



NEWSLETTER

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2021

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www.alaska-trails.org

ALASKA TRAILS NEWS AND NOTICES

FORMER GOV KNOWLES TAKES LONG TRAIL LEADERSHIP POST

Since the inception of the Alaska Long Trail, former Governor Tony Knowles has been a champion for the effort. He has lent his voice and pen to help publicize our efforts and has rolled up his sleeves to help plan the next steps for the Long Trail. That effort became even more official in January when Alaska Trails named Tony Knowles as the chair of the Advisory Group for the Alaska Long Trail Project. Alaska Trails is grateful for his inspiration, experience and leadership and we are looking forward to making great progress on this exciting project in 2021 and beyond.

Alaska Trails Board President Libby Kugel summed it up well.

“We couldn’t ask for a more dedicated or capable person to lead our efforts to link up some of Alaska’s finest trails into a system that will enable both Alaskans and visitors to see more of our great state via great trails,” Kugel said. “Gov. Knowles is focused on using his years of experience to help with this unique project. We are very grateful.”

To read more about the Alaska Long Trail see: www.alaska-trails.org/the-alaska-long-trail

Photo courtesy of Tony Knowles: At the top of Grandview on his way up to McHugh Peak



ALASKA TRAILS WELCOMES HALEY JOHNSTON TO OUR TEAM

Haley Johnston joined the staff of Alaska Trails in January 2021 as the Tongass National Forest



Sustainable Trail Strategy Project Manager. Haley comes to Alaska Trails with extensive experience in outdoor recreation as a long-time wilderness guide and outdoor educator. She also brings significant nonprofit expertise having served on several nonprofit and citizen advisory boards and working as the Business Specialist at the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage.

Haley passionately believes recreation is critical to the quality of life in Alaska, the mental health of our communities and the resilience of the Alaskan economy. Haley spends her non-working hours trail running, backpacking, Nordic skiing, packrafting and backcountry skiing with her partner, friends and dog.

Photo courtesy of Haley Johnston

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST, LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

Our work on the Sustainable Trails Strategy for the Tongass National Forest is continuing. In December, we completed the first stage of the project, working with ranger districts to create a preliminary trails inventory for the forest. Next step is the selection of half of the Tongass National Forest locations where community engagement work will take place in 2021 in order to initiate and/or continue building TNF partnerships with local stakeholders. If you would like to learn more about this work, please send us an email at mariyam.medovaya@alaska-trails.org or call 907-360-9950.

ALASKA TRAIL SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR SUMMER FIELD SEASON

APPLY Alaska Trails is seeking a Trails Technician who will spend 10 weeks directly supervising the Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) program and several weeks in preparation.

Work sites include trails managed by various land managers in the Anchorage area. The Trails Technician may also coordinate other trail projects, recruiting and training volunteers and developing partnerships with land managers.

Alaska Trails is also seeking two Trail Crew Leaders to train, direct and supervise one of two proposed, paid Trail Crews. The crews will be conducting trail projects done by one of two trail crews and volunteers through the Alaska Trail Stewards program. The Crew Leaders will also help train and supervise volunteers to conduct trail maintenance projects through the Alaska Trail Stewards program.

All three positions are seasonal - May - September full-time (40 hrs. per week plus, Monday-Friday, with some weekends). More details and application instructions are at: www.alaska-trails.org/jobs

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS FOR THE 2021 TRAILS CONFERENCE

SUBMIT Alaska Trails is seeking proposals for presentations and workshops for the Annual Trails Conference that showcase best practices in trail construction, trail maintenance, economic development, volunteers, trail design, partnerships, trail benefits and trail-related policy. Help make the conference a great kick-off for the 2021 trail season – and beyond! Send your ideas with “2021 Trails Conference Presentation” in the subject line to office@alaska-trails.org.

And remember to save the date for the conference, which will happen April 15-17. Whether it happens in-person or on-line, we are grateful to have your participation!



HELP NEEDED FOR ALASKA LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

ADVOCATE The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program that provides 1:1 matching funds to states and local and tribal governments to invest in outdoor recreation – \$3.5M is expected for Alaska in 2021.



Unfortunately, Alaska is lagging behind with acceptance of a total of \$3.4M in LWCF funds for the past two fiscal years. Funds that are not accepted within three years of their allocation are sent back to the federal pool. The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR), under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), submitted budget requests for LWCF funds for 2019, 2020, and 2021. Fortunately, these requests are included in the Governor Dunleavy’s DNR Supplemental Budget (FY2021) and DNR Capital Budget (FY2022). And that’s how you can help.

Once the legislature finalizes its leadership structure, advocates will need to urge legislators to approve these budgets and not let millions of potential trail funds go back to the federal pool. Meanwhile, if you have the chance for an informal conversation with legislator who you believe is sympathetic, please

use the linked information to help them better understand the issues and benefits for securing LWCF dollars.

To find out how you can help see: <https://www.alaska-trails.org/funding-for-trails>

FUNDS FROM CARES ACT BENEFITED TRAILS, YOU, ALASKA TRAILS

In July 2020, the State of Alaska set aside \$35 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to specifically support nonprofits in Alaska adversely affected by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) partnered with The Alaska Community Foundation to establish the Coronavirus Nonprofit Relief Fund (CNRF) with the set-aside funding. A total of \$47 million in CNRF grants has now been awarded to 256 organizations statewide. Alaska Trails was one of the grateful recipients of that funding for this project.



The dual goals of the project were to employ young people during the COVID-19 pandemic and produce a video that would introduce the next generation to trail work careers. The video was produced by Alaska Geographic and in partnership with us and other organizations dedicated to the next generation of trail stewards: the Anchorage Park Foundation, the Student Conservation Association and AK Geo.

View the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvP1p3Ct3C8>

VIRTUAL RACE ACROSS ALASKA HELPS YOU, ALASKA LONG TRAIL

SIGN UP It's not too late to sign up for the Virtual Race Across Alaska Winter Challenge! You can run, walk, bike, xc ski or swim. The challenge ends March 20. Join over 1,000 Alaskans in the BEST winter motivation in exercise! The challenge is also a fundraiser for the Alaska Trails development of the Alaska Long Trail! For every racer that participates, \$10 will be donated to Alaska Trails, plus racers can donate additional funds to support the development of the Alaska Long Trail.



The challenge will have occasional pop-up Zoom and/or Zwift free workouts for anyone in the Facebook Race Across Alaska Group:

www.facebook.com/groups/824863588292365

To register and find out more see: www.raawc.com/Race/AK/Anchorage/AlaskaChallenge

USE "PICK. CLICK. GIVE." TO DONATE TO ALASKA TRAILS

DONATE Alaska Trails is included in the Permanent Fund Dividend's "Pick. Click. Give" charitable contributions program. It's a secure and easy way to make a donation. When you file for your PFD online, you will be given an opportunity to donate using money from your PFD. If you do, please remember Alaska Trails.



If you use "Pick. Click. Give" you will be able to check a box that authorizes the state to send your name, contact information and the amount you give when it sends contributions to an organization. We want to acknowledge and recognize your generous support, and this is the only way we will know it's you making the gift.

For more information on "Pick. Click. Give" (www.pickclickgive.org/). To go directly to the Alaska Trails "Pick. Click. Give." page click here:

www.pickclickgive.org/index.cfm/pfdorgs.info/Alaska-Trails

TRAILBOUND ALASKA INCLUDES PART OF ALASKA LONG TRAIL

DONATE Max Romey is seeking donations for his project Trailbound Alaska, which highlights some of Alaska's trails and the stories found along them. Much of the route of the Alaska Long Trail is included in this venture.

Read more about the project here and how to support it: <http://maxromeyproductions.com/trailboundalaska>

SEEN RECENTLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

APPLY Jan 19: Alaska Trails is looking forward to another great summer with YEP! Know any teens who will be looking for a fun and rewarding job? Please pass this on!

Shared from

Youth Employment in Parks

Jan 18: The Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) 2021 summer positions are now open! This is a great summer job for Anchorage teens ages 16-19 years old. Get paid to work outside, make lifelong friends, and have the best summer of your life.

Apply today!

YEP Crew Member Position (closes 3/10/2021): <https://tinyurl.com/y5wwij2n>

YEP Senior Crew Member Position (closes 3/10/2021): <https://tinyurl.com/yy7ajket>

YEP Crew Leader (closes 2/21/2021): <https://tinyurl.com/y2p9arut>

To learn more about YEP: <https://anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/youth-employment-parks/>

Jan 13: "During these unprecedented times, when so many people have turned to our parks and trails for exercise and as relief from isolation, it would be wise to start investing in our state and local parks, especially when we have available funding through the LWCF program."

<https://tinyurl.com/yymhjf9h>

Jan 12: It's #TrailheadTuesday! Today we're heading to the Chugach State Park Middle Fork Trail(s), home of the Dena'ina people. If you enjoy country ski touring in open, beautiful terrain, the middle Fork of Campbell Creek out of Glen Alps in Chugach State Park is a particularly enjoyable destination. A well-marked route branches of the Powerline trail, crosses the bridge over the South Fork of Campbell Creek, wraps around the end of the O'Malley ridgeline, and heads of the Middle Fork valley. It's the relatively rare example of an extensive, inviting place for exploring on the XC skis, with moderate terrain and great views up the valley, and out west and north to the distant Alaska Range. A classic bike ride for fat tire bikers is to climb up the South Rim Trail from Prospect to Glen Alps, and then follow the start of the Middle Fork trail back down to Prospect.



Jan 11: Executive Director Steve Cleary got to write a piece for KMTA - among many other good ones and the Haiku contest! Scroll down for Steve's "We Can All Use a Little Hope": <https://tinyurl.com/y66ec83j>

ALASKA TRAILS LINKS

- Group thinks long trail could be big asset for Alaska, communities: <https://tinyurl.com/y6fynew9>

STATEWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

2020 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM PROJECTS ANNOUNCED

The Recreational Trails Program has awarded matching funds for 23 trail projects in Alaska last year, with many projects underway or already completed. These are reimbursable, grant-funded projects happening throughout the state between 2020 and 2022. The total allocated for these projects is just over \$1.2 million.

To see the list of projects, go to: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trailsgrantpage/rectr2020.pdf>

The trails program is managed by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) and receives its funding for trails projects from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. For more information about the Recreational Trails Program, visit the program's website: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm>.

GROUP STARTS PROJECT TO TRACK PETS/TRAPPING INCIDENCES

The Alaska Wildlife Alliance has created a webpage for people to report pets caught in traps along trails.

The group, based in Anchorage, describes itself on its Facebook page: "Wildlife can't speak on their own behalf or share information about their lives and changing habitat. We must be their voice. Alaska Wildlife Alliance was founded in 1978 to do just that."

The page for reporting trapping incidences also has an explanation of the program:

Trapping occurs on many different lands across Alaska; state, federal, Native, and private lands all have different permissions and reporting requirements. Currently, there is no statewide data collection on incidental trap encounters, including information on how many pets are caught in traps, where most pet trappings occur, or areas where trail users see wildlife caught in traps. We seek to understand the dynamics between traps and trail users, as well as gauge Alaskans' perspective of traps near trails.

During the first year (2020-21 trapping season), we will collect information from the public and publish a report with the consolidated data. This information will help inform our work, and guide conversations with trappers, non-trappers, the Board of Game, municipal authorities, land managers and others. Thank you for sharing your experiences and perspective with us!

See the page here: <https://www.akwildlife.org/safetrails>

The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner recently did a story on the project: <https://tinyurl.com/y3q53yty>

ALLIANCE PLANS VIRTUAL OUTDOOR WEEK WITH LEGISLATURE

Alaska Outdoor Week Virtual Fly In March 1 - 5 AOA is making plans for its 4th Annual Alaska Outdoor Week Fly-In, our annual effort to educate legislators about the importance of the outdoor recreation economy and stakeholder priorities. From March 1 - 5, we plan to have virtual hearings with House and Senate Transportation and Natural Resources committees, virtual deskside visits, a legislative Lunch & Learn and more. Main themes include: making Alaska more bike and walk-friendly, winter recreation needs, and state investment in outdoor recreation infrastructure. For more information contact the Alaska Outdoor Alliance (leehartak@gmail.com).



From Alaska Outdoor Alliance blog post

FED AGENCY SEEKS GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR ACCESS PROJECTS

APPLY The project application period for Federal Lands Access Projects (FLAP) is now open through March 26. While non-profit organizations may not apply for projects, there are opportunities for local governments, including tribal entities to apply. There are potential opportunities for trail and trail related facilities. More information about the program and project eligibility can be found here:

<https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/programs-access/ak>

From Alaska Outdoor Alliance blog post

SATELLITE COMMUNICATION DEVICES REQUIRE REGULAR UPDATES

The Garmin inReach series of satellite communication devices is popular in Alaska with trail users. Several people have recently discovered that if you don't regularly "sync and update" your inReach, you can run into a variety of communication problems, such as messages going to the wrong people or not getting through at all. That is not something you want to find out in the field where you can't "sync and update." So, if you have an inReach make sure to regularly update it, especially before using it on a trip. One person who had problems received this message from Garmin:

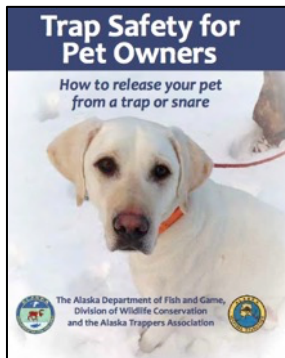


"In terms of due diligence for minimizing issues on future trips, we always encourage syncing the device and then testing it before heading out for the trip. You can verify your account has the correct contact information and test by sending a message, preset message, or using the 'Test' feature on the device itself."

Bikepacking.com recently did a review on the inReach Mini, with links at the bottom of the article to reviews of other devices: <https://bikepacking.com/plan/garmin-inreach-mini-review/>

RESOURCES HELP REDUCE PET/TRAPPING CONFLICTS

Trapping season is here, so trail users who let their dogs run loose should make sure they know some basic information about traps and trap lines. A pamphlet and videos are available.



PAMPHLET: A pocket-sized pamphlet titled "Trap Safety for Pet Owners" describes the types of traps and snares that may be encountered and provides illustrated instructions on how to free pets swiftly and safely. It is produced by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Alaska Trappers Association (ATA). Copies are available free of charge at department offices or may be viewed on the website at: <http://tinyurl.com/m6oulhk>. More information, including video footage featuring trap removal instructions, is found on the department's website at www.adfg.alaska.gov (see "Sharing the Trails" under the "Hunting > Trapping" dropdown menu), and on the ATA website (www.alaskatrappers.org).

VIDEO: The ATA also sells a 30-minute video, "Sharing Alaska's Trails," that includes information such as how to know if you are on a trap line, trap line safety, the physics of handling and opening traps and snares, and tips for first-aid for pets accidentally caught in traps. The video doesn't promote trapping but deals with the practicalities of sharing the trails. A three-minute excerpt of the DVD can be found on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jk242jZwEAQ). To order a copy of the DVD check the ATA store (www.alaskatrappers.org).



Most trapping seasons run from November 1 to the end of February, but the season for a few species lasts longer. Wolf traps could be active well into April.

SEEN RECENTLY ON STATEWIDE FACEBOOK PAGES

ALASKA HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Jan 24: Masking up while you're being active outside may seem unnecessary, but it's the safe and courteous thing to do if you are around others outside your household. Plus, it's a great way to keep your face warm. We share these trails, and together we can keep each other safe. Being outside around others is generally lower risk than being indoors. Masking up and physical distancing reduces risk even more. For up-to-date information on COVID-19 safety, visit covid19.alaska.gov.



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT - ALASKA

COMMENT January 7: The BLM is hosting six virtual public meetings for a Central Yukon draft plan and analysis that will guide BLM management of about 13 million acres, including the Dalton Highway utility corridor, for the next several decades.

The virtual meetings will be held **Feb. 2-4**. At the meetings you can learn more about the draft plan, ask questions, and provide comments to BLM.

Please note that **ADVANCE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED**. Details at <http://ow.ly/2IjB50D2WU4>

ALASKA OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

Jan 25: One of Alaska's savviest and most accomplished native-born adventurers, Luc Mehl, offers sage advice for a post-pandemic bucket list trip.

<https://mailchi.mp/7f40b247923d/the-brooks-range-a-how-to>

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Trailwork In Alaska — A Fun Summer Can Lead To An Exciting Career: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvP1p3Ct3C8

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- AOA 2020 Wins Fuel Momentum Heading into New Year: <https://tinyurl.com/ybns9tw>
- As pandemic-cooped crowds hit Alaska's backcountry, concerns grow about avalanche danger for all users: <https://tinyurl.com/yc8qtdko>
- Yakutat To Unimak: Hiker Recounts 2,500-Mile Alaska Traverse: <https://tinyurl.com/y2xmmcgq>
- New Alaska State Parks reservations website launches: <https://tinyurl.com/y3p4dfmz>
- State should support parks funding (ADN): <https://tinyurl.com/yymhjf9h>
- Fatbiking and Packrafting to Bristol Bay: <https://tinyurl.com/y2v4w45m>

SOUTHCENTRAL NEWS AND NOTICES

ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION ENCOURAGES COMMENTS, VOTES

Bike and Pedestrian Plan

COMMENT Help us shape the future of active transportation. Anchorage's Non-Motorized Plan highlights current and proposed pedestrian, bicycle, and trail networks to create an interconnected system for Anchorage residents. Check to see if your neighborhood connection is included and join Anchorage Park Foundation to advocate for safer connections along the Moose Loop and other critical walking, biking and rolling corridors. Submit public comments by March 5th. <https://www.anchoragenonmotorizedplan.com/>

We Need YOU

VOTE Our parks and trails have been there for us during this pandemic. But now they need us. We get the chance to invest in our community through the park and recreation bond in the March/April municipal election. Please contact us if you would like a Vote YES Park Bond Sign placed in your yard or to volunteer delivering signs: Diana@anchorageparkfoundation.org

From Anchorage Park Foundation newsletter

ANCHORAGE SEEKS INPUT ABOUT TRAIL USE DURING PANDEMIC

TAKE SURVEY Anchorage Parks and Recreation has launched a short survey to gather data related to recreation within parks, trails, and facilities managed by the department since the onset of COVID-19. This online survey will be available for completion through Friday, February 19, 2021.

"Our community's desire for healthy recreational outlets has been magnified since the start of the pandemic," said Parks and Recreation director Josh Durand. "The department continually strives to improve its services, and this survey is sure to provide valuable insight from a most unusual year."

The survey consists of a series of questions asking Anchorage residents to share where, when, and how they have utilized parks and trails after March 2020. Recent data from traffic counters placed at several popular areas in the municipality have indicated trail use is up, but department officials would like to capture a more detailed picture as a tool for future activities, services, and projects.

Those interested in completing the survey should be residents of Anchorage. All facility, park and trail users of any age are welcome to participate. The survey may be accessed via SurveyMonkey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/parks_covid); or on the Parks and Recreation website (www.muni.org/parks).

Anchorage Parks and Recreation and currently manages 10,946 acres of parkland and 250 miles of greenbelts throughout the municipality. It also manages 11 recreation centers and five pools. More information may be found on the department's website: www.Muni.org/parks.



From Anchorage Parks and Recreation press release

SEEN RECENTLY ON SOUTHCENTRAL FACEBOOK PAGES

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN PARKS

APPLY Jan 18: The Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) 2021 summer positions are now open! This is a great summer job for Anchorage teens ages 16-19 years old. Get paid to work outside, make lifelong friends, and have the best summer of your life. Apply today!

YEP Crew Member Position (closes 3/10/2021): <https://tinyurl.com/y5wwjj2n>

YEP Senior Crew Member Position (closes 3/10/2021): <https://tinyurl.com/yy7ajket>

To learn more about the YEP program visit: <https://tinyurl.com/y3g4nf34>

ALASKA STATE PARKS

Jan 23: This week was National "Get to know your customer" Day. Today, we're sending out a shout out to one such customer-turned-volunteer, Kevin Heck. Thank you for grooming ski trails around Nancy Lake SRA in the Mat-Su, helping us build even more users!

At #alaskastateparks, many of our customers are also our heroes! ...Making parks a better place for ALL. We have so many wonderful volunteers but are taking a few days to send our appreciation those around the state.



ANCHORAGE FAT BIKE

Jon Kunesh > Anchorage Fat Bike

January 7: A heads up to those who enjoy the trails in North Bivy. In response to fat bikers using the mushing trails, a couple of us did re-routes of a few trails that dumped riders directly onto the mushing trails. I hope this action does not spoil any "favorite rides" but the need to keep bikers off the mushing trails is the ultimate goal. New sections may be soft for a bit as it does take time for new trails to harden.

Jeremy Engeberg > Anchorage Fat Bike

January 3: Hey everyone, while so many in the community are awesome at understanding and complying with trail restrictions; we're having a lot of issues on the Alaskan Sled Dog & Racing Association mushing only trails. These trails are restricted to mushing only. These trails are privately maintained by the club members and the expense of that maintenance is covered by the members. These trails have been in use for mushing since the 50's. When multi-use trails became more congested in Anchorage, the city made an arrangement with the club to keep mushers off the multi-use trails for safety purposes. This arrangement designated the clubs current trail system to mushing only.

We're seeing an immense amount of traffic from fat bikers in particular riding on the mushing only trails and not yielding at mushing intersections. Most don't understand the harm from it, but it really does create a very dangerous situation. Imagine a dog team broadsiding a fat biker at a trail crossing while doing 20+ mph. That dog team cannot stop fast. It's likely that dogs will get seriously injured as well as the biker. Below is an encounter reported by a musher from this past week while running at night. Luckily this team was training for distance and was traveling at 8mph instead of the 20+mph that most are training at.

"You guys are wonderful at trail maintenance and the 100 [mile] run went great! We are enjoying the trails immensely. We only ran into one biker, head on, and I'm sure that person has a story they won't forget,..lol. I don't think he will venture on the trails again. He was coming up the hill as we were cresting it. He let out a low scream, crashed his bike, dragged it off to the side, fell over again.....as we

kindly let him know for his safety to stay off the mushing trails. Thank you again for everyone's hard work to make the trails awesome!!!"

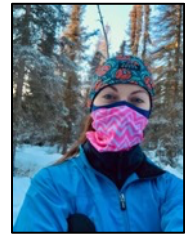
We get a lot of respect and support from this group, it is so appreciated by the mushers! We're hoping that as a community, that you all can help educate others that you see at mushing intersections or if you see others riding on the mushing only designated trails. Thank all of you for the support you have shown us!

ANCHORAGE PARKS AND RECREATION

Jan 19: We're proud of our Anchorage Parks and Recreation team for being part of Anchorage Health Department's #SmilesBehindTheMask!

Park planner Nicolette says: "Masks keep you cozy AND safe out on Anchorage's trails, especially in the winter!"

Access to parks and 250 miles of trails is one reason Nicolette loves living in Anchorage, her hometown. She wears a mask to make sure the outdoors remains a safe place for everyone to visit.



VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKERS AND HIKERS

Jan 22: VMBaH would like to thank Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation for awarding us a grant to buy our new groomer! Backcountry Bike & Ski has been generously loaning theirs for the past two winters and it's great to finally have our own!

We would also like to thank the Matanuska Susitna Borough for awarding us a grant to help offset the cost of grooming up at GPRA. It pays for fuel for volunteers personal snowmachines, which has been out of pocket expenses. The grant also paid for the widening of three bridges on Fireweed trail to make them safer to cross.

SOUTHCENTRAL LINKS

- 2020, A Year of Trails, Parks, and Outdoor Opportunity in the Mat-Su: <https://tinyurl.com/yyona7f8>
- **REPORT** Troopers request assistance following string of trailhead thefts (Mat-Su): <https://tinyurl.com/y6as5fco>
- 2 arrested in connection to 'massive amount of thefts' at Mat-Su trailheads: <https://tinyurl.com/y2y2cll9>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- **COMMENT** Anchorage MATS Non-Motorized Plan open for review until March 5: <https://tinyurl.com/y4zm7obe>
- Helm Given Mat-Su Trails and Parks 2020 Pathfinder Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yxh2zw9m>

INTERIORWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

STUDY DOCUMENTS TRAIL USE ON CREAMER'S FIELD REFUGE

The results of a study about winter trail use in Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge has been completed.

Data for the study was collected from November 2019 to April 2020. The study was conducted to help with management of the Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge and because "some interactions

among public user groups have become tense in recent years.” However, the study was done solely to collect information about trail use and not to determine “if there are issues or user conflict.”

Ryan Klimstra, a wildlife biologist with the refuge, also pointed out that the study captured only one winter season.

“We may continue this project in the future in an effort to better inform the next Management Plan for the refuge, which is sorely overdue,” Klimstra wrote in an email.

The study used about 20 game trail cameras throughout the refuge that cover approximately 90 percent of refuge trail segments. Steps were taken to avoid individual identification of trail users in order to protect people’s privacy. Each camera lens was covered by a plastic baggie that had been colored with a marker. At the time of the study, signs were placed at several places around the refuge to let people know about it.

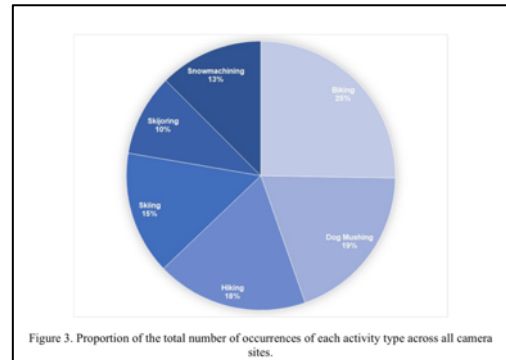
The study was run in part by Shelby McCahon a senior in Wildlife Biology and Conservation at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), as part of her studies at UAF. The research was funded by UAF’s One Health Program.

It is interesting to note that while most of the trails included in the study are groomed by the Alaska Dog Musher’s Association, the highest number of users were bikers. Musher’s were second, with hiking, skiing, snowmachining, and skijoring following in descending order. (However, the study does not appear to distinguish between grooming done with a snowmachine and other snowmachine use.)

See the full study at: <https://tinyurl.com/yyf35k8g>

For more information contact 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>



SHRINKING BUDGETS AFFECTING WINTER CHENA RIVER SRA TRAILS

Budget woes are hitting winter trails in the Chena River State Recreation Area.

The recently finished Mastodon Trail is still being blocked by blowdowns from fire-killed trees. Many trees were removed by volunteers led by Tom Paragi (see story in November 2020 edition), but more continue to fall. In addition, original plans were to groom the trail occasionally in the winter. Unfortunately, that can’t happen with the blowdowns and lack of sufficient staff. The state Department of Parks and Recreation has been feeling the effects of the shrinking state budget, which means a smaller staff for each region. Smaller staffs mean the departments are hit even harder when a staff member leaves a position, creating a vacancy that must be filled and then that person trained. Still, Ian Thomas, superintendent of the northern region, is somewhat optimistic.



“I hope to get ahead of the blockages this summer with the goal being to keep the Mastodon groomed if possible,” he said. “Our goal is to have the Mastodon Trail cleaned up and in good shape by fall of 2021 and the Mastodon Cabin finished so we can groom the trail and have that section of the CRSRA fully functioning.”

Winter grooming of all the rec area’s trails has also been hit by a shrinking budget, though through a different mechanism. The Snowmobile Trails Program, which is funded mostly by fees from snowmobile

registrations, provides funds for grooming of snowmobile trails, though that grooming benefits all users. Funding for the program has been declining over the years, because snowmobile registrations have been declining, but the northern region was hit particularly hard this year.

“Over the last 10 years or so our SnoTrac award has ranged from 8 to sometimes even 10 or 11k on a good year,” Thomas said. “This year we got just over 3k which isn’t enough to put a viable contract out. We’re using the money to maintain our snowmachines and groomers and doing what we can to groom the major accesses to cabins. We should be able to do a bit more as March approaches and we get one more employee hired.”

Photo by Eric Troyer: Corrine Leistikow riding the Mastodon Trail in November 2019.

COMMISSION TO HOLD WORK SESSION ON TRAILS PLAN UPDATE

The Trails Advisory Commission (TAC) of the Fairbanks North Star Borough will be holding a work session on February 8 regarding an update of the borough’s Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan.

The meeting starts at 5 p.m. and the work session is to start at or after 6 p.m. This will be a Zoom meeting and the public is invited to attend.

R&M Consultants has been hired to help with the update. The trails plan has been in need of an overhaul for a long time. The Trails Advisory Commission has been trying to tackle that job, but it’s a big lift. Money for the plan update is coming from a federal grant.

See the TAC meeting agenda here (includes information on how to join the meeting):

<https://tinyurl.com/y4el5q6o>

See more about R&M Consultants here: <https://www.rmconsult.com/>

WALK OF LIGHTS OFFERED ALONG DELTA’S LIEWER TRAIL

Enjoy the glow of winter along the Liewer Community Trail for DJTA’s annual Walk of Lights February 13 from 6 to 9 pm.

Let your own lights shine or follow the candle-lighted trail through the woods. Social pets on leash are welcome. This year we encourage staggered timing and selfie photos, so sign in at the kiosk any time from dark (6) to about 8:15. No restrooms available. Make sure you have a headlamp or flashlight and are dressed in lights for fun!

FAIRBANKS PARKS AND REC TRAILS CHALLENGE UPDATED

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department has got everything up and running for its Winter Trails Challenge.

The last sign, on the Stiles Creek Trail, has been put up and the event guidebook has been updated and its size reduced, which is much appreciated by all those with slower internet connections. (Please note that at last check while the official checklist on page 8 of the guide has the Stiles Creek Trail as trail #18, the graphic on the last page had Angel Creek Hillside Trail listed as trail #18. Trails Coordinator Bryant Wright is aware of that mistake and plans to fix it.)

The sign list was revealed in late December for this popular ongoing event, which is free and open to anyone. Participants have until April 30 to find at least 10 Trails Challenge signs hidden around local trail systems and share their photos with each sign.

This winter’s challenge features trails at local recreation areas including Birch Hill, Tanana Lakes, Chena Lake, Skyline Ridge Park, Pearl Creek Nordic Ski Park and more. Five of the trails are ski only, and several are non-motorized, but six are motorized, multi-use, so there is something for everyone.



Anyone can participate by finding the Trails Challenge signs and sharing their photos on social media using the hashtag “#fnsbtrails” or by emailing their photos to parks@fnsb.us. Anyone who finds at least 10 signs will receive the Trailblazer Award and be entered in a prize drawing. Participants under age 10 need to find at least 5 signs to win the Junior Trailblazer Award.

For more information on this year’s challenge, see:

- Trails Challenge page at <https://tinyurl.com/y8mlkkuv>
- Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2687304928198988/>
- Winter Trails Challenge Guide : <https://tinyurl.com/y5lmy2mr>

Photo of Bernie Sanders from Winter Trails Challenge Facebook page.

DELTA TRAILS GROUP HOLDS FIRST DAY EVENT DESPITE PANDEMIC

The Delta Junction Trails Association held a successful, COVID-friendly First Day Event at Quartz Lake State Recreation Area on January 1. Here’s a report from Mindy Eggleston:

The morning of January 1, 2021, was -12 at Little Lost Lake at the Quartz Lake State Recreation Area, Delta Junction. Delta Junction Trails Association (DJTA) partnering with Alaska State Parks hosted their 9th annual Farthest North 1st Day Hike, Ski & Snowshoe event. The moon hung in the pink sky over the far end of the lake. It was dead calm; an amazing cherished stillness was in the air. DJTA Board members & Scout Troop # 56 were busy setting 3 campfires and laying out the event info & ice candles on the picnic tables adjacent to the lake. Elin Hicks worked her magic and positioned 16 tree people along the groomed trail to Moose Pond! As temperatures rose throughout the day to a balmy +4, 89 participants signed in throughout the 4-hour event. Walking on the lake also provided plenty of open space. It truly looked like everyone was happy to have a healthy yet social event to start 2021! HAPPY NEW YEAR everyone.



For a Fairbanks Daily News-Miner story of the event see: <https://tinyurl.com/y22ht2qm>

Photo by Paul Alsted: Joann Singer (left) and Mary Ann Czmer at the First Day event.

SEEN RECENTLY ON INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

ALASKA STATE PARKS

Jan 22: Yesterday was National "Get to know your customer" Day. Today, we're sending out a shout out to one such user-turned-volunteer, Tom Paragi. Tom and a dedicated group of friends and fat-bikers have tirelessly worked to clear the non-motorized Mastodon Trail in Chena River SRA, left largely impassable due to fire-killed blowdowns following the 2019 fire season!

At #alaskastateparks, many of our customers are also our heroes! ...Making parks a better place for ALL of our customers. We have so many wonderful volunteers but are taking a few days to appreciate a handful of helpers around the state.

FAIRBANKS TRAIL USERS

Simon Mcloughlin

Jan 26: Recently some trail users have come across traps placed in a near trail that have placed other users and their dogs in danger.

Below is current head of Alaska trappers associations advice to trappers regarding other trail users.

Be an ethical trapper -- Conduct your trapping activities in compliance with the highest ethical standards. Every year, we have to deal with incidents where traps are set in inappropriate places. Those incidents give every trapper a black eye in the view of the general public and eat up a tremendous amount of our time and energy. Be sure that you aren't one of the trappers causing these problems. In addition, help us police the ranks. If you know of a trapper who is skirting the edge of legality or you learn of a trap placed in a heavily-used area, then please intercede on behalf of ATA. Don't take the trap. Don't yell at the trapper. Just step in and try to rectify the situation in a professional manner.

We all want to see trapping continue on into the indefinite future. You can help that vision be a reality by investing a little time and effort into making ATA a bigger, better, stronger organization. It will pay dividends in the long run.

Jan 11: There have been some discussions in a variety of places about trail users bringing along their unleashed or otherwise unrestrained dogs on trails. The Fairbanks borough "leash law" is often brought up, but people seem to have differing ideas about what it actually says. I've dug into the law and written a post trying to better explain it. I realize this information won't solve the conflicts that sometimes arise, but I hope people will at least have accurate information.

<https://www.interioralaskatrails.org/2021/01/11/dogs-on-trails-fairbanks-leash-law/>

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH PARKS & REC

Jan 22: The freshly groomed trails are waiting for YOU! There are lots of paths to choose at Chena Lake Recreation Area:

-The River Park trails are a non-motorized area, with several loops ranging in length from 1.5 kilometers to 5.5 kilometers. Authorized uses include skiing, fat biking, ski jor, hiking and dog walking. A Winter Trails Challenge sign can be found on the 2.5-kilometer cutoff.

-Mike Agbaba Multiuse Trail: All sections of the trail are firm, and passable for walkers. Have a hike and look for the Winter Trails Challenge sign on the 5-mile loop.

-Other groomed trails in the park include a loop around the Lake Park Day Use Field, the Lake Park Peninsula Maintenance Trail, and Camp Loop #2 in the River Park.

"Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt."

-John Muir
(Or SNOW!)

Which path will YOU choose?

For updates on all of our trails and outdoor rinks, please visit the Trails Condition Report on our website!

<https://fairbanksak.myrec.com/info/facilities/details.aspx?FacilityID=14968>

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- Quartz Lake trail easement and land management amendment application: <http://notice.alaska.gov/201020>
- Ester Dome loops are great for a short hike (FDNM): <https://tinyurl.com/y4ez3v2s>
- Fatbiking trips in the White Mountains National Recreation Area
 - First Cabin Trip of 2021: <https://tinyurl.com/y9wgnlo7>
 - Whites Loop: <https://tinyurl.com/yxh45owz>
 - Fun at Wolf Run - Doctor's Orders: <https://tinyurl.com/y4mni8rt>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Parcel is Puzzle Piece That Fills in Conserved Land (Fairbanks): <https://tinyurl.com/yys8w2k9>
- Bureau of Land Management to hold public meetings on resource management plan for Central Yukon region (FDNM): <https://tinyurl.com/y4sg5u98>

SOUTHEAST NEWS AND NOTICES

SEEN RECENTLY ON SOUTHEAST FACEBOOK PAGES

TRAIL MIX, INC.

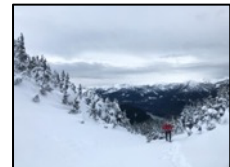
COMMENT Jan 27: Blackerby Ridge is a favorite for many hikers, climbers, and other alpine enthusiasts. The trail going up there? That's another story.

The calf-busting hike rises 1,500 ft in just 3 miles and the steep grade makes this trail susceptible to erosion. In December, storm damage washed out huge sections of the trail.

We are investigating how to improve access to the Ridge and its awe-inspiring views by talking with trail users, those who live near the trailhead, and of course, working with our partners at Juneau Parks & Recreation. This work also includes field research, and here Kate is exploring a possible alternate route.

If you frequent Blackerby Ridge and have thoughts, we'd love to hear from you. Send us a message!

Info on the trail: <https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/alaska/blackerby-ridge-trail>



Jan 15: You all showed up for Treadwell Ditch! 🙌🙌🙌

We are absolutely floored by the response to the Treadwell Ditch Trail Renovation Project. We needed your help to raise the remaining funds to fully restore all 14 miles, and not only did we meet our goal, but we exceeded it by over \$10,000. 🤯

Why is this such a big deal? Trail Mix has been working on improvements to Treadwell Ditch since 2010, but it's been piecemeal. This will allow us to execute a plan for the whole trail, ensuring a comprehensive and consistent restoration. The difference between ad hoc improvements and a holistic vision can't be understated.

Thank you all for supporting us to do our best work. We are so privileged to serve this community.



JUNEAU PARKS & RECREATION

January 7: The public can start reserving the new Amalga Cabin online (bit.ly/registerCBJparks) on Monday, January 11 at 12 p.m. The first available day for reservation is Friday, January 15. Amalga Cabin, which overlooks Eagle Harbor, is an easy 15-minute walk from the Eagle Valley Center and connects to the Boy Scout Beach trail. Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis and can be made up to three months in advance. Cost is \$75/day plus tax. Guests may reserve a maximum of three consecutive days. Use of the cabin is by reservation only.

Recently we moved to a new online registration system (bit.ly/registerCBJparks). Those interested in reserving this cabin are strongly encouraged to set up an account – if you haven't already done so –



in advance of cabin reservations opening up on January 11. There's a chance you may already have an account if you've done business with Parks & Recreation before. Try logging into the new system by using your email and your old eTrak password.

Construction was made possible by dozens of volunteers, COVID-19 Conservation Corps crews, and CBJ staff. Major funding for the project was provided by the Juneau Park Foundation and the Rasmuson Foundation. More details on Amalga Cabin, including rental rules, how to get there, and what to bring, are available on the Amalga Cabin webpage (bit.ly/AmalgaCabin).

For more information, contact us at 586-5226. To reserve the cabin starting on January 11 at 12 p.m., go to bit.ly/registerCBJparks.

CLEAN UP January 5: Dog poop doesn't go together well with any form of precipitation. Rain doesn't magically melt the poop and hiding it with the snow isn't good for anyone or the environment. Experts even say, "leftover fecal matter gets more dangerous the longer it festers." Sadly, we have had to temporarily close some parks when spring reveals all that has been left behind. Please help us keep the parks and trails open; remember a bag and clean up after your pets this winter.



SITKA TRAIL WORKS, INC.



Jan 26: We're making great progress on the new Cross Trail extension! We've constructed 68% of Phase 6 from Harbor Mountain Road to Starrigavan, but still have to build the bridge across Watlacheix'k'i Heen (No Name Creek).

Thanks for all the enthusiastic support and thanks for respecting the very active construction site. Trail foreman Troy Bayne is regularly running large gravel trucks and heavy machinery, so please be cautious and don't walk up the trail yet.

SOUTHEAST LINKS

- Sitka Cycling Club releases results of mountain bike trail plan survey: <https://tinyurl.com/yyls9fm4>
- Sitka Cycling Club CCC Constructing New Spur of MTB Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/y6cwp898>

NATIONWIDE NEWS AND NOTICES

COALITION ANNOUNCES RTP ANNUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT), a federation of national and regional trail-related organizations, is pleased to announce its 2020 Achievement Awards to recognize outstanding trail projects funded by the national Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

Twelve trail projects and programs have been chosen by the Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) as recipients of its 2020 Tom Petri Recreational Trails Program Annual Achievement Awards. The awards – honoring former U.S. Representative Tom Petri (WI) – recognize outstanding use of Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds. These projects will be honored at a live virtual ceremony on October 22 with participation by award recipients and key trails champions, including Members of Congress.

See the list of awardees at: www.americantrails.org/communications/awards/crt-annual-achievement-awards-2020

From American Trails webpage

REGISTER NOW FOR VIRTUAL HIKE THE HILL 2021

REGISTER In 2021, due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, trail organizations and partners from across the nation will come together VIRTUALLY to advocate for legislation, learn about new policies, and meet with federal partners, elected officials and their staff, and fellow trail organizations. Join American Hiking Society and the Partnership for the National Trails System for this annual event, which will be held March 8-26, 2021. Find out more at: <https://americanhiking.org/advocacy/#hike-the-hill>

From American Hiking Society's Paperless Trail

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

- Clif Bar Family Foundation grants (for groups, projects; ddline **Feb 1**, June 1, Oct 1): <http://tinyurl.com/y5es3wjc>
- Polaris T.R.A.I.L.S. grants (ATV trail projects; due **March 1**): <https://tinyurl.com/y49dxbhe>

VOLUNTEER

- American Hiking Society: 2021 Volunteer Vacations and COVID-19 Update: <https://tinyurl.com/y3nr9a4o>
- Conservation International (January newsletter): <https://tinyurl.com/y593xnj9>

HEALTH

- Design for Understanding: Protecting Trail Users in the Time of Covid-19: <https://tinyurl.com/y54e2kh6>
- Why 30 Minutes of Nature a Day Is So Good for Your Health: <https://tinyurl.com/y69aswpm>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- The U.S. Is Building a Bike Trail That Runs Coast-to-Coast Across 12 States: <https://tinyurl.com/y4phcat3>
- Nature Valley, National Parks Partner to Restore Trails: <https://tinyurl.com/y6hj272f>
- How Collaboration Achieved Results In Idaho: <https://tinyurl.com/y23y8rvs>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Within Weakness (video about hiking with cerebral palsy): www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_tNXjeKlaQ

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 seven days before the first of the month. Send stories to Editor Eric Troyer at fbxtrails@gmail.com