

## Alaska Trails Initiative

# Reserving Trails on State Land

- Issues, Challenges & Opportunities
- Options for Improvements

### ***Panelists:***

AK Dept of Natural Resources NRO AJ Wait; SCRO Jay Rokos

Bryant Wright – Fairbanks North Star Borough

Trena Haugen – Denali Borough

George Hoden – Matanuska Susitna Borough

Michael Downs – NPS, Rivers Trails Conservation

Facilitator Chris Beck, AK Trails Initiative

**Land Management Forum November 29, 2020**



## Trail Reservations Agenda

### 1. Brief intro – 5 minutes

- Alaska Trails Initiative/Trails Investment Strategy
- Why Focus on Trails Reservations?

### 2. Experiences/Examples from Trail Advocates 10 mins

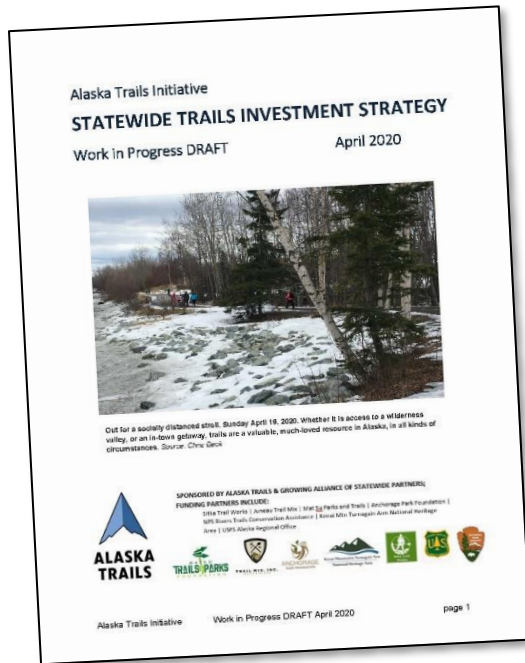
- Fairbanks, Mat Su, Denali Boroughs
- Statewide – NPS Rivers Trails, Conservation Assistance

### 3. DNR Reservations System: Today/Going Forward 15 mins

- Existing reservation process, tools
- Emerging options

### 4. Group Discussion: Steps Towards Improvements 15 mins

# Partner-Driven Priorities – in two categories



See the full document at  
<https://www.alaska-trails.org/alaska-trails-initiative>



## Alaska Trails Initiative

# STATEWIDE TRAILS INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Work in Progress Draft April 2020



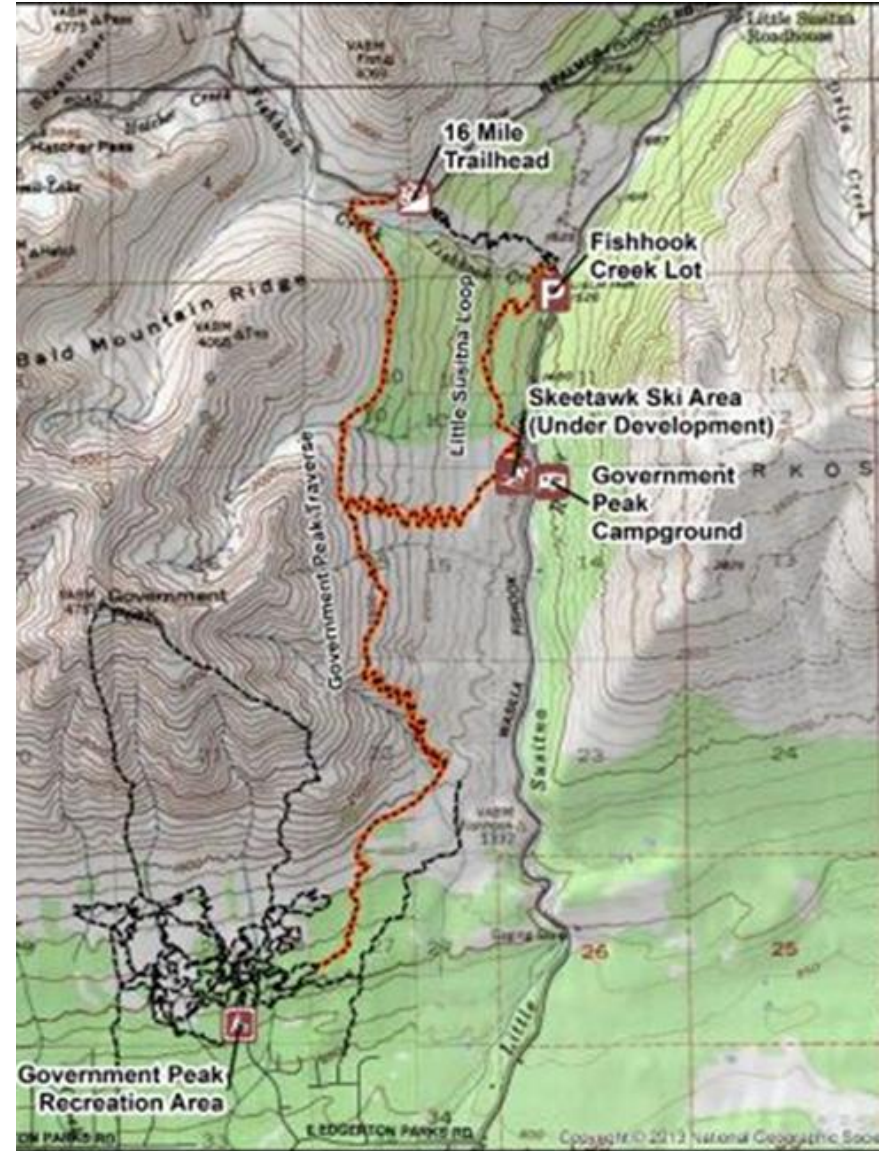


# Trails Investment Strategy – Specific Projects



## Government Peak Traverse and Little Susitna Loop

- Connect popular, expanding recreation destinations
- Preliminary estimated cost: \$1M



# Trails Investment Strategy – Statewide Policies

Alaska Trails Initiative

Work in Progress Draft April 2020

Page 1

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS** *ACTIONS TO IMPROVE TRAILS AND GROW THE ALASKA ECONOMY*

This Chapter focuses on specific tools and policies that will facilitate the implementation of the projects presented in this document. By bringing together multiple agencies and stakeholders, we can increase the investments needed to better attract and retain residents, give visitors reasons to spend “one more day” in Alaska, and build a stronger, more durable Alaska economy while taking greater advantage of the potential economic benefits of outdoor recreation.

**1. Invest strategically for greatest impact**

- expand Fall/Winter/Spring opportunities - grow more year-round jobs
- focus on adventures for the “missing middle”
- create world class “long trails”
- develop better gateway towns
- provide “must see” high volume outdoor recreation destinations
- invest in a “bigger pie” for all tourism sectors

**2. Spread the benefits**

- improve trails in all regions of Alaska
- improve all kinds of trail-based activities – motorized & non, summer & winter, resident and visitor

**3. Stabilize and expand resources for trails & outdoor recreation**

- expand, maximize use & leverage of established federal outdoor rec funds (e.g., RTP)
- expand state & federal agency funding for operations and maintenance
- take advantage of bills pending in Congress
- solve the “Alaska Disconnect” – link growing demand for services with growing revenues
- develop partnerships to build & maintain trails

**4. Streamline authorizations for public land use**

- simplify trails approval regulatory process
- speed process for securing trails on state land
- expand options for commercial uses of trails

**5. Improve marketing and user information**

- take greater advantage of existing outdoor recreation resources
- provide the full spectrum of user info: website, visitor info centers, maps, signage

**6. Political power and Leadership**

- establish a state office of Outdoor Recreation
- continue to bring in new partners

**7. Relentlessly make the case for all the benefits of trails**

- collect better data, focused on the link between investments, use, economic impact
- include in & out of state recreation spending

**8. Include outdoor recreation in “working landscapes”**

- incorporate recreation into forestry, other active land uses

**9. Actively guide growth through Management/ Stewardship**

“These days, no place stays special by accident”

- invest in sustainable trail design, routes, construction
- “curate” recreation resources – actively, strategically plan for growth, maximize recreation values
- provide for a range of experiences, from intense and busy, to peaceful and little used
- include affected users, communities in planning

These recommendations are discussed in more detail on the following pages. We want to discuss these initial ideas with everyone who cares about Alaska’s future, and work together to refine and implement these strategies.

- “Speed process for securing trails on state land”

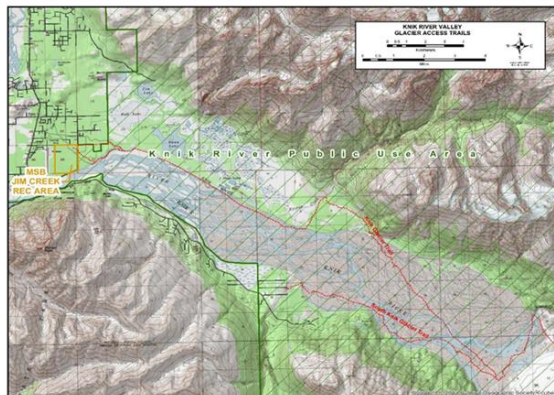
# 1. Why Focus on Trails Reservations?

**“The future of many of Alaska’s favorite, most used trails is blowing in the wind...” (Bob Dylan)**

1. Forces clarity (to different degrees in different settings) regarding routes, land ownership, land-owner approval
2. Basis for trail investments, marketing, trail system connectivity; protects trails/trail use into the future
3. Process for reserving trails on State of AK land could be improved; it has often been slow, costly, frustrating. Why?
  - *Issues with DNR side*: limited staff, limited regulatory tools, backlog of applications, costly survey requirements
  - *Issues on the applicant side*: lack of capacity, lack of knowledge about process



## 2. Experiences and Examples from Trail Advocates



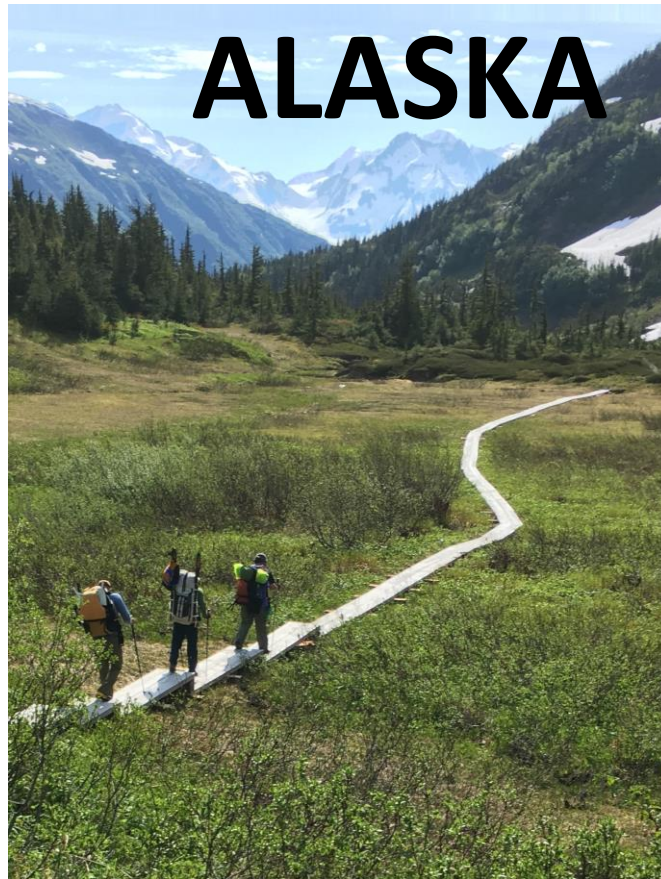
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# ALASKA

# LONG TRAIL

A trail reservations case study in the making





# **3. DNR Trails Reservations System: Today/Going Forward**

## **1. Intro to DNR Regional Office responsibilities**

## **2. Trails Reservations Program/Processes Today:**

- Easements, Rights of Way, Permits..
- Application processes – timelines, challenges
- Surveys

## **3. Emerging options**

- Special Land Use Permit

## **4. Possible Next Steps**

- 1. Testing & refining special land use permit process**
- 2. Information piece for applicants?**
- 3. Options for alternative forms of surveys?**
- 4. Informal Trail Reservations Working group?**
- 5. What else?**





# Alaska Trails Initiative

## How do we make progress?

## How can we work together?

Ways to support Alaska Trails and the Long Trail:

Volunteer with our [Alaska Trail Stewards](#)

Trails Initiative: **send us your ideas!**

[www.alaska-trails.org/alaska-trails-initiative](http://www.alaska-trails.org/alaska-trails-initiative)



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