



CONFERENCE

AGENDA

THURSDAY APRIL 15th 1:15-1:45pm

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Senator Lisa Murkowski

\$1.9 Trillion COVID Relief Bill – What It Means for Investments in Alaska’s Trails, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure & Economy

WEDNESDAY APRIL 14TH

10:00am – 11:00am — The National Digital Trails Network – Connecting Trails to expand recreational opportunities on public lands

The National Digital Trails Network project was developed in response to the Department of Interior’s (DOI’s) vision to expand recreational opportunities on the Nation’s public lands. Our Nation is home to a vast network of recreational trails traveled by millions of citizens. The trails are managed by numerous organizations and jurisdictions and do not form a coherent, connected network. The overall objectives of this project are to provide data and tools to enable land managers to visualize opportunities to increase the connectivity within this network. This session will provide an overview of the project and demonstration of the Trail Routing, Analysis, and Information Linkage System (TRAILS) application, followed by discussion and information on how attendees can participate in the project.

Presenters: Elizabeth McCartney, USGS - National Digital Trails Project Manager
Tatyana Dimascio – USGS - National Digital Trails Project, Senior Technical Lead

1:00 – 3:00 – Effective Communication of Leave No Trace - Tools for Protecting Alaska’s Trails

Join one of the Subaru/Leave No Trace Teams for an overview of Leave No Trace principles, practices and ethics, including both the hows and whys behind the importance of practicing Leave No Trace. What we say is as important as how we say it, and effective communication is key to breaking down barriers to opposition and providing a space for visitors to feel receptive to our message. Discussion will include the Authority of the Resource Technique, a proven method of changing visitor behavior through deemphasizing regulation in favor of education about the natural world. Participants will learn ways to generate clear, succinct and focused

social and ecological reasons for visitors to engage in practices that help avoid impacts. This session is geared toward those with previous knowledge of Leave No Trace and who interact with park and public land visitors or engage in communications and messaging for the public. Those who are new to Leave No Trace or have not had Leave No Trace training in recent years are encouraged to review the Leave No Trace [Online Awareness Course](#) in advance.

Presenters: Erin Collier and Brice Esplin – Subaru / Leave No Trace Team Members

THURSDAY APRIL 15TH

10:00 – 12:00 - FROM PLANS TO SHOVEL READY PROJECTS – SETTING THE STAGE FOR TRAIL & OUTDOOR RECREATION INVESTMENTS

This year provides the opportunity – and in some cases, the requirement – for five major statewide/regional trail and outdoor recreation planning projects: the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), Alaska Long Trail, Alaska Trails Initiative, Tongass Sustainable Trails Plan, and the Alaska Outdoor Alliance. Rather than a series of what would be duplicative meetings, NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA), working with Alaska Trails, is bringing together *Regional Working Groups* to integrate these planning projects. This two-part session focuses on DOING THE WORK. The morning session introduces the five projects. This will be followed by a presentation of work in progress from representatives of the 20-person Statewide oversight team, and discussion of an initial draft of statewide outdoor recreation and trails goals and strategies. **Join these sessions if you want to affect decisions on priorities for trail and outdoor recreation investments all over Alaska!**

Presenters:

- Ricky Gease - Director, AK DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Chris Beck - Alaska Trails Initiative Coordinator
- Zach Babb - Program Manager - Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) - Alaska
- Reed Stoops – Alaska Long Trail Steering Committee
- Lee Hart - Founder, Alaska Outdoor Alliance
- Mariyam Medovaya - Alaska Trails Initiative Staff
- Haley Johnston - Tongass National Forest Sustainable Trail Strategy Project Manager
- Sharon Seim - Wilderness and Trails Program Manager, USFS Alaska Region
- John Suomala - Recreation, Trails & Wilderness Program Manager, Tongass National Forest
- SCORP Statewide Advisory Group representatives

=====

12:15 – 1:00pm LUNCH Keynote – Reimagining the CCC for Alaska's Future

During the COVID 19 pandemic, the City and Borough of Juneau and Trail Mix designed a program to put over 50 people back to work by building trails on public land. Join Ryan O'Shaughnessy and Kate McWilliams of Trail Mix for the story of Juneau's COVID Conservation Corps and its broad-ranging impacts. Ryan and Kate will discuss the inspiration, implementation, and lessons learned from this program, as well as a proposal to implement similar programs across the state.

Presenters: Ryan O'Shaughnessy – Executive Director, Trail Mix
Kate McWilliams – Alaska Fellow, Trail Mix

THURSDAY APRIL 15TH (continued)

1:00 – 3:30 FROM PLANS TO SHOVEL READY PROJECTS: REGIONAL WORKING GROUP BREAKOUTS

The session will break for the keynote address by Senator Lisa Murkowski:

1:15-1:45pm Senator Lisa Murkowski: \$1.9 Trillion COVID Relief Bill – What It Means for Investments in Alaska’s Trails, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure & Economy

This session will continue the work begun in the morning session. Participants will join working groups in one of eight regions through Zoom breakout rooms. The facilitated breakouts will include the individuals already involved in the process, plus other conference attendees. Breakout participants will make an initial pass at the two main topics to be addressed in each of the plans presented in the morning session: 1) regional trails/outdoor recreation trends, goals and strategies; and 2) initial illustrative examples of specific shovel-ready projects. After meeting in their respective breakout working groups, the entire group will reconvene to share results of the breakouts, including key regional goals and strategies, as well as examples of shovel ready projects. The session will conclude with next steps and ways for people/organizations to stay involved and guide this process as it continues over the coming months. Working Group Facilitators:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| • Seward/Girdwood/Kenai | Jessica Szelag – KMTA National Heritage Area |
| • Anchorage | Chris Beck/Ben Corwin – AK Trails/Chugach St Park |
| • Mat Su/Copper River | Wes Hoskins – Mat Su Trails & Park Foundation |
| • Denali | Trena Haugen/Clay Walker – Denali Borough |
| • Interior/Fairbanks | Bryant Wright – Fairbanks North Star Borough |
| • Southeast – north | Michele Elfers – City & Borough of Juneau, Parks |
| • Southeast – south | Kate Thomas – City of Wrangell, Parks |
| • Rural Alaska | Morgan Urquia – Rivers, Trails, Conservation Assistance |

3:30 – 5:00 – What it Costs vs. What is Available for Maintaining Public Trails, and a Start at Filling the Gap

This session will examine the challenges faced by Alaska land managers in completing maintenance on existing trails. A group of State land managers from different parts of Alaska will compare their current resources for completing maintenance against what might be considered an adequate level. The session will not be whine-fest – that’s justified, but not helpful. Instead, the goal is a dispassionate, factual look at the realities: what managers are currently lacking in terms of resources, the methods they are using to scrape by (e.g., RTP grant for a temporary trail crew instead of a permanent budgeted crew) and what they believe is needed to do the job right for the long term. This will help us better understand issues, trends, and provide a jumping off point for possible shared solutions. Following the presentations will be group questions and answer session between presenters and attendees. Our goal is that those who use and benefit from trails, and those that manage trails, might together identify some practical solutions, ranging from small technical “tricks of the maintenance trade”, to larger scale strategies to secure more funding.

Presenters: Stuart Leidner – State Park Superintendent, Mat-Su Valley and Copper River Basin
Tyler Glenn - Recreation Program Manager, Chugach National Forest
Tim Gurnett and Ben Corwin - Chugach State Park
AJ Wait – Natural Resource Manager - Alaska DNR, General use state lands

=====

FRIDAY APRIL 16TH

9:30 – 11:00 Funding Panel: Funding Options for Trails

How can land management agencies, local governments, outdoor recreation nonprofits, and trails interest groups tap into funding resources for building and maintaining trails? What are some funding strategies at the local and state levels? What are some sustained funding options versus one-time opportunities? Where does the funding come from and where to find it? Who is eligible to apply? These questions and more will be addressed during this session. A wide array of local, state, and federal funding strategies and sources will be presented and illustrated through a lens of successful examples of funded trail projects in Alaska.

Presenters: Chris Beck, Alaska Trails Initiative Coordinator
Steve Cleary, Executive Director, Alaska Trails
Ricky Gease, Director, AK DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Eric Phillips, Community Development Director at Mat-Su Borough
Genelle Winter, Director of Landscape and Maintenance, Metlakatla Indian Community
Maeve Nevins-Lavtar, Senior Park Planner, Anchorage Parks and Recreation
Ryan O’Shaughnessy – Executive Director, Trail Mix

11:15 – 12:15 COVID Pandemic highlights the important health benefits of trails

With the sudden absence of typical socialization and entertainment outlets, more than ever trails and outdoor recreation have become a lifeline for many during the pandemic. What have we learned about the importance of trails and outdoor recreation during this time? What are we doing to better understand the positive health impacts of trail use? How do we make sure all Alaskans have access to trails and healthy outdoor activities going forward? What role can the trail community play? Panelists will cover current efforts to address these questions and issues.

Presenters: Nicolette Dent - Park Planner, Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation
Van Le - Manager – Planning Department, R&M CONSULTANTS,
Lee Hart - Founder, Alaska Outdoor Alliance

FRIDAY APRIL 16TH (continued)

1:00 – 2:15 - Volunteer Successes – Building Trails and Community

Volunteers have been increasingly looked to for trail maintenance and building as local, state and federal funding has waned. Even if funding is revived, volunteers will still play a key role in maintaining the trails that they love. Hear the successes earned and challenges faced by a number of groups from across the state. Bring your ideas to share and questions to ask as we work together to figure out the best way to continue volunteer successes on our public lands.

Presenters: Kathy Sarns – Friends of Kachemak Bay
Geoff Orth – Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation
Will Taygan – Chugiak Mountain Bike Riders
Mindy Eggleston – Delta Junction Trail Association

2:30 – 4:00 - Project Updates – Exciting Trails Around the State!

Presenters from around the state will showcase a set of projects that are in various stages – from idea to nearing completion. These projects stretch across the state – projects with big economic benefits and real potential for near term action. A representative from each project will detail progress to date, future work to be done, partners involved, and how these projects can together form a larger network of projects and advocates that will elevate trails in Alaska.

Presenters: Ben Hughey – Sitka Trail Works - South Sitka Sound Trail
Alan McClain and Emerson Krueger – Mat-Su Borough / Settler’s Bay Trails
Gabe Travis – Interior Trails / Curry-K’esugi Connector Trail
Mike Hopper – EARTH – Eastern Alaska Range Thru Hike
Lee Bolling and Adam Robinson – Singletrack Advocates / Hemlock Burn Trail
Beth Nordlund - Anchorage Park Foundation / Coastal Trail to Ship Creek
Haley Johnston – Alaska Trails / Tongass Sustainable Trail Strategy

