail.

Aug 3: Ya know, the inaugural meeting of the hiking club took place at the Noel Wein Library maybe 20 - 25 years ago. I am amazed at how it has grown and how it has sprouted a whole new generation of hikers. I love all the posts from new hikers out there exploring the trails and posting their pics. Keep the trip reports coming and keep enjoying our wonderful Interior Alaskan outdoors.

SKARLAND & PEARL CREEK PARK TRAIL USERS

August 11: Side hill be gone! This is on the Skarland Trail above Wolverine Lane. The trail will end up 2 feet wide - lower portion is duff roots etc. and will vegetate. Amazed at how quickly the old trail migrated downhill until it was up against the trees. The cut bench stops the migration. This is the area where the snowmachine tipped over due to the sidehill.

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- 'A majestic arctic tributary': floating 120 miles on the Chandalar River: <https://tinyurl.com/yydpg4lx>
- Trails Group Working to Rehab Land for Park, Trail Along Delta River: <https://tinyurl.com/y4bd4et5>
- Ester Dome Run/Hikeabout on Some New-ish Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/y4dgg4ut>
- Bear Creek Loop - Take 2: <https://tinyurl.com/y4gyyq28>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Adieu, Fairbanks (Fairbanks Daily News-Miner Outdoors Editor leaves): <https://tinyurl.com/y4cf43mk>
- Trials and Tribulations on the Way to Triangle Peak: <https://tinyurl.com/yygjhtxu>
- Alpine Paradise Off the Richardson Highway: <https://tinyurl.com/y6f2hyta>

SOUTHEAST NEWS AND NOTICES

SEEN RECENTLY ON SOUTHEAST FACEBOOK PAGES

JUNEAU PARKS & RECREATION



Aug 27: Lots of work has taken place along the Twin Lake's trail this summer. Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership volunteers worked with our P&R Landscape crew to plant fruit trees and shrubs as a Community Fruiting Forest. They planted 3 cherry, 2 apple, and a plum tree as well as raspberries, currants, and gooseberries thanks to an Arbor Day grant from the Alaska Community Forest Council.

Aug 26: Zach Gordon Youth Center's YEP crew and Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition recently planted native salmonberry and thimbleberry plants along the trail at Twin Lakes. This should be a great patch to pick in a few years!

Aug 18: The Point Caroline Trail near the Jensen-Olson Arboretum will be closed to the public beginning Wednesday, August 19 until further notice for trail maintenance.

Aug 13: Check it out! Alaska Electric Light & Power has made great progress on the Flume this summer and the trail is expected to open mid-fall. Project updates are available on AEL&P's website: <https://tinyurl.com/y2j8ykg4>

Alaska Electric Light & Power

Progress on the Gold Creek Flume Trail is coming along nicely and we're on track for a mid-fall completion. In the meantime, here's a short video to give you an idea of what the trail will look like.

SOUTHEAST LINKS

- USFS Public Easement Application for (trail and parking lot) Improvements in Starrigavan Valley Watershed/Recreation Area (Sitka): <http://notice.alaska.gov/199131>
- Sitka Cycling Club continues work on fourth new single-track mountain bike trail of the summer: <https://tinyurl.com/y4vt36ng>
- Tales from 2 trails and some bird stories (Juneau): <https://tinyurl.com/y5n9kto2>

NATIONWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

TRAIL APPRENTICE PROGRAM SEEKS APPLICANTS

APPLY Are you interested in a career in history, recreation and the outdoors? Partnership for the National Trails System is looking for young leaders for its 2020-2021 Trail Apprentice program. The program will include orientation and attendance at the 2020 National Trails Virtual Fall Workshop Oct 21st - Oct 29th. In addition, we are currently looking at ways to extend the program virtually with mentoring and other opportunities.

The workshop is a skill building opportunity covering a variety of topics. You will be an active part of the workshop dialogue, engaging in skill- and tool-sharing and networking amongst the national scenic and historic trail communities. Selected participants should be ready to explore, learn, and engage virtually! Topics will include, though are not limited to, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; tools for planning and building trails; creating new partnerships; fundraising in turbulent times; and more.

Applicants must be between the age of 18-28 with an interest in the National Trails System. Trail apprentice scholarships include:

- Free attendance to all sessions at the Workshop
- Access to other webinars/workshops through 3/1/2021

The **deadline to apply for the Trail Apprentice program is September 11**. Please fill in this contact form to receive an application form and for more information out the national scenic and historic trails. Or contact Liz@pnts.org directly. Use "Trail Apprentice" in your header.

Learn more at:

<https://partnershipnationaltrailssystem.salsalabs.org/taform2020/index.html>

From American Trails Facebook page

NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

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

FUNDING

- IMBA Dig In Program: <https://www.imba.com/digin>
- Federal Highway Administration funding chart (has trails-related categories): <http://tinyurl.com/zgz2m8p>
- Clif Bar Family Foundation grants (for groups, projects; ddline Oct 1): <http://tinyurl.com/y5es3wjc>
- How The Great American Outdoors Act Can Improve Trails Near You (from International Mountain Biking Association): <https://tinyurl.com/y64t7o37>

VOLUNTEER

- American Hiking Society's Volunteer Vacations: <http://tinyurl.com/ydh95kp8>
- American Trails Volunteer Portal: www.americantrails.org/volunteer-opportunities

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- How Harassment Keeps Women off Hiking Trails: <https://tinyurl.com/y2lv9eob>
- How Indigenous Hikers Are Reclaiming America's Most Famous Trails: <https://tinyurl.com/y6g7y4oc>
- American Trails is Sharpening Its Focus: <https://tinyurl.com/y5h37xsk>
- The Tennessee RiverLine: A 652-Mile Regional Trail System: <https://tinyurl.com/y4yuem54>
- What the Great American Outdoors Act Means for the Hiking (and Trails) Community: <https://tinyurl.com/yyk5spna>
- NFF Grant Funds First Forest Therapy Trail On National Forest: <https://tinyurl.com/y5cde8sx>
- User Created "Enduro Lines" Damage Resources And Jeopardize Riding Areas: <https://tinyurl.com/y655yogn>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors (book): <https://www.carolynfinney.com/book>
- Positive Forward Motion: Jennifer Pharr Davis shares how her experiences in nature - from setting the Appalachian Trail Record to Backpacking while Pregnant - have transformed her life (15 min video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX5VsY-29r0&feature=youtu.be>
- Tennessee's Treetop Skywalk is the Longest Tree-Based Bridge in North America!: <https://tinyurl.com/yyk9ar85>

The Alaska Trails board meets via teleconference the first Tuesday of every other month from 5-7pm. If you want to hear more about Alaska trail topics, share trail information, or propose a trail project, join us. 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