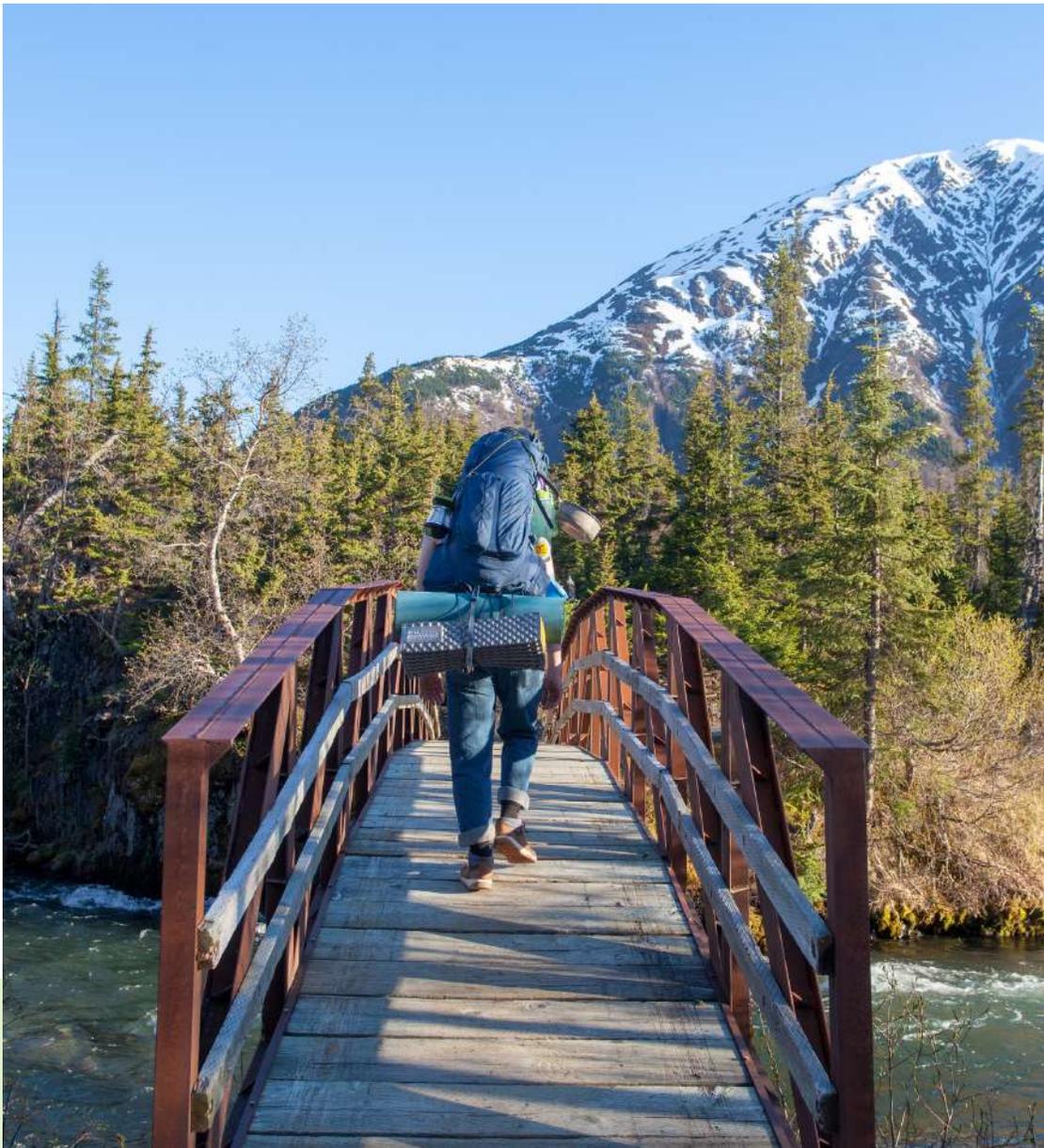

ALASKA STATEWIDE TRAILS INITIATIVE

WORK-IN-PROGRESS DRAFT REPORT



Prepared by
Alaska Trails Initiative
May 2019



This report was prepared by Trails Fellow Meg Pritchard for Alaska Trails and a growing group of trails partners. The Trails Fellow position was funded through the generous contributions of those below:

Alaska Trails
Anchorage Park Foundation
Chris Beck
Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area
Levitation 49/Confluence
Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation
NPS National Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance
Sitka Trail Works
Trail Mix, Inc.
U.S. Forest Service

Alaska Trails thanks the Alaska Venture Fund for important, early support for this Trails Initiative. Recognizing the value of trails and outdoor recreation to help strengthen the Alaska economy, in early 2018 the Alaska Venture Fund provided initial seed funding that helped launch this project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contents of this report came through conversations with dozens of individuals, agencies, non-profits, and other organizations. We'd like to express thanks to all those who have contributed. A partial list is below:

Judy Bittner, Alaska Historical Commission
Erik Boraas, Trail Mix, Inc.
Lynne Brandon, Sitka Trail Works
Brenda Carlson, Visit Anchorage
Paul Clark, NPS Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance
Steve Cleary, Alaska Trails
Steven Cohn, The Nature Conservancy
James DePasquale, The Nature Conservancy
Neal Fried, Alaska State Department of Labor
Meredith Gutierrez, Anchorage Park Foundation
Joe Hall, Alaska State Parks, Chugach
Steve Halloran, Visit Anchorage
Lee Hart, Levitation 49/Confluence
Trena Haugen, Denali Borough
Taylor Holshouser, Alaska Trails Initiative
Wes Hoskins, Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation
Eileen Kazura, Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board
Kevin Keeler, Bureau of Land Management
Erin Kirkland, AK on the Go
Nolan Klouda, UAA
Gunnar Knapp, UAA ISER Emeritus
Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Alaska House of Representatives
Stuart Leidner, Alaska State Parks, Mat-Su/Copper Basin Region
Sarah Leonard, ATIA
Beth Nordlund, Anchorage Park Foundation
Geoffrey Orth, Stray Dogs LLC
Pat Pourchot, Alaska Long Trails
Zachary Russell, Denali Snowcat
Wendy Sailors, Alaska State Parks
Katherine Sims, Alaska Division of Economic Development
Lia Slemmons, Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area
Mark Spano, Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board
Holly Spoth-Torres, Huddle
Jessica Szelag, Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area
Eric Troyer, Fairbanks/Alaska Trails
Clay Walker, Denali Borough
Bryan Wright, Fairbanks North Star Borough

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

Alaska has barely tapped our state's remarkable outdoor resources. Because of this chronic under investment, we are missing our chance to build a stronger, more durable Alaskan economy.

Outdoor recreation is bigger and more diverse than widely recognized. Places that make smart investments in outdoor recreation have seen remarkable results. Parts III and VIII of this report give details, but a couple of examples include:

National Impact: The outdoor recreation economy accounted for 2.2 percent (\$412 billion) of current-dollar GDP in 2016, comparable to the contribution of sectors like utilities, telecommunications, and mining [1].

One More Day in AK: If even just half of out-of-state visitors spent one more day in Alaska, their spending would add an extra \$137 million to the state's economy [2].

Hikers and Backpackers Spend More: International tourists who participate in walking and hiking in New Zealand spend \$800 more per visit than average tourists [3]. Increases in these types of tourists could have a significant impact on visitor spending in Alaska.

This report presents work still in progress by a still-growing group of trail users, non-profit trail user groups, land management agencies, and businesses, all of whom believe that when done right, trails and outdoor recreation will be a key to Alaska's prosperous future.

Given that this group has no direct statewide authority, a fair question is: what's our strategy to effect change? Our emerging answers are below:

Make and sell the case for the economic, public health, and way-of-life benefits of trails

[1] US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, 2018.
[2] Total 2017 out-of-state visitor spending was \$2.5 billion divided by 9.1 days = \$275 million/day
[3] New Zealand Tourism, Tourist Special Interest - Walking and Hiking New Zealand, February 2014.

Focus energy and attention on "Feature Trails" — promising projects with broad economic and other benefits, a clear champion, land owner and public support, and momentum

Build partnerships and a strong statewide coalition

Use the coming year - with your help - to refine our message, expand partners, and share the story

This "work-in-progress" report presents the significant progress we've made thus far. We're proud of what we've done — but we very much want your feedback, your ideas, your inspirations, and your participation. We are confident that if we work together, we can bring about more and better trails, hut-to-hut systems, and the signage, maps, and marketing that will make Alaska a top-tier travel destination — all the while maintaining and preserving those aspects that make Alaska a unique, wonderful place to live and visit.

Thank You.

On behalf of the Alaska Trails Initiative partners,

Chris Beck Principal Agnew:: Beck	Erik Boraas Executive Director Trail Mix, Inc.	Steve Cleary Executive Director Alaska Trails
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Hiking on a warming spring day. Source: Chris Beck

PART II

**VALUE OF TRAILS AND
OUTDOOR RECREATION**



Alaska is perhaps best known for its access to incredible natural resources.

Most obviously recognized as a site for oil extraction, mining, and fisheries, Alaska also boasts an abundance of natural resources in its public and privately-held lands. With approximately 365 million acres ranging from Arctic tundra to vast stretches of taiga to lush temperate rainforests, Alaska's land is arguably the natural resource with the most potential in the state. Locals and visitors alike enjoy developed and undeveloped lands for all kinds of recreational and non-recreational use.



Sharon Kim, Chief of Resources, Kenai Fjords National Park. Source: NPS





Canoeing on the Delta Wild and Scenic River. Source: BLM, Jeremy Matlock

A moose on the Coastal Trail, a paved, accessible trail in downtown Anchorage. Source: Chris Beck



There is a wide spectrum of trail use across Alaska, and our trails are beginning to reflect that spectrum. Casual urban trail users might go for an afternoon stroll on the well-paved, well-marked Coastal Trail in Anchorage, while more dedicated backcountry hikers might hike Kesugi Ridge in the Mat-Su Borough or even find a less well-marked backcountry loop. Families can enjoy paved, ADA Accessible paths that allow for strollers or tackle remote, rocky scrambles. We have many different types of trails that offer opportunities for many different types of trail users—but increasing the number of options will only better cater to this wide spectrum of users.



Flying into a remote part of Alaska. Source: NPS, Neal Herbert

Mountain Village, AK, a community with a population of just 813. Source: ADN <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/rural-alaska/2017/09/29/>

From rural villages to accessible lands on and around the railbelt, trails cross all parts of Alaska. As trails are developed in different regions, it is important to understand the needs of different communities. For some, the improvement of subsistence hunting trails might be their highest priority. For others, especially with the increasing impact of climate change on traditional travel routes, safe travel options may be most important. For still others, it may be the development of visitor resources to attract tourists to these smaller communities. As a result, trails and trail development will look different across the state— and it is especially important to take into account these varying priorities if this is to be a statewide Alaskan effort.



Getting ready to snowshoe from the Summit Trail Shelter. Source: BLM



Trails also have different uses in different seasons. Summer trail users might roller-ski on paved paths, mountain bike on singletrack, ride their ATVs on multi-use trails, day-hike a popular route, or go for an extended backcountry trip. Trails can be used to access rivers and campsites for other activities such as kayaking, pack rafting, rock climbing, or camping.

Winter trail use includes cross-country and backcountry skiing, snowmachining on multi-use trails, fat-tire biking, and snowshoeing and traditional winter hiking. Trails are also used as access for winter camping, ice climbing, ice skating, or other activities.

Iditarod National Historic Trail, Kaltag AK. Source: BLM, Bob Wick





Hiking along Crow Pass Trail. Source: Iditarod National Historic Trail, Jacob Torres

Local and visiting trail users also often have different perceptions of Alaskan trails. Local trail users often pride themselves on the remoteness and challenge of Alaska's trails, shunning the use of trail signage and additional wayfinding markers while arguing that these signs make the land feel less wild and natural.

Visitors, on the other hand, often feel uncomfortable in Alaska's wilderness. With oft-inflated tales of dangerous wildlife and impossible-to-navigate remoteness, visitors rely upon good signage and well-developed trails to feel safe exploring Alaska's lands. Tourists thus tend to congregate around one or two trails, where the crowds of people make wary visitors feel more comfortable.



Crow Pass Trail. Source: Iditarod National Historic Trail, Jacob Torres

Fat tire biking, a winter sport pioneered in Alaska. Source: Chris Beck



Alaska's dedicated backcountry users have been instrumental in developing new outdoor recreation opportunities. Pack rafting, where an inflatable raft is carried in a backpack and allows hikers to travel by river as well as foot, originally gained popularity in Alaska, where the method allowed hikers to travel more readily in the northern and interior regions of the state.

Similarly, fat-tire biking is Alaska's latest invention. A response to rising winter temperatures and poor annual ski conditions, fat-tire biking has swept the state as the alternative to skiing in warmer, wetter conditions, and has now moved throughout the rest of the country.

Pack rafters hiking to water. Source: Chris Beck





Alaska High School State XC Ski Championships held at Kincaid Park and open to the public. Source: Chris Beck

Alaska's outdoor spaces, parks, and trails offer the perfect setting for many outdoor events. With phenomenal infrastructure and conditions for excellent skiing, Anchorage recently hosted the US Junior National Cross Country Championship races. The Mt. Marathon race in Seward attracts some of the top mountain runners in the world. Local competitions and outdoor events keep communities engaged and exercising, while events like the Iditarod draw tourists from around the world while shining a spotlight on some of Alaska's own mushing stars. With supreme natural features, Alaska is a prime location to host these outdoor events.



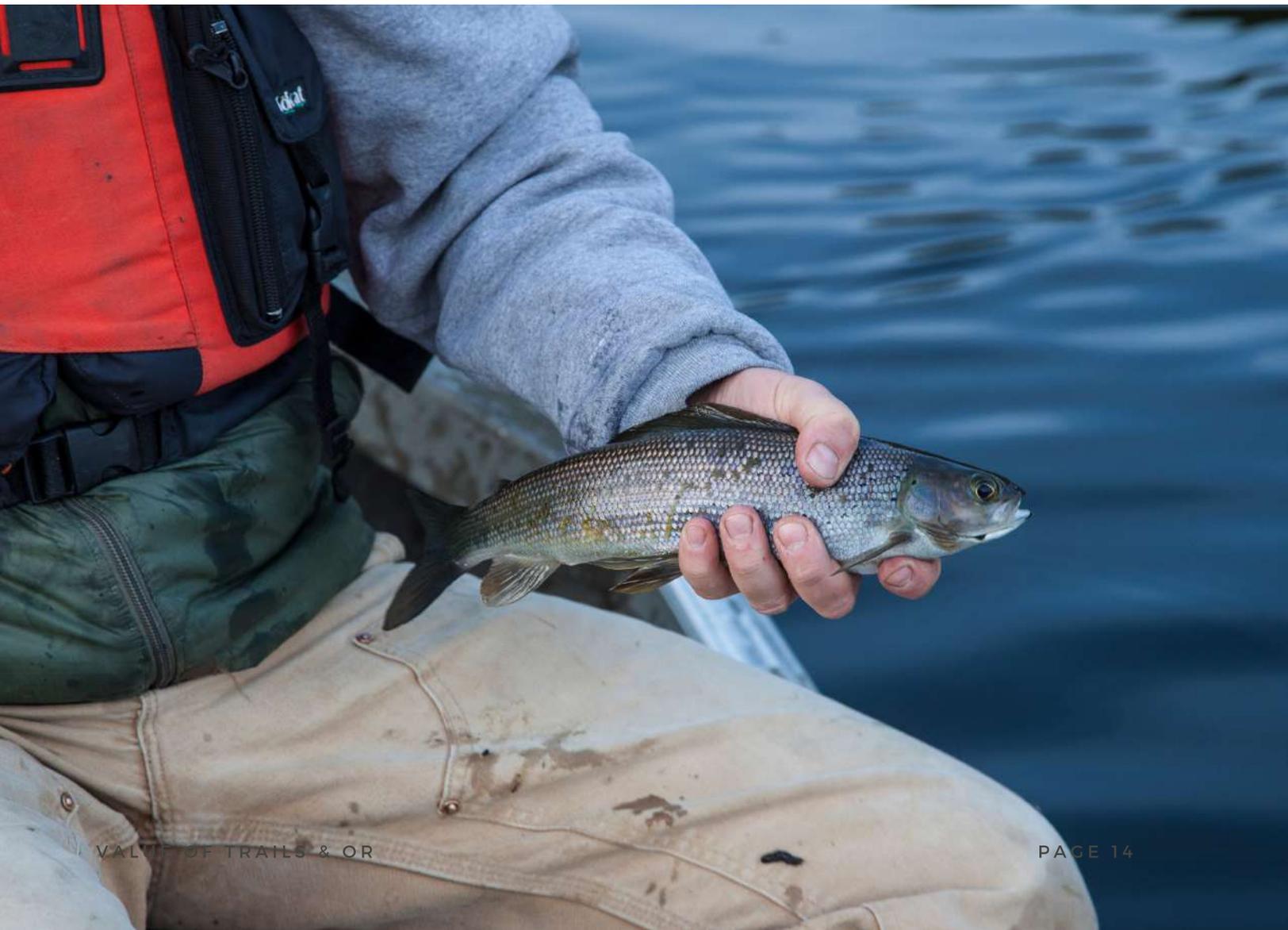
Kayaking with friends in the Prince William Sound. Source: Chris Beck

Trails aren't just used for recreation, however. Trails can be used in cities to commute from home to school or work. In rural communities, trails might be used to travel from village to village for business or other matters.

Alaska's lands are also used for hunting, trapping, and fishing throughout the year. In many communities all over Alaska, subsistence hunting is an essential part of a family's health, economic survival, and tradition, providing a necessary source of food and income during the year. Recreational hunting is also a common past time for many Alaskans.



Source: BLM, Bob Wick





Children at Campbell Creek Science Center. Source: BLM, Bob Wick

Source: BLM, Craig McCaa



Outdoor spaces offer a wide range of benefits to the public. Access to outdoor areas like parks and trails increases public health by providing opportunities for exercise and improved mental health— and the results can be measured in terms of economic benefit as well. According to a 2015 study of the Mat-Su Borough, the total annual health-related costs associated with obesity in Alaska were around \$276 million. That number was expected to increase to \$680 million by 2018. The study examined the Mat-Su Borough's outdoor spaces and concluded that access to outdoor areas saved Mat-Su residents approximately \$3.24 million a year in avoided healthcare costs and lost productivity [1].

[1] Earth Economics, *Economic Benefits of Trails, Parks, and Open Space in the Mat-Su Borough*, 2015, https://www.matsugov.us/department?task=download&file=file_upload&id=17008

Trails also offer a way for local residents to get involved in their community. Volunteers are essential in helping to perform vital maintenance on trails across Alaska. The Alaska Trail Stewards, for example, a community volunteer program run by Alaska Trails, boasts 291 members who built, maintained, or protected 18,962 ft of trail over 23 trail projects in 2018 and offered \$52,644 of donated labor. Community volunteers in Delta Junction, a small community with a population of just 847, have donated more than 14,000 hours of their time to trail stewardship and maintenance. More than just investments by state, federal, or nonprofit entities, trails are supported by the communities that use them.



Moose Pass Work Day. Source: Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, Jacob Torres



PART III

TRENDS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION AND MARKETS

Outdoor recreation is a more complex economic category than it might initially appear.

Covering a wide range of direct, indirect, and induced jobs and touching upon industries as diverse as manufacturing, marketing, retail, travel, and healthcare, outdoor recreation has enormous growth potential in the local and national economy.

This chapter includes the following sections:

THE OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY -
WHAT IS OUTDOOR RECREATION?

OUTDOOR RECREATION SPECTRUM OF
BENEFITS - FROM DIRECT SPENDING TO
WORKFORCE RETENTION

ECONOMIC BENEFITS TODAY - A QUICK
LOOK AT NATIONAL DATA

ECONOMIC BENEFITS TODAY - ALASKA

POTENTIAL FOR EXPANDED BENEFITS

[1] U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2018 Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account Analysis.

[2] UAA Center for Economic Development, Outdoor Recreation in Alaska: Impacts and Opportunities, March 2019, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f6b60bcf81e02892fd0261/t/5c7eff9415fc0410111212a/1551826896433/Outdoor+Recreation+-+Impacts+and+Opportunities.pdf>

[3] Alaska Trails Initiative calculation, using visitor spending and length of stay data included in the 2016 Alaska Visitor Statistics Program prepared by the State of Alaska

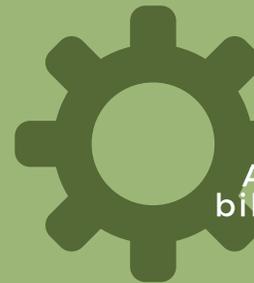
Source: BLM, Robben Taylor



IN SUMMARY

Outdoor recreation is the "sleeping giant" of the American economy, providing 2.2% of the total US GDP, about

\$412 BILLION ^[1]



The economic impacts of outdoor recreation in Alaska are \$3.2 billion in annual participant spending and

38,100 JOBS ^[2]

One More Day: if half of current AK out-of-state visitors spent one more day in Alaska it would generate

\$137 MILLION ^[3]
in additional annual spending

WHAT IS THE OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY?

MORE SECTORS, MORE ACTIVITIES THAN MOST REALIZE

EQUIPMENT

Direct spending on outdoor recreation gear like skis, snow machines, bikes, hiking boots, or a fishing rod. A puffy down jacket, on the other hand, is less clearly in this category, as it may be fashion or functional for a non-recreational purpose.

ACTIVITIES

Spending on outdoor recreation activities and experiences. This might include a ski lift pass, guided fishing trip, lodging, rentals, or travel.

MANUFACTURING

Production of material and gear used for outdoor recreation. In Alaska, this includes fat tire bikes, clothing, backpacking food, and pack rafts.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The range of services that support outdoor recreation, from maintenance on sight-seeing planes to construction of cabins and trails to marketing.

Outdoor recreation is remarkably diverse in terms of economic activity, including activities that support recreation. This could be a factory manufacturing hiking boots, a family traveling to a national park for a week or a ski area for a day, or a charter plane dropping off a guide and client for a hunting trip.

Different statistics and analyses use different definitions of activities that constitute outdoor recreation. The chart shown here is from the national Outdoor Industry Association. Other groups add outdoor sports such as golf or archery.

The outdoor recreation industry is sometimes referred to as "sleeping" because the sector is, not unfairly, considered diffuse, fragmented, and difficult to measure. Conflict between different types of users further segments the sector. The combined result reduces awareness of the true magnitude of the outdoor recreation industry relative to more traditional sectors. New research and reports are helping to change this perception.



The OIA's included forms of outdoor recreation. Source: Outdoor Industry Association

OUTDOOR RECREATION SPECTRUM OF BENEFITS

FROM DIRECT SPENDING TO WORKFORCE RETENTION

The statistics in this chapter give a factual picture of the economic benefits of the outdoor recreation industry, but miss the human face and more subjective economic benefits that come with a robust outdoor recreation economy. This section provides some examples of how localities with easy access to outdoor recreation create a quality of life that supports other benefits— providing jobs in rural communities, improving public health, and encouraging an entrepreneurial environment.

Jobs in Places with Few Other Economic Opportunities

Wrangell Mountain Air, based in McCarthy, has created a successful business taking hunters, hikers, rafters, and sightseers into the backcountry of North America’s largest natural area, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. This creates a range of jobs including pilots, office staff, and mechanics.

Other opportunities may be less formal. The two helpful gentlemen at right have an informal but effective operation based in Port Heiden. For a reasonable fee, they take hikers and packrafters overland on four-wheelers to Aniakchak National Monument, bypassing a long slog on foot through wet and treacherous terrain.

Startup Business Opportunities

More so than many economic sectors, outdoor recreation and tourism give energetic individuals a chance to start their own small business. North Shore Cyclery, a small bike shop in Talkeetna, is a good example.

Successful Hospitality Businesses

Bikers, skiers, and snowmachiners all share an enthusiasm for a drink and some hearty food at the end of a day of adventure. Businesses that complement the outdoor industry, from bakeries to breweries, tend to thrive and capture both outdoor recreators and casual passerby.



Plane in Wrangell-St. Elias. Source: NPS, Neal Herbert



Port Heiden entrepreneurs. Source: Chris Beck



Winter biking. Source: Chris Beck

Fees and Taxes to Governments

Alaskans are not known for their enthusiasm for taxes.

But we all are pleased when the road to a winter trailhead has been plowed, or when a popular parking lot is expanded. The outdoor recreation and tourism industries are contributors to funding for state and local governments—supporting recreation infrastructure. Trailhead parking fees, for example, often go directly towards trailhead maintenance.

A SUITE OF INTANGIBLES

Attraction and Retention of a Quality Workforce

Both CNBC [4] and Forbes [5], in recent studies looking at the “best states for business,” note that opportunities for recreation figure prominently as factors in quality-of-life indices. Indeed, these opportunities for outdoor recreation and even visual amenities of open spaces and places weigh equally in importance with proximity to strong universities and access to healthcare.

Invitation to Healthy Living

A wide range of research shows that the slow rise in obesity in many Americans creates significant health impacts. This in turn costs billions of dollars every year for individuals, businesses, and tax payers. Better access to safe, high-quality trails and pathways makes physical activity more inviting. Studies show that access to trails and public outdoor spaces can save regions millions of dollars in lost productivity and healthcare costs.

Economic Incentives for Quality Communities

The incentive of business and visitor attraction gives communities the motivation needed to invest more in community safety, appearance, and amenities, all of which add to the quality of life or residents. It is no accident that many of the fastest growing communities in the US are those that have become known for exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities.

Community Connections

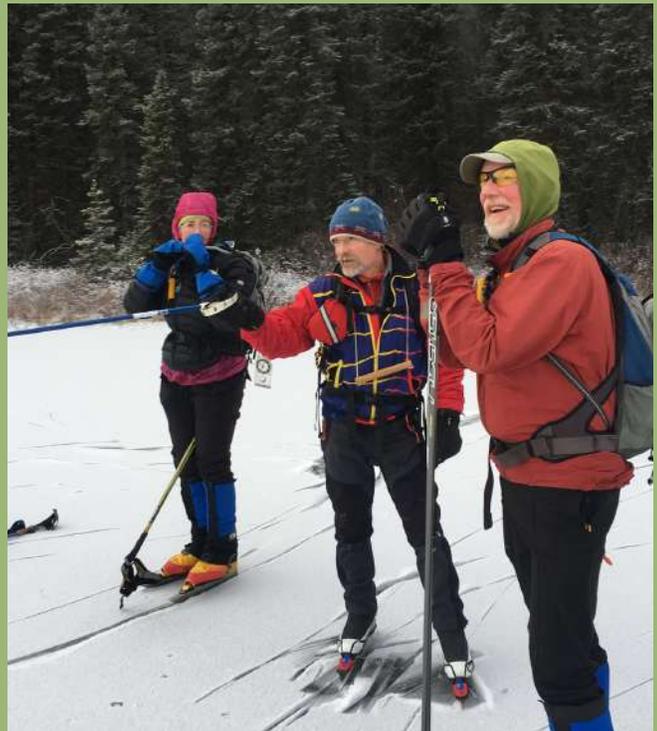
A quality system of trails and sidewalks can open up attractive and convenient ways to reach the destinations of daily life: work, school, stores, restaurants, and parks. Trails make it easier to cross paths— figuratively and literally— with all kinds of people in a community.

[4] CNBC, “CNBC’s America’s Top States for Business 2019: Methodology and Sources,” June 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/13/cnbcs-top-states-for-business-2018-methodology-and-sources.html>

[5] Forbes, “The Best States for Business 2018: Behind the Numbers,” Nov. 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2018/11/28/the-best-states-for-business-2018-behind-the-numbers/#57ca40992bae>



Grooming on the Denali Highway. Source: Zach Russell



Lake to Lake skate. Source; Chris Beck



Local race. Source: Chris Beck

ECONOMIC BENEFITS TODAY - NATIONAL

NATIONAL DATA SHOW THE ECONOMIC POWER OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

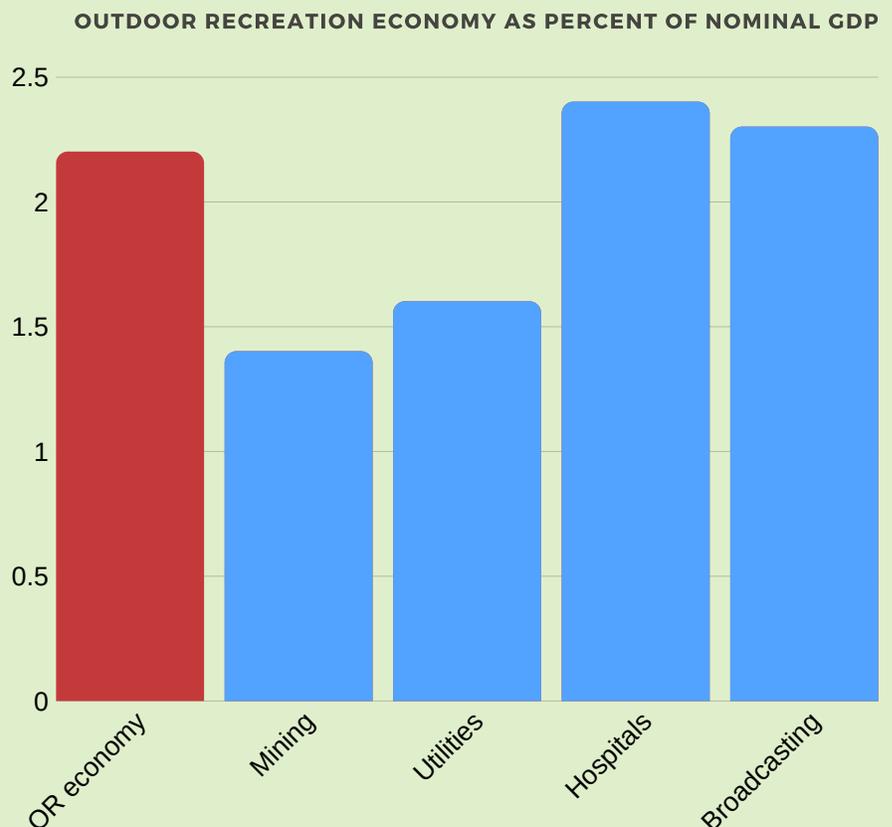
For the first time, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) [6] has attempted to measure the annual economic impact of the outdoor recreation industry [7]. The Bureau began focusing on the outdoor economy in 2016, when the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act was approved by Congress. After two years of research, the BEA released a report in 2018 that "creates a picture of the outdoor recreation economy that would otherwise remain hidden within BEA's national statistics."

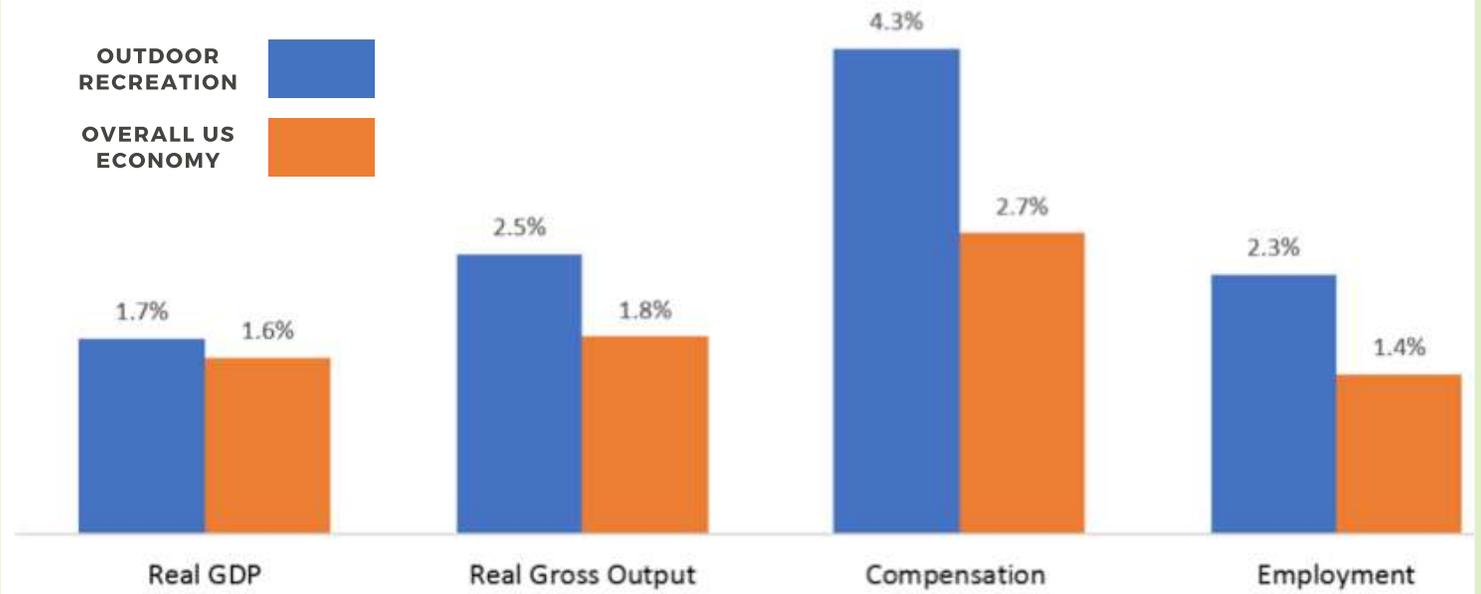
The report shows that in 2016, outdoor recreation accounted for 2.2% (\$412 billion) of current-dollar GDP.

This means the sector contributes more to annual GDP than the total output of US farms, forests, and fisheries, each of which make up 1% of the GDP. Recreational boating and fishing make up the largest share of the recreational gross output. In the BEA report, gross output is measured in three general categories: conventional core (bicycling, hiking, hunting), other core (gardening, outdoor concerts), and supporting activities (construction, tourism, government expenditures). In 2016, conventional core accounted for 32.7 percent of outdoor recreation gross output, other accounted for 19.3 percent, and supporting accounted for the remaining 47.9 percent.

[6] Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2018). Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account: Prototype Statistics for 2012-2016 [Press release]. <https://oyasin.io/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/BEA-Outdoor-Rec-Industry.pdf>
[7] US Bureau of Economic Analysis -Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account: Updated Statistics for 2012-2016, 9.20.18 <https://www.bea.gov/news/2018/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-updated-statistics-2012-2016>

Outdoor recreation compared to other traditional industries, including mining. It is important to note that this chart doesn't imply that outdoor recreation should replace mining— it just emphasizes how important outdoor recreation is to our economy.



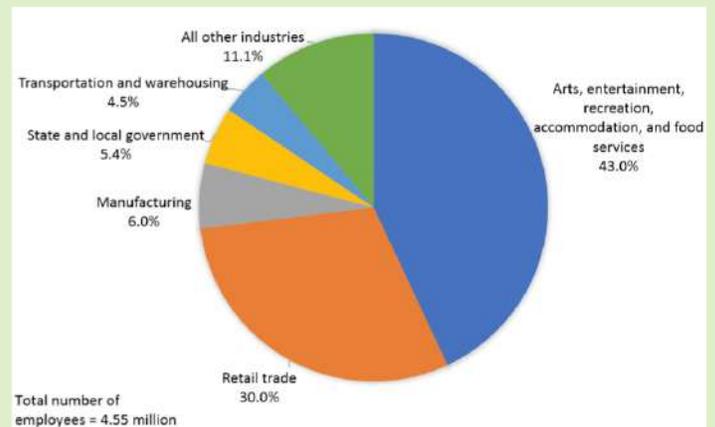


OUTDOOR RECREATION OUTPACES GROWTH OF THE OVERALL U.S. ECONOMY, 2015-2016

In this first-ever study, the BEA found that the outdoor recreation economy grew 1.7% in an inflation-adjusted GDP in 2016, comparable to the 1.6% growth for the overall U.S. economy. In addition, real gross output, compensation, and employment all grew at the same rate or faster in outdoor recreation than in the overall economy in 2016. The BEA did not include the retail value of outdoor recreation clothing and other equipment that was manufactured outside the United States.

The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), an industry advocacy organization, also examined the national economic value of outdoor recreation [8]. The OIA measured the 2018 total contribution of outdoor recreation to the U.S. economy as over \$887 billion in annual consumer spending, up from previous numbers as of 2012. The OIA's numbers are higher than those of the BEA due to differing methodology. According to OIA's 2018 annual report, the industry created 7.6 million direct jobs nationally, \$59.2 billion in state and local tax revenue, and \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue.

[8] Outdoor Industry Association Outdoor Recreation Economy https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OIA_RecEconomy_FINAL_Single.pdf



INDUSTRY COMPOSITION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION EMPLOYMENT, 2016

Source: BLM, Bob Wick



ECONOMIC BENEFITS TODAY - ALASKA

RECENT STUDY DEMONSTRATES VALUE ADDED TO THE ALASKAN ECONOMY

A recently-completed study by the Center for Economic Development at the University of Alaska Anchorage provides important support for the value of outdoor recreation in our own state.

Alaska ties with Montana for the highest rate of participation in outdoor recreation in the United States. It also has the highest rate of participation in fishing and hunting. The economic impact of this participation is approximately \$3.2 billion

[9] UAA Center for Economic Development, *Outdoor Recreation in Alaska: Impacts and Opportunities*, March 2019, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f6b60bcf81e02892fd0261/t/5c7eff9415fcc0410111212a/1551826896433/Outdoor+Recreation+-+Impacts+and+Opportunities.pdf>

in annual participant spending on outdoor recreation trips, including lodging, fuel, and permits but excluding equipment. Outdoor recreation also provides approximately 38,100 direct, indirect, and induced jobs in Alaska.

Outdoor recreation also represents a smart local investment. K'esugi Ken, a recently-opened campground in Denali State Park, has enjoyed tremendous popularity. With more than 8,000 visitors in its first year, the campground generated approximately \$152,000 in revenues for the State of Alaska. With similar revenue expected each year, the campground will quickly be a reliable source of profit for the State of Alaska and park systems.

With more than half of all out-of-state visitors engaging in outdoor recreation, along with a large number of residents, this sector is poised for growth [9].

Upper Kalskag crew members William Alexie, on right, and Francis Vaska load bags on a jet bound for Missoula, Montana. Their crew was called to aid in helping manage wildfires in the Lower 48. Source: BLM, Beth Ipsen



FUTURE ECONOMIC BENEFITS

HOW COULD EXPANSION BENEFIT THE ALASKAN ECONOMY?

Focus on projects with the greatest "bang for the buck." See the Feature Trails (Part VII) for a good start

Projects that serve the "missing middle" of users who want outdoor adventure but are short on fitness, gear, experience, or time

Provide a few "destination" trails-- like the popular long trails of other regions, these draw new visitors

Work to create more "destination communities" – walkable, mixed-use town centers with easy outdoor access

Stabilize and expand resources for outdoor recreation, such as grants

Provide support and resources in rural communities and regions

Improve outdoor recreation marketing and user information

Support planning and implementation at the local and regional level

Establish a state Outdoor Recreation Coordinator

Streamline authorizations for use of state land and provide some "regulatory relief"

Actively guide growth through land management and stewardship

Range of experiences and intensities of use, from wild to developed

Quality outdoor recreation on working landscapes

Minimize trail user conflicts



Source: Chris Beck

Alaska currently offers a wide array of outdoor recreation experiences. But much could be done to make the Alaskan outdoors more accessible, safer, and more appealing. Better trails and trail-related infrastructure offer the strongest means of reaching that goal.

Part VIII of this report outlines strategies to improve trails and expand access; those recommendations are summarized to the left. This section gives an overview of the potential economic benefits of implementing those actions. Also included here are two case studies showing the economic benefits of these kinds of strategies in communities outside of Alaska.

Ultimately, intentionality and design are required if we are to both develop our lands and sustain the quality of the Alaskan way of life. What makes Alaska unique— the wildness of its lands, the beauty of its surroundings— is ultimately what must be preserved if any new development will succeed in the state. Though the following case studies offer a compelling argument for growth, relying upon and preserving what makes Alaska uniquely Alaska is the only method to grow our state's opportunities in a sustainable manner.

WHAT KINDS OF INVESTMENTS SHOULD BE MADE?



Upgrades to trails that are long overdue for maintenance, like Crow Pass Trail connecting Girdwood and Eagle River



Comfortable huts and hut-to-hut systems. One compelling shovel-ready option: the hut and trail project in Spencer River



More resources to support well-designed, well-built trails. Reinstating of the Alaska snowTRAC funding for maintenance and signage of winter trail systems.

WHAT COULD BE THE OUTCOME?

The total 2017 out-of-state visitor spending in Alaska was \$2.5 billion. The average length of stay in Alaska is 9.1 days, which means that on average, Alaskan out-of-state visitors spent about \$275 million per day [10]. If even just half of out-of-state visitors stayed in the state for an extra day, they could add an extra \$137 million in spending in Alaska per year.

[10] <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/dev/tourismdevelopment/tourismresearch.aspx/>

HOW HAVE OTHER LOCATIONS BENEFITED FROM INVESTMENTS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION?

Case studies of New Zealand and Carcross, YT, below, present options that other locations have taken to successfully transform their outdoor resources into economic opportunities. While these methods have been successful, it is a strategy that takes advantage of Alaska's unique aspects that will be most effective.

DO THE MATH

In 2017, out-of-state visitor spending amounted to **\$2.5 BILLION**

The average length of stay in Alaska is **9.1 DAYS**

Therefore, visitors to Alaska spend a total of about **\$275 MILLION/DAY**

If even half of visitors stayed one more day, it would generate **\$137 MILLION/YEAR**

CASE STUDY: NEW ZEALAND



New Zealand offers an abundance of world class day hikes. Most renowned is the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, a 20K trail with trail signs, restrooms, and convenient shuttle service. The route is followed by as many as 1,000 people a day, leaving other routes quiet and peaceful

New Zealand is a global laboratory and success story demonstrating how trails and related outdoor recreation investments can attract visitors, please residents, and generate dramatic economic benefits. While the two destinations are not exactly the same, both New Zealand and Alaska are long-haul destinations with outdoor environments as the primary attractions. While not all growth in New Zealand travel is tied to trails, experiences in that country provide valuable learning opportunities for Alaska.

A much longer report would be needed to explore all of the factors behind New Zealand's growth and examine their applicability to Alaska's future plan for sustainable development. As a start it is important to note there are significant differences in the two destinations.

In the last 20 years, international travel to New Zealand has grown from just over 5 billion to over 14 billion annual visits. Figures below for the year ended March 2018 [11] and are represented in New Zealand dollars, which are equal to approximately \$0.67 USD.

- **Growth in Expenditures:** International tourism expenditure increased 9.6% to a total of \$16.2 billion and contributed 20.6% of New Zealand's total export of goods and services
- **Tracking Domestic Spending:** Domestic tourism expenditure increased 6.5% to \$23.0 billion
- **National Contribution:** Tourism generated a direct contribution to GDP of \$15.9 billion, or 6.1% of the total GDP
- **Hikers Stay Longer:** Backpackers account for over 159,000 visitors to New Zealand each year, with an average stay of 31 days compared to the average of 19 days for non-backpackers. Their average spending is over \$3,600, a full \$800 more than the average for other visitors
- **Sustained Growth:** Between 2016-2017, New Zealand saw total visitor arrivals increase by 10%, significantly faster than global tourism trends which fell at 3.9% visitor growth in 2016 and 6% in the first half of 2017 (UNWTO World Tourism Barometer)

[11] New Zealand Tourism, Tourism in New Zealand on the Up and Up, <https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/news/tourism-in-new-zealand-on-the-up-and-up/>

CASE STUDY: NEW ZEALAND

KEY STRATEGIES USED

Extensive public investments in terrestrial (and marine) trail systems, leveraging public and user organization resources

A focus on "missing middle" opportunities, such as town-to-town bike trails, like the recently completed 75K West Coast bikeway, below



Integrated marketing and trail user info, including hut-to-hut, lodge-to-lodge tracks

Investments in trails, public spaces, and town planning to create walkable "gateway towns" like Nelson, below



High-volume, must-see destinations that have huge capacity and work well for both motorcoaches and independent travelers, like "Pancake Rocks" pictured above

Cooperative arrangements with private landowners to provide for continuity of trails

Public and private investments in excellent trail signage and superb, professionally-staffed visitor information centers

Wide range of private investment including guides, shuttles, lodging, web-based booking



Using working landscapes to blend resource use activities like logging, mining, grazing, and agriculture, with recreation infrastructure, like biking in Rotorua's active timber harvest area, above.



NEW ZEALAND WALKERS AND HIKERS STAY LONGER AND SPEND MORE

On average, international tourists that participate in walking and hiking spend \$3,700 during their stay compared to \$2,800 for all holiday visitors. There is a significant high value segment in the walking and hiking sector with over 20% of international tourists reporting they spend over \$5,000 on their visit to New Zealand [12].

[12] New Zealand Tourism, Tourist Special Interest | Walking and Hiking, New Zealand Tourism, Tourist Special Interest | Walking and Hiking, <https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/media/1768/tourism-profile-walking-and-hiking.pdf>

CASE STUDY: CARCROSS, YT



The Arne Ormen Cabin on Lake Bennett, Carcross, YT. Ormen.. A historic site in Carcross, the cabin was originally home to Arne Ormen when he moved into town. It now functions as a popular tourist visiting spot, highlighting the intersection between natural beauty and history in Carcross.

The economic development of the small, primarily First Nations town of Carcross provides insight into how outdoor recreation investments may generate greater economic benefits for parallel regions within Alaska. Now a thriving destination for singletrack mountain biking, Carcross has been able to transform to successfully capture the tourism market by taking advantage of its natural resources.

Nestled in the Yukon Territory, Carcross is connected to Alaska geographically, historically, culturally, and ancestrally. Carcross is physically closely connected to southeast Alaskan communities through the Alaska Highway, the Chilkoot Trail, the Yukon River, and the White Pass Train, and its story parallels many small Alaskan communities. Many in the Carcross community are descendants of Tlingit traders who ventured from southeast Alaska.

Carcross had long experienced economic stagnation, and at the end of successful negotiations with the Canadian government to become a self-governed First Nation community, leadership took the opportunity to develop a new economic vision.

Through identifying a natural comparative advantage, the community has been able to leverage assets such as its mountainous geography, gold rush history, location, and opportunity-seeking young people to transform into an internationally lauded outdoor recreation destination, while preserving and uplifting the community's indigenous roots. By incorporating local history into the visitor experience in a culturally-appropriate manner, Carcross has been able to open itself up to visitors while maintaining a strong sense of identity and place.



Trail entrepreneurship in Carcross. Source: Yukon News Commentary, <https://carcross.wordpress.com/2013/11/21/158/>

CASE STUDY: CARCROSS, YT

The community's approach thus far can be divided into two stages:

1

Supporting outdoor recreation through building and maintaining world-class single-track mountain biking trails, and creating job opportunities for local youth in the process. With the goal of developing Carcross into a world-class recreation destination, in 2006 the Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN) spearheaded the Singletrack to Success (S2S) initiative, in hopes that the Montana Mountain (Tsélgi shaa) could transform into a mountain biking haven.

2

Creating a vibrant retail center that welcomes visitors and provides amenities, supplies, and cultural experiences to complement the recreation taking place outside of town. Through implementing these approaches, Carcross has been able to operate a successful visitor industry that is supported by the community. Other communities, particularly indigenous communities around North America have mimicked the Montana Mountain trails initiative.



Biking in Carcross. Source: Explore Magazine, https://www.explore-mag.com/Carcross_Mountain_Bikings_New_Mecca



Carcross Desert. Source: YukonInfo, <https://www.yukoninfo.com/photo-gallery/yukon-territory/carcross/>

Carcross' economic success and continuing promise stem from its abilities to:

- Survey residents to gauge community values and incorporate into economic development.
- Engage local youth in positive ways – by providing jobs creating and managing the single-track bike trails and healthy forms of entertainment, contributing to community buy-in.
- Interact with the cruise ship industry despite not being a direct port, by defining itself as a hot spot for a specific activity (single-track mountain biking) accessible by day trip.
- Integrate First Nations culture and local history into the visitor experience, in a culturally appropriate manner that also provides amenities for local community gathering.
- Provide non-outdoor activities and amenities to complement the main visitor outdoor activity such as gift shops, snack shops, cultural education sites, and a visitor center.
- Benefit from ongoing positive press, particularly target outlets like outdoor magazines.

Understanding the success of Carcross could point us towards ways in which we can improve Alaska's approach to developing our outdoor recreation economy. Leveraging our natural and local resources and emphasizing all-around amenities could be good starting points for building our own strong program of outdoor recreation.

PART IV

POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

Countless organizations across Alaska are heavily invested in the maintenance and continued development of the state's existing networks of trails. These organizations are varied and diverse in their relationship with trails, from land managers to recreational clubs to businesses that rely on recreation.

The list of organizations below is partial and meant to be purely illustrative of the type of diversity of groups with a vested interest in Alaska's trails.

This is by no means comprehensive and is merely a first attempt at a list. More work is needed to better represent many of the communities and villages who may be underrepresented in this list.

These organizations have not made any formal commitments to this initiative and are simply a representative selection of Alaskan entities. Only a small number of these entities were consulted during the making of this report, but the remaining groups will be contacted for feedback and potential partnership in the future. In compiling this list, the Initiative is attempting to demonstrate Alaska's current pro-trail potential.

Those organizations which have made a partner commitment to the Trails Initiative are indicated in bold.

LAND MANAGERS

Ahtna, Inc.
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Alaska Department of Transportation
Alaska Mental Health Land Trust
The Aleut Corporation
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation
Bering Straits Native Corporation
Bristol Bay Native Corporation
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Anchorage District
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Anchorage Field
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Arctic District
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Barrow Field
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Central Yukon Field
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eastern Interior Field
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Fairbanks District
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Glenallen Field
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Nome Field
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Recreation Division
Calista Corporation
Chugach Alaska Corporation
Chugach State Park
Cook Inlet Region, Inc.
Doyon Limited
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
Konaig Incorporated
NANA Regional Corporation
National Parks Service
Ounalashka Corporation
Sealaska Corporation
State Parks - Chugach
State Parks - Kenai Peninsula / Prince William Sound
State Parks - Kodiak
State Parks - Mat-Su / Copper Basin
State Parks - Northern
State Parks - Southeast
University of Alaska
US Fish and Wildlife Service

US Forest Service Region 10
USFS Chugach National Forest
USFS Tongass National Forest

NON-PROFITS

Alaska Chapter National Recreation and Parks Association
Alaska Dog Musers Association
Alaska Huts
Alaska Long Trails
Alaska Outdoor Access Alliance
Alaska Outdoor Council
Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association
Alaska Trails
Anchorage Park Foundation
Bethel Trails Committee
Big Lake Trails
Bike Anchorage
Chugach Park Fund
Delta Junction Trails Association
Friends of Eagle River Nature Center
Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park
Friends of Kodiak State Parks
Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su
Girdwood Trails Committee
Great Land Trust
Interior Alaska Land Trust
Island Trails Network
Kachemak Heritage Land Trust
Kenai Mountains/Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area
Levitation 49/Confluence
Mat-Su Health Foundation
Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation
Rasmuson Foundation
Singletrack Advocates
Sitka Trail Works
Trail Mix, Inc.
Tsalteshi Trails Association
Willow Trails Committee

CLUBS

Alaska ATV Club
Alaska Extreme Fourwheelers
Alaska Mountain Runners
Anchorage Skijor Club
Anchorage Snowmobile Club
Aurora Dog Musers
Caribou Cabin Hoppers Snowmachine Club
Chugach Mountain Bike Riders
Curry Ridge Riders
Denali Nordic Ski Club
Fairbanks Area Hiking Club
Fairbanks Snow Travelers
Girdwood Mountain Bike Alliance
Girdwood Nordic Ski Club
Homer Cycling Club
Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
Mat-Su Sled Dog Council
Mat-Su Valley ATV Club
Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage
Snomads Snowmachine Club
Valdez Nordic Ski Club
Valdez Snowmachine Club
Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers
Willow Dog Musers

OUTDOOR RECREATION BUSINESSES

Above and Beyond Alaska
Agnew::Beck Consulting
Alaska Alpine Adventures
Alaska Nature Guides
Alaska Wild Guides
Alaska Wildlife Guide
Alaska Wildland Adventures
Alaska ATV Adventures
Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking (AMH)
Alaska Tours
Alaska Wilderness 4-Wheeler Tours
Alyeska Resort
Denali Mountain Works
Downtown Bicycle Rental
Exit Glacier Guides
Flattop Mountain Shuttle
Hoarding Marmot
MICA Guides
Nugget Alaskan Outfitter
REI Anchorage
REI Fairbanks
Rod's Alaskan Guide Service
Sasquatch Alaska Adventure Co.
Seaman's Eco Tour Adventures
St. Elias Alpine Guides
Talkeetna ATV Tours

GOVERNMENT

Alaska Legislature
City of Bethel - Parks and Facilities
City of Sitka
Congressional Delegation of Alaska
Denali Borough
Fairbanks North Star Borough
Fairbanks Parks and Recreation
Juneau Parks and Recreation
Kenai Borough - North Peninsula Recreation
Mat-Su Borough
Northwest Arctic Borough
Office of the Governor

Alaska's lands are managed by a wide variety of organizations and agencies. The State of Alaska owns about 28% of the state's land, while the federal government owns 59% and 1% is privately owned. Alaska Native Corporations also own a significant portion of land — about 12%. This diversity of land managers and agents can lead to complicated interactions between organizations at the dividing lines of ownership.

The non-profits listed here are specifically trail- or outdoor recreation-focused. These groups range from Friends groups to trail advocacy organizations to outdoor and park groups. All of the organizations have an interest in trails and most have a strong interest in advocacy and community action.

For this purpose, clubs are primarily recreation-focused and may or may not engage in trail advocacy. These clubs include motorized and non-motorized trail use, and may include organizations that use trails for recreational hunting.

The business category is less clear. Generally speaking, these businesses were chosen for this list if their success or profits depended on the use of trails. This list thus includes gear stores which may outfit locals or visitors, companies which provide guide services or tours, and lodges or resorts which actively promote and provide access to trails as a main attraction.

City and borough governments, Native regional and village corporations, and institutional owners like the University of Alaska and the Mental Health Land Trust all play a vital role in Alaska land management and trail development. Most of the comprehensive plans and associated implementation strategies developed by these groups already call for more outdoor recreation infrastructure. Supporting these plans is a good way to take further advantage of the benefits trails can provide.

Members of the Alaska Legislature, the Congressional Delegation, and the Office of the Governor are also needed to help improve our trails and strengthen Alaska's economy. Working with Confluence, we have begun reaching out to a number of elected officials.



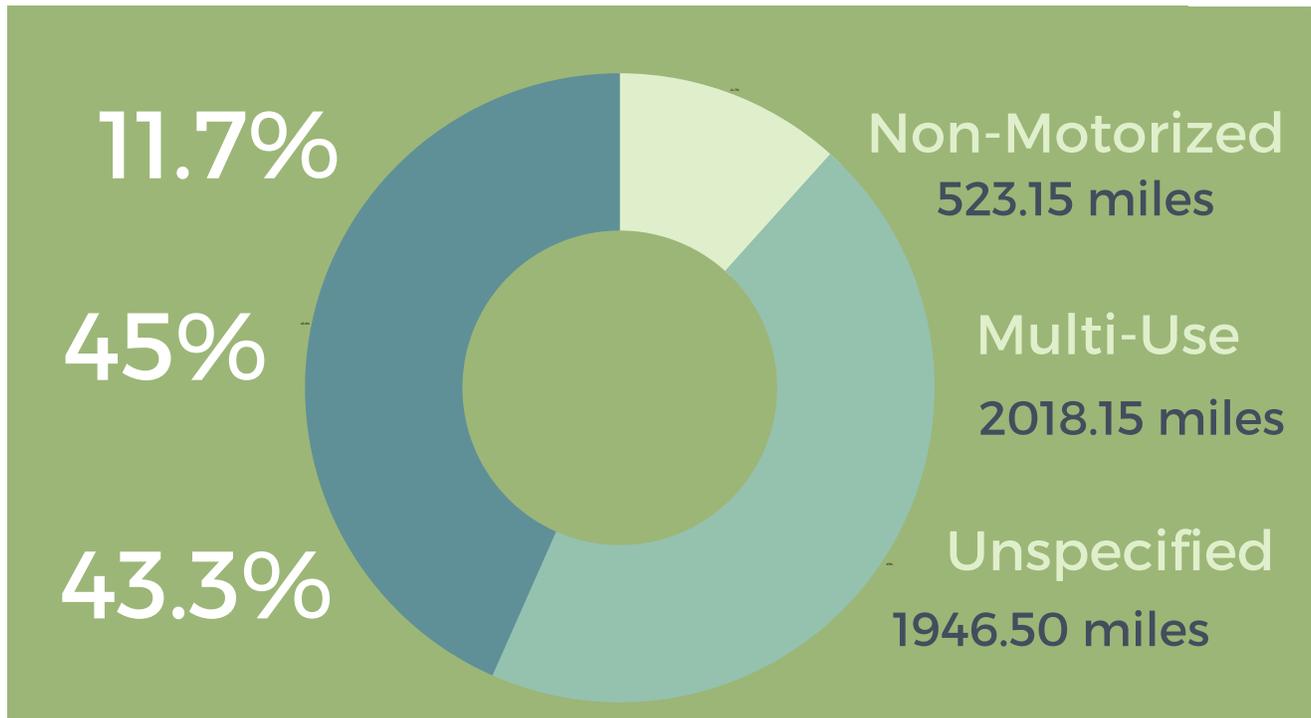
Mount Edgecumbe Trail, Sitka. Source: Dawn Johnson

PART V

TRAIL INVENTORY

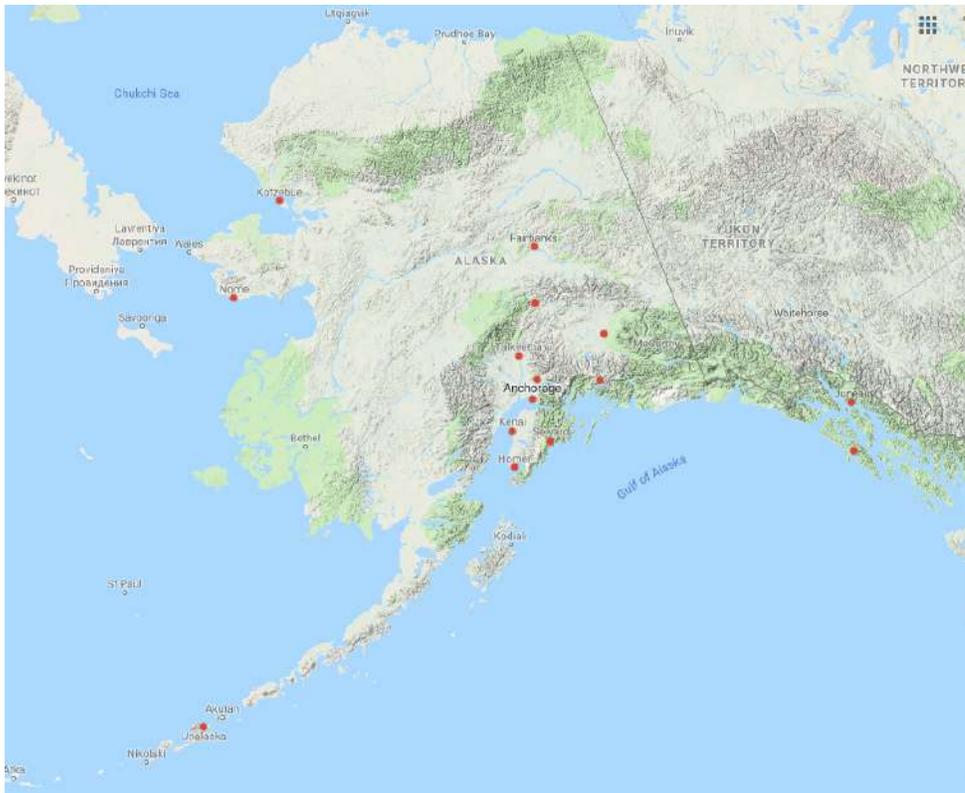
Region	City/Park	Organization(s) Access	Trail	Length (mi)	Format	Partner Organizations	Land Owners	Surface	Use	Existing or Proposed	Current Status	Creation Date	Description	Notes 1:	Submitted By
Southcentral	Anchorage Hillside	Alaska State Park	Prospect Heights Wolverine Peak Trail	4.7	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			3500 ft elevation gain. Moderate difficulty. Mountain summit with view.		
Southcentral	Anchorage Hillside	Alaska State Park	Glen Alps or P. Williwaw Lakes Trail	5.9	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			800 ft elevation gain from GA; 1500 ft (and 7.4 mi) from Prospect Heights.		
Southcentral	Anchorage Hillside	Alaska State Park	Prospect Heights Near Point Trail	3.7	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			2100 ft elevation gain. Moderate difficulty. Hiking and some biking.		
Southcentral	Seward Hwy Trails	Alaska State Park	Bird Ridge Trail	2.5	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			3400 ft elevation gain. Moderate to difficult difficulty. Begins as a single track.		
Southcentral	Seward Hwy Trails	Alaska State Park	Bird Valley Trail	13.2	One-Way				Multi-Use	Existing			Easy difficulty. Hike, bike, ski, horseback, atv, snowmobile (down to road).		
Southcentral	Seward Hwy Trails	Alaska State Park	Bird Valley Trail	10	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			1900 ft to Bird Creek pass. Moderate to difficult. Wide trail continues to Bird Creek.		
Southcentral	Seward Hwy Trails	Alaska State Park	0.5 mile from E Penguin Peak Trail	2	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			3200 ft elevation gain. Difficult. Short but steep. This less developed trail.		
Southcentral	Eagle River Nature	Alaska State Park	Eagle River Near Crow Pass Trail	21	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			2100 ft elevation gain from CC TH, 3100 ft from ER Nature Center.		
Southcentral	Eagle River Nature	Alaska State Park	Eagle River Near Rodak Nature Loop	0.7	Loop				Non-Motorized	Existing			100 ft elevation gain, easy. Interpretive loop trail with salmon and eagle.		
Southcentral	Eagle River Nature	Alaska State Park	Eagle River Near Albert Loop Trail	2.8	Loop				Non-Motorized	Existing			100 ft elevation gain, easy. Reaches banks of Eagle River. Eagle.		
Southcentral	Eagle River Nature	Alaska State Park	Crow Pass Trail	3	One-Way				Non-Motorized	Existing			300 ft elevation gain, easy to moderate. Access to Dew Mound (a).		

A work-in-progress, the Trail Inventory is an attempt to create a first-of-its-kind database of trails across the state, drawing from the inventories of all different land management agencies to create a comprehensive, inclusive list. The database collects as many as possible of the following parameters: Region, City/Park, Organization, Access Point, Trail Name, Length (mi), Format (one-way or loop), Partner Organizations, Land Owners, Surface, Use, Existing or Proposed, Current Status, Creation Date, a full Description, Notes, and Submitter. No trail had all information, and most motorized trails had even less specificity. New trails are being added every day to the inventory.



Currently there are 1,329 trails logged in the system, representing 4,487.81 miles of trail. Most of these trails have Region, City/Park, Access Point, Trail Name, Length, Format, Use, and Existing Status fields filled. Many have excellent descriptions of current status or route highlights.

The trails in the system are primarily centered around metropolitan areas, but include trails from Anchorage, Juneau, Sitka, Fairbanks, Homer, Unalaska, Nome, and Kotzebue, to name a few. Information for trails in rural areas was more difficult to collect.



Areas currently represented in the trail inventory

Trail inventories exist in many agencies around Alaska. The novelty of this attempt is in bringing together many of the resources of different groups to create a single unified list. This inventory includes submissions from the USFS Tongass National Forest and Chugach National Forest branches, Alaska State Parks, University of Alaska, Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska Pacific University, Eagle River Parks & Rec, Mat-Su Borough, Kachemak Nordic Ski Club, Sheep Mountain Lodge, Tsalteshi Trails, Sitka Trail Works, Bureau of Land Management, NPS, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Bering Straits Native Corporation, AKDF&G, Northwest Arctic Borough, and Ounalashka Corporation.

As a resource for the future, this list provides a centralized database from which to launch outreach efforts, as well as providing a massive resource of agency-led, reputable trail information for Alaska. Additionally, analysis of this database can provide valuable information that can drive trail development efforts in different regions of Alaska by providing a clear understanding of the current trails in the state.

Region	City/Park	Organization/s Access	Trail	Length (in Formal)	P/Ow/Use	Existing or Pr. Status	Cre. Description	Notes 1.	Submitted By
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Kivalina to Noatak	40	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Kivalina to Kotzebue	75	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Noatak to Kotzebue	55	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Kotzebue to Riley Wreck	15	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Riley Wreck to Aulukuk	5	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Aukluk to Callahan	25	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Kotzebue to Noorvik	50	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Noorvik to Kiana	25	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Noorvik to Singauruk	20	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Singauruk to Selawik	5	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Kiana to Spud Farm	20	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Spud Farm to Selawik	10	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Selawik to Selawik Lake	25	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Selawik Lake to Kauk RI	5	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Callahan to Kauk River	20	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Deering to Candle	30	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Candle to Buckland	25	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Buckland to Kauk River	25	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Callahan to Buckland	25	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Selawik to Penigsgvik	40	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Penigsgvik to Ambler	55	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Kiana to IAN-ABL	50	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	IAN-ABL to Ambler	50	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Penigsgvik to Rabbit Cr	40	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Ambler to Shungnak	25	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Rabbit Creek to Shungnak	40	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		
Northern	Kotzebue Region	Northwest Arctic	Shungnak to Kobuk	5	One-Way	Snoulli-U Existing	Winter Trail		

4487.81
MILES

TRAIL RECORDED IN INVENTORY

1329
TRAILS

LOGGED FROM ALL OVER ALASKA

13.6
MILES

AVERAGE LENGTH OF
MULTI-USE TRAILS

TRAILS FROM
LAND 23
MANAGERS

INCLUDED IN THIS INVENTORY

3.4
MILES

AVERAGE LENGTH OF NON-
MOTORIZED TRAILS

7.0
PERCENT

OF TRAILS REPORTED ARE
LOOPS, NOT ONE-WAY

PART VI PROPOSED PROJECTS SUMMARY

Before delving into the featured trail projects of Part VII, this section provides an overview of a wider selection of projects from around the state. If the trails inventory is the big-picture attempt to understand the current state of trails across Alaska, the projects summary is

a closer look at trail development in the state today. There are many more projects than we can effectively highlight here that demonstrate both worth and momentum in their regions. While the featured trails section of this report limited us to one or two projects per region, this list below demonstrates just how many exciting, viable projects are out there— any one of which could easily take the form of a featured trail. The sheer variety of projects is a reminder that there is tremendous potential for new development in trails.

This list is not exhaustive, nor is it fully representative. Rural communities are underrepresented on this list, mostly due to a combination of lack of trail development and the slow nature of outreach to partner groups.

LOCATION	LAND OWNER	TRAIL	CONDITION	NEEDED INVESTMENTS
SOUTHEAST - Sitka				
1 Sitka	Tongass National Forest	Lucky Chance Mine	Partial existing through informal use	Critical link, would create loop
2 Sitka	City and Borough of Sitka	Cross Trail Connector (Jarvis St)	Existing 5 miles, another 2.6 shovel ready	2.6 miles to be completed 2019-2021
3 Sitka	Tongass National Forest	Gavan Harbor Mtn Trail reroute	Design narrative complete, NEPA in 2019	Needs funding, important part of recreation area
SOUTHEAST - Juneau				
1 Juneau	Tongass National Forest, City & Borough of Juneau, DNR	Treadwell Ditch Trail	Varies	Varies

Sitka Projects: Lucky Chance, Cross Trail Connector, and Gavan Harbor Mtn

Juneau Project: Treadwell Ditch Trail





Anchorage Projects: Arctic to Indian, Crow Pass, Turnagain Arm, Chugach connections, Ship Creek, Park access, South Coastal Trail, Hillside Trails

SOUTHCENTRAL - Anchorage

1	Anchorage/Chugach State Park	AK State Parks	Arctic to Indian	Partial existing summer trail	Upgrade winter route, realign
2	Anchorage/Chugach State Park	AK State Parks	Crow Pass	Existing trail, signage	Maintenance, bridge crossing
	Anchorage/Chugach State Park	Private, MOA, USFS	Community Trails	Varies	Committee working now
3	Anchorage/Chugach State Park	AK State Parks	Turnagain Arm Trail	Missing segment	Fill gap where trail ends
4	Anchorage/Chugach State Park	Private, MOA, State Parks	Connections from town to Chugach	Varies	Highlight connections, build trail
5	Anchorage Bowl	Military, State Parks	Ship Creek extension	Existing paved trail to Mtn View	Option to continue to Seward Hwy
	Anchorage Bowl	Mixed	Community connectors	Varies	Work with APF
6	Anchorage Bowl	Mixed	Chugach State Park access	Varies	State Parks access plan has details
7	Anchorage Bowl	Private, ADF&C	South Coastal Trail	Continuation of existing trail	Link existing trail with Turnagain Arm
8	Anchorage/Chugach State Park	AK State Parks	Hillside Trail projects	Existing trails and signage	Sustainable rerouting, education

	LOCATION	LAND OWNER	TRAIL	CONDITION	NEEDED INVESTMENTS
SOUTHCENTRAL - Mat-Su Borough					
1	Denali State Park	Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation, AK State Parks	Curry Ridge Trail	Currently design & build stage	Slated for Pittman Robertson funding
	Denali State Park	AK State Parks	Backcountry Trails	Trail blowouts, several problem areas	Funding needed
	Denali State Park	AK State Parks	Public Use Cabins	Increasing PUCs	3 new PUCs at Kesugi Ken, 3 new PUCs Kesugi Ridge and Curry Ridge
2	Independence Mine State Historical Park/East HP Management Area	AK State Parks	Reed Lakes Trailhead	Needs design & construction docs	Relocate TH before bridge, larger lot. Needs funding
	Nancy Lake State Recreation Areas	AK State Parks	Public Use Cabins	Replace aging PUCs	Replace 5 PUCs, need funding
3	Nancy Lake State Recreation Areas	AK State Parks	Canoe Loop Water Trail	Need to remove old bridges and reroute portions	Multi-year, \$300K project funding needed

Mat-Su Projects: Curry Ridge Trail, Reed Lakes Trailhead, Canoe Loop Water Trail



PROPOSED PROJECTS

LOCATION	LAND OWNER	TRAIL	CONDITION	NEEDED INVESTMENTS
SOUTHCENTRAL - Kenai Peninsula Borough				
Spencer Glacier	USFS	Hut	Portions of trail built, one USFS cabin	Project in process, USFS and Huts
INTERIOR - Denali Borough				
Healy/Denali NP	Mixed	Bison Trail	Some trail, lot on wrong side	New parking lot, trail development
Parks Hwy	Mixed	Parks Hwy Bike Trail	Varies	Develop bike trail

The placement of all these project ideas side-by-side gives some insight into the challenges of developing new trail plans. While a safer crossing of Eagle River, for example, at the start of Crow Pass Trail has long been discussed and supported, improving various connector trails around Anchorage might have a much larger impact on the thousands of people who use city trails compared to the hundreds who might use backcountry ones. When funding is limited and land managers must balance the maintenance of existing trails with the development of new ones, the potential return on investment of each trail becomes an important measure of project worthiness. Trails that could be a compelling reason for visitors and locals to stay in Alaska and spend their money here may be more valuable than trails which cater to a smaller, less profitable sector of the population.

This list is still growing... submit your local projects to represent your region.



NPS Ranger Glenn helps a youth volunteer carry trash out of a site in Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve. Source: NPS, Sean Tevebaugh



Crow Pass Trail. Source: Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, Jacob Torres

PART VII

FEATURED TRAILS

These featured trail projects represent the diversity of the Alaska Trails Initiative's coalition base. Ranging geographically from metropolitan hubs to rural communities and in user type from day-trippers to backcountry hikers to subsistence hunters to motorized users, these trails showcase just a sampling of the potential available in Alaska's trails. These projects are part of a larger, comprehensive statewide trail plan to promote sustainable, high-quality trails across Alaska.

Our role is to help increase the visibility of these projects and convene partners who can help move these priority projects to completion.

We look forward to working with organizations, agencies, and other partners to further add to and refine this list of projects.

CRITERIA

These trail projects are featured because they are the projects across the state that might realistically move forward in the next year or two. They are all supported by a strong champion in their region. Land managers, non-profits, and other organizations were asked to submit projects that they and their communities were excited about pushing forward. The hope was that these projects would all be shovel-ready; this is not the case, but these projects are all feasible with support and funding. Every project has the potential to produce economic benefits.

75
MILES
EXISTING TRAIL ON ROUTE

48
MILES
TRAIL TO CONSTRUCT

\$25-30
MILLION
INVESTMENT NEEDED

7
COMMUNITIES ON THE TRAIL

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

Municipality of Anchorage, State of Alaska, USDA Forest Service, Kenai Peninsula Borough

Non-Profit Partners

Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area, Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, Alaska Trails, Seward Trailblazers, Girdwood Trails Committee

Business Sponsors

Girdwood Brewing Co., Trail Lake Lodge, Spoons Catering, Alaska Wildland Adventures, The Ice Cream Shop, Trail Lake Lodge, Girdwood Picnic Club, The Bake Shop

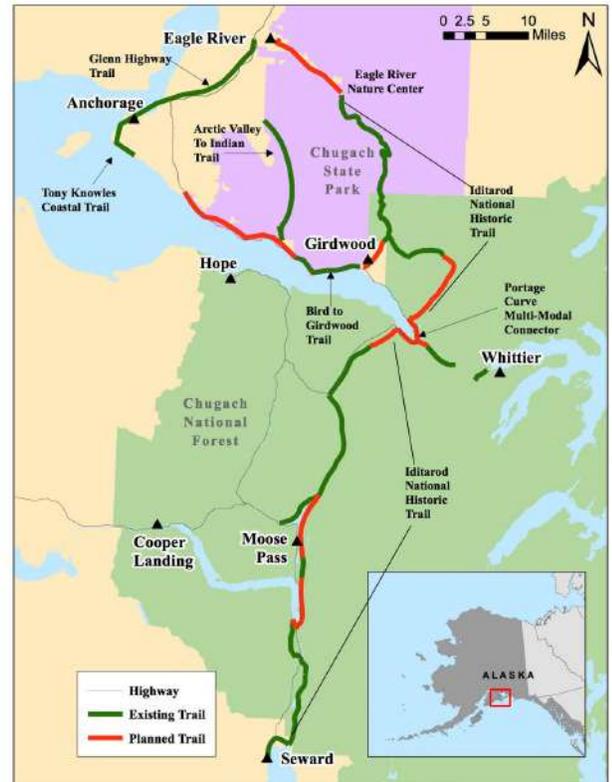
FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

ANCHORAGE TO SEWARD

VISION: A continuous trail connecting Anchorage and Seward that fosters healthy communities and economic development through world-class recreational opportunities

Project Summary

The 120+ mile route from Anchorage to Seward goes through awe-inspiring terrain ranging from coast to alpine, along the same routes traveled by people for thousands of years, and connects several communities. People of all abilities and interests enjoy existing trail segments year-round. The area is rich in history and culture: nearly the entire route is part of the IDITAROD NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL. Much of it is already in place, ranging from paved paths to primitive backcountry trails. Additional key investments and continuing partnerships will make the vision a reality by connecting the existing trail segments together.



Project Benefits

Improving trails infrastructure is a smart way to invest in our state's future. Easy access to trails enhances tourism opportunities, improves real estate values, builds communities, and provides numerous ways for Alaskans and visitors to enjoy a healthy way of life. By completing the Anchorage to Seward trail, every community along the route will enjoy the benefits of having a destination trail in their backyard.

What if we could convince visitors to stay for just "one more day"? In 2017, visitors spent approximately \$2.8 billion in Alaska, which comes to around \$275 million/day. If even just half of visitors added "one more day" to their itineraries, their actions could contribute an extra \$137 million in spending to Alaska's economy.

ANCHORAGE TO SEWARD

Current Investments

Portage Curve Multimodal Connector: The USDA Forest Service is working in partnership with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to design and construct 7 miles of paved accessible trail from Twenty Mile to Ingram Creek adjacent to the Seward Highway, 5 new trailheads and a trail connection to the Trail of Blue Ice in Portage Valley. Total project cost is estimated at \$12 million and will be funded through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), and Forest Service funding.

Anchorage Non-Motorized Plan: Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions, or AMATS, is working on a plan to create a "multi-modal transportation system that is efficient, safe, and implementable." The plan is a comprehensive effort to examine the opportunities to increase and expand multi-modal facilities, for both recreation and transportation, throughout the city of Anchorage, Alaska.

Needed Investments

Substantial progress has been made in creating a continuous route. With key additional investments, the route will be complete. In Anchorage, paved routes could be identified and constructed to connect the existing trails system to Potter Creek. From Potter Creek to Bird, Chugach State Park has proposed a 12.1 mile paved path that will connect Potter to the existing Bird to Girdwood path, and is planning to improve additional trail segments to connect to other parts of Anchorage and Eagle River. The Chugach National Forest has planned approximately 35 miles of additional trail and completed design work for six bridges. Additional funding is required to complete construction of trail infrastructure. Once complete, partners can work together to market the destination trail more widely, and continue to engage local residents in shared stewardship of the trail.

For More Information

To learn more about this project and the Alaska Trails Initiative, contact Steve Cleary of Alaska Trails at steve.cleary@alaska-trails.org or 907-334-8049.



NEEDED INVESTMENTS



Chugach National Forest

27 bridges and 35 miles of trail segments: \$8-10 million

Chugach State Park

12.1 mile paved path: est. \$12-15 million

Anchorage Connections

~ \$1 million per mile new paved travel construction

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3.7
MILES
BETWEEN THE EXISTING
TURNAGAIN ARM TRAIL AND
THE BIRD TO GIRL BIKE TRAIL

26.5
MILES
OF UNINTERRUPTED TRAIL
CREATED BY THIS PROJECT

2
DOT/PF
PROJECTS
IN PROGRESS THAT
MIGHT FILL THIS GAP

OPENS UP
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR TRAIL FROM ANCHORAGE TO
PORTAGE, MOOSE PASS, OR SEWARD

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

Chugach State Park,
Municipality of Anchorage,
DOT/PF

Non-Profits

Anchorage Park Foundation,
KMTA National Heritage Area,
Anchorage Economic
Development Corp, "Live Work
Play"

FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

TURNAGAIN ARM CONNECTOR

VISION: Fill the missing 3.7 mile link between two trails to create an inviting, continuous path between Anchorage and Girdwood and eventually from Anchorage to Seward along the sunny Arm



Project Summary

Two well-used trails run along Turnagain Arm between Anchorage and Girdwood. One is the Turnagain Arm Trail which follows a path above and parallel to the Seward Highway. This is a historic route used to connect the people living along Alaska's coast with the interior of the state. The second is the more recent, paved "Bird to Gird" biking and pedestrian trail.

This proposed "Turnagain Connector" project would fill the short gap between these two trails and create an inviting, safe connection between the Anchorage Bowl and Girdwood, setting the stage for future connections south to Portage, Moose Pass, and Seward.

Project Benefits

Adding this one small link greatly adds to the value of already well-used trails, creating a major attraction for visitors, residents, and businesses. The trail is strategically located in the scenic corridor that connects Alaska's largest city and the destinations and communities of Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula. This trail is perfect for the large portion of Alaska's residents and visitors who seek a comfortable, safe, easy outdoor adventure that does not require tremendous fitness or experience but does offer the rewards of some of Alaska's most beautiful landscapes. Linking these existing trails will give visitors more reason to spend time in Southcentral Alaska.

TURNAGAIN ARM CONNECTOR

Current Investments

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has two projects in progress that could complete this valuable trail link if bike trails were added to the current designs.

- In late 2019, AK DOT/PF will begin work on improvements to the Seward Highway between milepost 100 and 105; as part of the project there will be a 1 mile extension of the existing Bird to Gird Trail (from MP 103 to 104). However, this project does not currently include an extension of the trail between Milepost 104 and 105.
- DOT/PF is considering a project in the Windy Corner area, from Milepost 105 to 107. That project would include a major rock quarry to generate material for a new, straighter alignment for the road and railroad. This project does not currently include a paved bike trail, but the addition of one would help bridge this gap between Anchorage and Girdwood.

Needed Investments

Work is still needed to finalize the best approach to making this key trail linkage. Businesses, trail users, and other should stay actively involved as DOT/PF works out the final details of these two projects. A particular need is to ensure the bike trail connects between the Windy Corner trailhead and the Bird to Gird bikepath. In addition to or instead of the paved road side trail, there is a possibility of a continuation of the Turnagain Trail uphill from the road. The terrain is steep and challenging, however.

For More Information

To learn more about this project, contact Steve Cleary of Alaska Trails at steve.cleary@alaska-trails.org



NEEDED INVESTMENTS



Seward Highway

Identifying the best approach to including this trail

Funding, adding a bike path to existing projects

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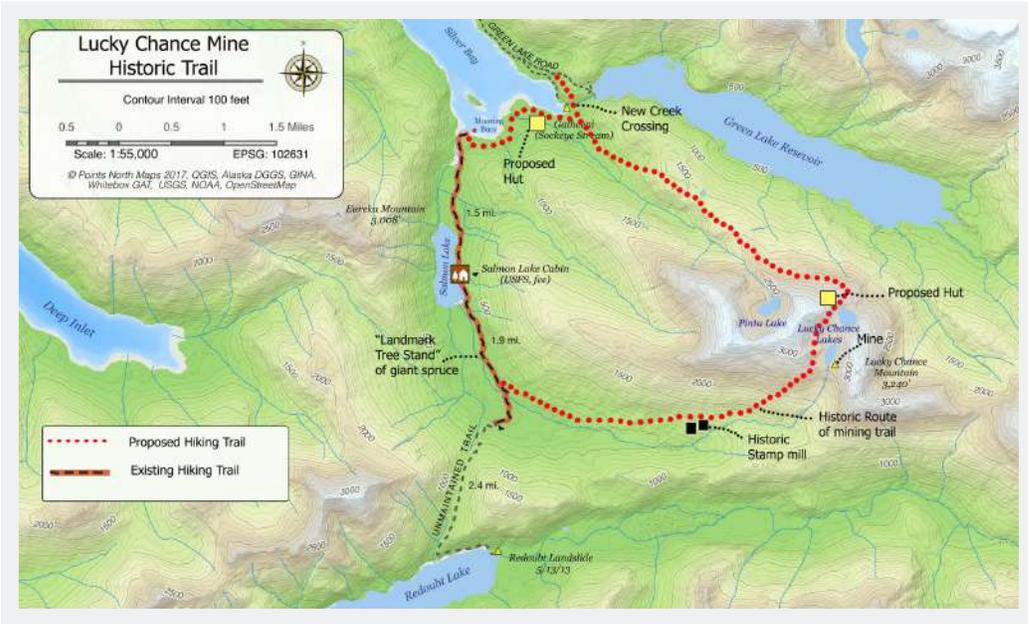
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FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

LUCKY CHANCE MINE

VISION: A new loop trail would connect two existing historic trails and the Sitka road system in a spectacularly scenic route



Project Summary

This project is a critical link in the Sitka Trail System. It connects the Sitka road system (Municipal lands) with the old corduroy road system created by Alaska's first gold miners at the Lucky Chance mine (National Forest Lands). This project would create a loop trail from two existing historic trails: the Lucky Chance Mine and the Salmon Lake trails. Hikers would be able to see historic remnants first-hand as they follow the same route used by miners who hauled ore from the first major hard rock mine in Alaska. The Lucky Chance claims were the first major hard-rock mines developed in the state. The scenery along the route is spectacular, with superb old-growth forests, alpine lakes, muskegs and narrow gorges with waterfalls. The trip would be a two or three-day hike with stops at proposed alpine camping hut or existing Forest Service Cabin.

Project Benefits

This trail will provide a number of public benefits. Recent planning shows demonstrated strong support for trails and trails with historical content. An additional advantage is that this trail would be accessible to the Green Lake road. One Forest Service cabin would become accessible to the road system. It would serve as a year-round trail. Development of this trail will create family wage jobs building the trails, provide new small business opportunities, and create new recreation infrastructure. The 2006 McDowell Group tourism study found that 25% of visitors surveyed at the Sitka Airport enjoyed area trails during their visit. With more trail options, visitors to Sitka may spend more time—and money—in the city.



11
MILES
TRAIL TO CONSTRUCT

1872
ORIGINAL HISTORIC MINE
CONSTRUCTED

76
PERCENT
OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORT
BACKCOUNTRY HISTORIC TRAILS

25
PERCENT
OF VISITORS ENJOY TRAILS
WHEN VISITING SITKA

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

USFS - Tongass National Forest,
City and Borough of Sitka,
Federal Energy Regulatory
Commision

Non-Profit Partners

Sitka Trail Works

LUCKY CHANCE MINE



NEEDED INVESTMENTS



Tongass Ntl Forest

11 miles of new trail construction, 3 miles old trail construction, 3 proposed huts, one large bridge over Green Lake Outfall

Projected cost \$4.476 M

Current Investments

Sitka Trail Works has pursued various funding opportunities, including state legislative and federal funding efforts. It is a project goal of the Sitka Trail Plan and the 2011 Sitka Sustainable Outdoor Recreation plan. The 3 miles of Salmon Lake trail is a maintained section and portions of the Lucky Chance Mine trail exist as a result of informal use. Traces of the 1872 mine still exist including shafts, glory hole, the stamp mill, and aerial tram. Most of the hikers start from the other end of the trail, from the beach across from the Green Lake dam powerhouse. Since the trail isn't formalized it only gets sporadic use by adventurous hikers when the weather is good.

Needed Investments

The project is still in the planning phase. The trail receives informal use since sections are existing as a part of the old mining effort, making the probable route easily identifiable. The US Forest Service and City and Borough of Sitka, Sitka Trail Works, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission would be involved.

The project is spearheaded by the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization Sitka Trail Works. Development of the Trail System is being guided by the 2003 Sitka Trail Plan. Trail projects that are developed on lands belonging to a single land owner are straightforward in how they are developed and funded. When the proposed trail system involves multiple land owners, as in the case of the Lucky Chance Mine Historic Trail, project development becomes very complex. Multiple sources of funding are required, as well as a high degree of partnership coordination. Eleven miles will be constructed to an unpaved hiking trail standard. At least three large bridges will be needed, one major stream crossing at the Green Lake river outfall. Two huts are proposed for the trail loop. Investments in a conceptual design and cost estimate will be needed. Bridge locations, design and engineering, trail alignment and survey, permitting and construction investments needed.

For More Information

To learn more about this project, contact Lynne Brandon of Sitka Trail Works at trail@sitkatrailworks.org or 907-747-7244.

Photos by Dawn Johnson and Suzanne Jackson



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 **49**
MILES
TRAIL CONNECTED BY PROJECT

14
MILES
TRAIL TO CONSTRUCT

2019
SPRING/FALL
BEGIN CONSTRUCTION

80
PERCENT
VISITORS REPORT WILDLIFE VIEWING
OR HUNTING AS PURPOSE OF TRIP

54
CARS/DAY
COUNTED ENTERING DENALI STATE
PARKS ON AVERAGE OVER 73 DAYS

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

Alaska State Parks, Alaska
Department of Fish & Game

Non-Profit Partners

Mat-Su Trails and Parks
Foundation (MSTPF)

FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

KESUGI TO CURRY RIDGE

VISION: A new trail would connect the popular Kesugi Ken Campground with the Kesugi Ridge Trail, providing new backcountry access for hiking, hunting, and wildlife viewing



Project Summary

This project will construct up to 14 miles of new connector trails to improve public access to a world class trail network in the state park's crown jewel of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The trail will create new access for hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. The project will link the popular Kesugi Ridge Trail (~30 miles) to the new Curry Ridge Trail (~5 miles) that has been constructed above the new Kesugi Ken campground. State Parks constructed a short loop at the top of the Curry Ridge Trail in FY 2018 to avoid establishment of social trails. This project would begin at the crest of that segment and provide users the option to extend their trip overnight.

Project Benefits

This project will improve access for hunting, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities by establishing a new trail route that connects the new Kesugi Ken campground to the rest of the trail network that provides access to the Byers Lake trail system and the Kesugi Ridge/Upper Troublesome Creek Trail. With a large number of visitors already in the area, this connection could draw more, adding to fees collected in the area and increasing revenue. In addition to improved access, this project will also benefit private businesses, such as guide services, who operate in the Denali State Park area. With increased usage year after year, this highly-impacted area will benefit from increased connectivity.

KESUGI TO CURRY RIDGE



Current Investments

The Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation will be managing the funding aspects, contracting, and overall project management; however, the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) will provide construction as needed. MSTPF and their subcontractor will be responsible for the trail design parameters and coordination of any necessary environmental impact analyses and permitting. DPOR will be consulted during this process as necessary. Overall, MSTPF will be responsible for developing plans and specifications for construction of the project that adhere to DPOR policies and regulations. The Curry to Kesugi Ridge trail project was included in the public scoping process when the master plan for South Denali Implementation Plan was completed in 2006 by Alaska State Parks and the National Park Service. MSTPF has adopted this project as a priority trail project of focus that they hope to complete by 2021. Phase I of the project will begin in Spring 2019 and consists of community engagement and route determination.

Needed Investments

Phase I will commence in Spring-Fall of 2019 and will include community outreach and route flagging. Construction, Phase II, will take place during Spring-Fall 2020. Remaining construction, signage installation, and reporting will be finalized during Spring-Winter 2021.

For More Information

To learn more about this project, contact Wes Hoskins of Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation at whoskins@matsutrails.org or 907-746-8757.

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NEEDED INVESTMENTS



Denali State Park

14 miles of new connector trails from Curry Ridge to Kesugi Ridge Trails

Interpretive signs/kiosks

Trail mapping, GPS/GIS collection, reporting



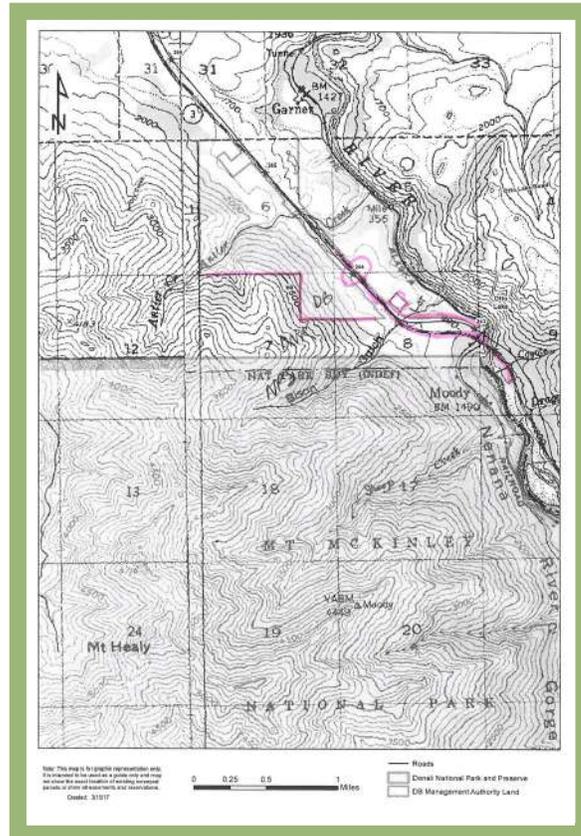
FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

BISON GULCH

VISION: A relocated parking lot and expanded trailhead and short trail options opens up Bison Gulch as a user-friendly recreation area year-round

Project Summary

At Mile 243.5 on the east side of the Parks Highway there is a small AK DOT pullout. For many years, this pullout has been utilized as a parking lot by local and tourist hikers to access the Mount Healy trailhead. Denali Borough's intention is to relocate the parking area North and across to the West side of the Parks Highway at approximately mile 244 of the Parks Highway. In addition to the newly-created parking area, this project will also seek to develop a new trailhead and open up other hiker-friendly 2-3 mile loops for hiking or cross-country skiing in the Bison Gulch area in the Denali Borough.



Project Benefits

The focus of this project is to relocate the Bison Gulch parking area and enhance the Mount Healy trailhead and trail. The Bison Gulch area is located at approximately mile 243.5 of the Parks Highway. The area is well-known, widely-used, and in definite need of improvement. The Denali Borough owns land that is located on the north and west side at mile marker 244 of the Parks Highway. This land can be used to create a new parking area and trailhead to potentially branch out to align with the existing Mount Healy trail.

By moving the parking area across to the west side of the highway, it will provide users a safer and more direct access to the same side of the trailhead, eliminating the endangerment of crossing pedestrians and oncoming traffic. Redesigning and refurbishing the trailhead and trail will allow all levels of hikers a chance to hike a more cohesive trail system. Additional trails will also offer more options for trail users in a busy, high-traffic area. Short loop trails offer different options for recreation in summer and winter and cater to local and visiting users.

In an area already popular during the summer months, this trail offers visitors to the Healy area a safer option to explore and a reason to stay longer in the region.

INCLUDED
IN **3**
PLANS AND RESOLUTIONS

2-3
MILE
LOOP TRAILS PROPOSED

MEASURABLE
INCREASE IN
SAFETY
FOR LOCALS AND VISITORS

POTENTIAL
LAND **3**
PARTNERS

WHO MANAGE LAND IN OR
AROUND THE AREA

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

Denali Borough, National Park Service - Denali National Park, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Department of Transportation

BISON TRAIL



NEEDED INVESTMENTS



Denali Borough

New parking lot, upgraded trailhead, new connector trail or short 2-3 mile loop trails suitable for hiking or cross-country skiing. Funding needed.

Current Investments

Denali Borough is currently in the very beginning planning stages of this project. While initially the main focus was exclusively on relocating a dangerous parking lot, the project has developed an ambition to also expand trails and trail access in the area. Realistically, logistically, and financially, this is proving to be more complicated than it sounds. Denali Borough is currently in the process of applying for the Federal Land Access Program grant to fund the construction costs of the parking area. The Borough is also applying for the Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance program through the National Park Service. The RTCA would be able to assist and consult on the creation of new trails and especially the enhancement of the Mount Healy trail.

The Denali Borough Assembly also passed a resolution (19-02) supporting the development of a plan to improve the Bison Gulch parking area and the nearby Mount Healy trail, aiming to "support quality, sustainable 'front country' recreation and tourism."

A definite advantage is that the Denali Borough owns the land on either side of the proposed lot at mile marker 244. This land can be used to create the parking area, trailhead, and then new trail branches.

Needed Investments

The project is still in the planning phase. Concrete plans for a trailhead and potential trails, along with land manager agreements, would need to be developed. The collaboration of the National Park Service, Department of Natural Resources, and the Alaska Department of Transportation would be needed for future collaboration and potential access to their portions of land.

While planning is still in early stages, input from community and other interested parties will be necessary and useful.

For More Information

To learn more about this project, contact Mayor Clay Walker of the Denali Borough at cwalker@denaliborough.com or Trena Haugen of the Denali Borough at thaugen@denaliborough.com or 907-683-1330.

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BOTH
MOTORIZED AND NON-
MOTORIZED USERS
SERVED BY THESE PROJECTS

17
MILES
OF POTENTIAL NEW
GROOMED TRAIL IN VALDEZ
CREEK ROAD

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC NAMED
DENALI HIGHWAY IS
ONE OF THE
TOP 10
MOST SCENIC
DRIVES IN THE
WORLD

123
MILES
SNOW GROOMED THROUGH SNOW
TRAC FUNDS AND LODGE OWNERS

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

Denali Borough, Mat-Su
Borough, State of Alaska

Businesses

Denali Snowcat, Maclaren River
Lodge, Backwoods Lodge,
Clearwater Mountain Lodge,
Alpine Creek Lodge

FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

DENALI HWY & CANTWELL WINTER

VISION: An expansion of winter recreation options in the popular Denali Highway/Cantwell area would provide new options for multi-use and non-motorized local and visiting users



Project Summary

The Denali Highway/Cantwell area is already a popular winter recreation destination. This spectacular region stretches out along the southern edge of the Alaska Range, at the meeting place of the Denali and Matanuska-Susitna Boroughs. Zack Russell with Denali Snowcat is grooming the west half of the Denali Highway with funding from the State of Alaska Snow Trac funds. Alan Echols with Maclaren River Lodge is grooming the east half of the Denali Highway, meeting in the middle. He also grooms a 30-mile loop and a 10-mile loop off the highway. The result is a wintertime route through striking wilderness terrain, open to snowmachiners, dog mushers, skiers, fat tire bikers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. In addition to great snowpack and impressive scenery, there are lodges along the route such as Backwoods Lodge, Clearwater Mountain Lodge, Alpine Creek Lodge, and McLaren River Lodge.

A list of potential project ideas follows on the next page. These projects would embrace motorized and non-motorized users and encourage both locals and visitors to recreate more frequently in the area. By taking advantage of the already-great resources in the area, these projects could make the area the go-to winter destination for outdoor recreation, bringing jobs to the area while enhancing local and visitor recreation experiences.

DENALI HWY & CANTWELL WINTER



Current Options

Current options to sustain and expand the existing winter recreation opportunities in the Denali Highway/Cantwell area:

- Continuing the funding that supports the grooming of the Denali Highway. The Snow Trac funding that pays for this grooming is proposed to be eliminated in the Governor's budget
- Expanding the number of areas that are groomed— the Valdez Creek Road would be ideal track to send a Snowcat groomer along. This road, which leaves the Denali Highway at MP 79.0, leads to the abandoned mining camp of Denali. Originally developed in 1903, the area was worked extensively until 1995. There are still current mining operations that are active in the summer months. The existing road runs approximately 17 miles to Roosevelt Lake and would open up an attractive new option for a range of users looking to play in the Clearwater Mountains.
- Coordinating with the community of Cantwell to establish it as a gateway for a range of winter recreation activities.
- Developing an integrated trails information and marketing plan, working with land owners, residents, community organizers, local businesses, and boroughs. Aiming to integrate marketing and trail information to better describe the area. Resources would include online information about winter experiences, hardcopy "collateral material" like maps and advice for safe travel, trail signage at the entrances to the Denali Highway winter recreation area, and connections to local businesses or public information places.

For More Information

To learn more about this project, contact Mayor Clay Walker of the Denali Borough at cwalker@denaliborough.com or Zack Russell of Zack's Towing/Denali Snowcat Services at zackrussell@denalilsnowcat.com



NEEDED INVESTMENTS



Denali Borough

Continuing Snow Trac funding and expanding groomed areas

Coordinating public support from Cantwell community

Integrated marketing/information plan

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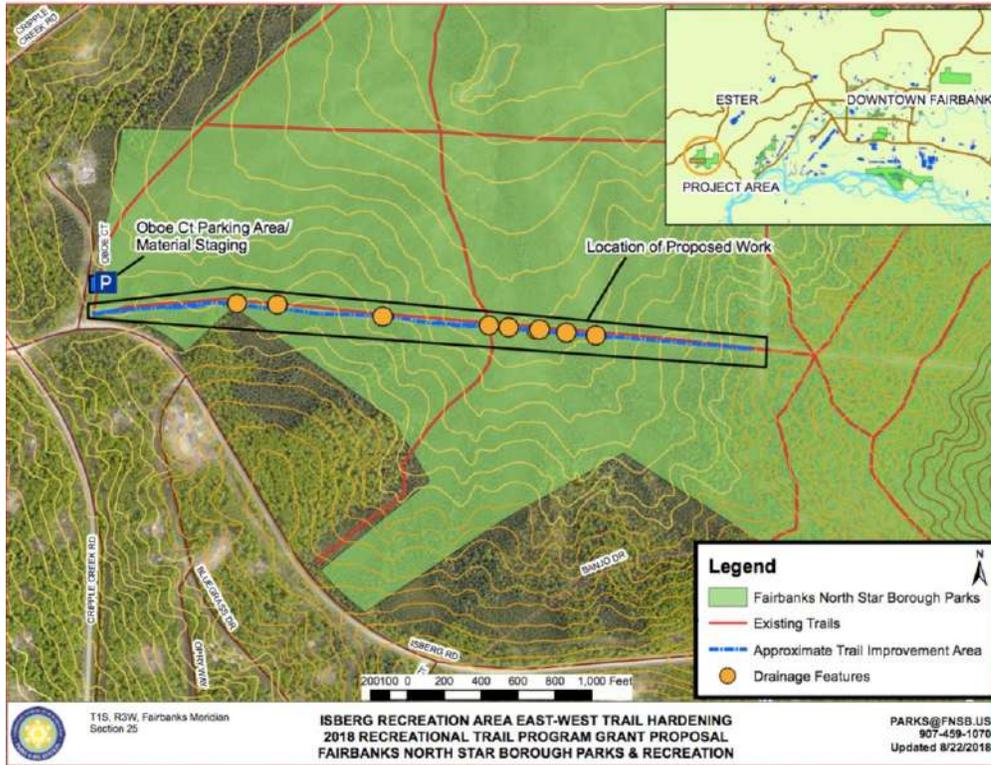
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FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

ISBERG RECREATION AREA

VISION: The latest improvement to the growing recreation area, the hardening of a 3-mile loop would provide a usable summer trail and better access to Isberg Uplands



Project Summary

The Isberg Recreation Area, a 420-acre area in the Cripple Creek subdivision south of Fairbanks, has slowly amassed improvements over the years. These improvements have most been related to damaged trails and the boggy nature of the area. This project would harden a 3-mile loop in the Isberg lowlands, making it useable in the summer and providing durable year-round access to the upland trails. The hardening of the northwest side of the loop has already been completed. This project would complete the south side. The north-south connection on the west side would be the final component of the loop project.

Project Benefits

This project would help create a sustainable, useable trail that allows for summer use without damaging an otherwise-soggy trail. The Isberg Recreation Area has slowly been improved since 2008. This component would improve a key component at the heart of the area and would further the goal of a large, sustainable trail system outside of Fairbanks. Currently the only access to the uplands from the trailhead at Oboe Court is through a multiuse trail in muddy terrain. This project would benefit Fairbanks residents as well as provide an enjoyable option for visitors to the area.



420
ACRES
IN THE ISBERG REC AREA

\$212,500
COMMITTED
TO THE AREA THUS FAR

3
MILES
OF LOOP TRAIL
HARDENED BY
THIS PROJECT

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

Fairbanks Borough Assembly

ISBERG RECREATION AREA



NEEDED INVESTMENTS



Fairbanks Borough

3 miles of trail hardening

New funding to support current plan



Current Investments

In 2007, the Fairbanks Borough Assembly approved a master plan for the Isberg Recreation Area. The Fairbanks Parks and Recreation Department was asked to address community parking concerns and an addendum was added to the master plan, but no major factors were changed.

In 2008, the Isberg Recreation Area received a \$50,000 state grant to improve portions of the 100-Mile Loop Trail. The project was primarily a hardening project to open the trail up for year-round use and prevent rutting. With the borough's matching funds, the project had a total of \$62,500. The Fairbanks Borough Assembly also allocated \$150,000 to developing the area.

In 2010, Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation staff continued to harden the 100-Mile Loop Trail while also beginning construction on the Oboe Court parking lot. They also began scouting a new, non-motorized trail, and brushed a new winter trail to improve rider safety in the area.

There is also continued public support for the area. In 2018, the Parks Department, REI Fairbanks, Alaska Trails, and more than 20 trail users contributed nearly 100 volunteer hours to remove brush from the trailhead and address sinkholes along the trail.

Needed Investments

This project needs additional funds. The Borough has applied for a Recreational Trails Program grant to fund this project. While the northwest side of the loop has been hardened, the south side has yet to be completed. Plans would also need to be developed for the east side, where some kind of north-south connection would be ideal. The Fairbanks community has shown tremendous community support for the area, and volunteer hours and commitment would not be difficult to come by for this project.

For More Information

To learn more about this project, contact Bryant Wright of Fairbanks North Star Borough at BWright@fnsb.us

HOW WILL WE DO IT?

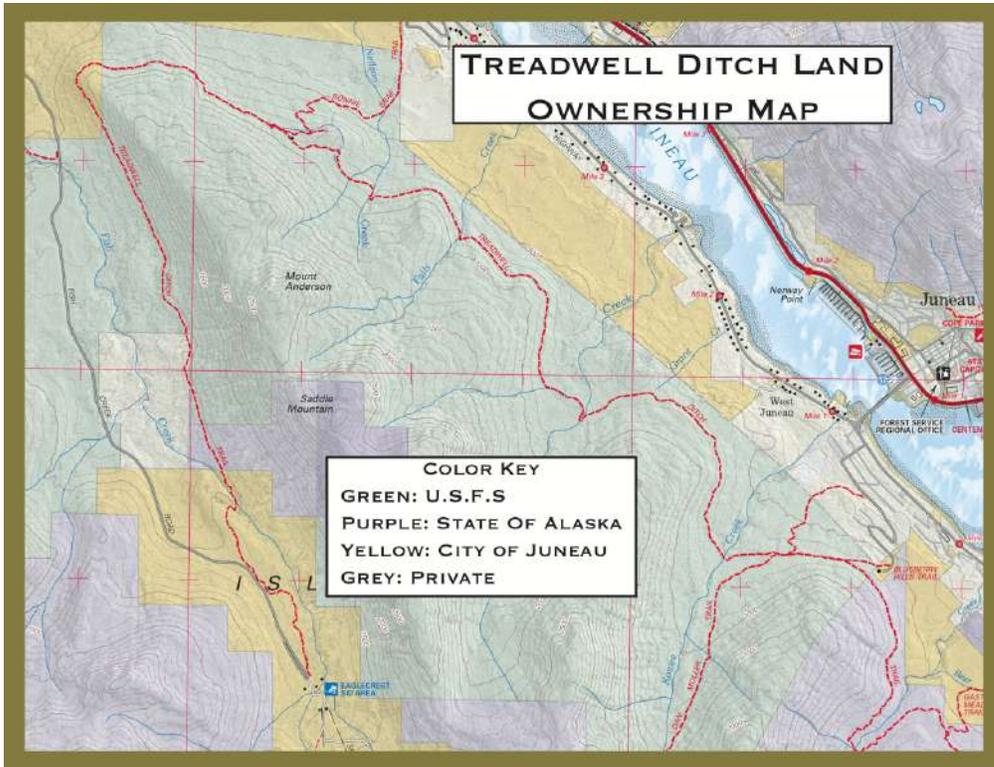
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FEATURED TRAIL PROJECT

TREADWELL DITCH TRAIL

VISION: Improve one of the most-loved trails in Juneau by installing and replacing bridges and culverts and hardening muddy areas



Project Summary

The Treadwell Ditch Trail was built in the late part of the 19th century as an aqueduct to carry water 16 miles at a 1% grade along Douglas Island to the Treadwell Mining District, which at the time was the largest gold mine in the world. Many of the dams, caretaker cabins, and other historic structures are still in evidence along the trail. The actual path is the maintenance trail built alongside the ditch. It is for the most part in excellent shape despite indifferent maintenance over the last century. However there are washouts, missing bridges, and failing culverts that render portions of the trail nearly impassible.

Project Benefits

The Treadwell Ditch Trail is one of the most-loved trails in Juneau. In 2018 there were more than 2,000 volunteer hours logged on the trail. The local distillery hosted a celebration of the Treadwell Ditch Trail in the fall of 2018. By completing the missing connections along the Treadwell Ditch Trail, the trail would enjoy even more use than it currently does. The trail would provide a long, low-angled trail in a community where such trails are rare. This would provide additional accessibility for the community. This would also be a useful option for cruise ship visitors who arrive in Juneau looking for an accessible trail.

43
YEARS

TRAIL HAS BEEN LISTED AS A TOP
PRIORITY ON JUNEAU TRAIL
PLANS

\$1.014
MILLION
CURRENTLY INVESTED IN
PROJECT AREA

2,000
VOLUNTEER
HOURS INVESTED ON
THE TRAIL IN
2018

1%
GRADE
MAKES THIS TRAIL EASILY
ACCESSIBLE

PROJECT PARTNERS

Land Managers

USFS, City and Borough of
Juneau, State of Alaska DNR

Non-Profits

Trail Mix, Inc., Juneau
Community Foundation, National
Forest Foundation, Juneau
Mountain Bikers Alliance

Businesses

Amalga Distillery

TREADWELL DITCH TRAIL



Current Investments

Currently, there is \$110,000 from the Federal Land Access Program invested in the project. There is also \$880,000 from Pittman-Robertson Funds and \$24,000 from the City and Borough of Juneau.

In the last ten years, the project has received \$250,000 from Secure Rural Schools, \$250,000 from the City and Borough of Juneau, and \$90,000 from the State of Alaska Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds.

The project is shovel-ready. NEPA and engineering are completed for most of the trail. The rest should be completed by 2021.

The trail has tremendous public support. With many access points and a negligible grade, the Treadwell Ditch is popular with a wide range of users. Through the year you can see runners, mountain bikers, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers (on portions open to motorized use) and people pushing strollers. There has already been a substantial amount of work on the trail.

The trail has also been listed as a top priority on all Juneau Trail Plans since 1976.

Needed Investments

This project needs additional money for tread repair and to create new access trails.

For More Information

To learn more about this project, contact Erik Boraas of Trail Mix, Inc. at erik@trailmixinc.org or 907-790-6406

NEEDED INVESTMENTS



City and Borough of
Juneau

Additional funding for tread
repair and new access trails



HOW WILL WE DO IT?

ONLY WITH YOUR HELP!

The Initiative's vision will only become reality through an expanding, diverse, and dedicated group of partners. Join us to help invest in our trails for this and future generations.

PART VIII

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY ACTION

IN SUMMARY

- 1 FOCUS ON INVESTMENTS WITH GREATEST IMPACTS
- 2 STABILIZE AND EXPAND RESOURCES FOR TRAILS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION
- 3 STREAMLINE AUTHORIZATIONS FOR USE OF STATE LAND
- 4 IMPROVE MARKETING AND USER INFORMATION
- 5 ESTABLISH A STATE OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION
- 6 SPREAD THE BENEFITS TO ALL USERS, ALL REGIONS
- 7 INCLUDE "WORKING LANDSCAPES" IN DEVELOPMENT
- 8 ACTIVELY GUIDE GROWTH THROUGH MANAGEMENT/ STEWARDSHIP

This section presents strategies to grow opportunities for visitors and residents to enjoy the best of outdoor Alaska year-round.

Alaska has only begun to take advantage of our phenomenal outdoor recreation resources. By working together to expand trails, huts, and outdoor recreation marketing, we can increase reasons for visitors to spend "one more day" in Alaska, better attract and retain residents, and build a stronger, more durable Alaskan economy.

The recommendations detailed below are primarily directed at the following audiences:

- State Legislature and Governor— as they set budgets and policies affecting opportunities to grow the outdoor recreation economy in this state
- Community, Borough, and Tribal Governments— as a reference for budgets and comprehensive plans and land management policies in regions and communities across Alaska
- Large Landowners (State, Federal, Native Corporations)— as a reference and direction as they manage their land and work with other land partners
- Tourism Organizations, including the Alaska Travel Industry Association and Regional Destination Marketing Organizations— as these entities are well positioned to improve marketing of Alaska's outdoor recreation opportunities and to advocate for better outdoor recreation infrastructure

We would like to discuss these initial ideas with the groups above and everyone who cares about Alaska's future economic growth.

1. FOCUS ON INVESTMENTS WITH THE GREATEST IMPACTS

INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS WITH LIMITED RESOURCES

This section presents four major themes for improving outdoor recreation in Alaska, informed by global travel and recreation market trends, experiences of successful destinations around the globe, and Alaska's current outdoor recreation opportunities.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE FOR THE "MISSING MIDDLE"

Alaska needs to increase opportunities for the "missing middle" of the outdoor recreation spectrum, the largest part of the outdoor recreation market. While our state already offers many lifetimes of rugged outdoor adventures and well-established opportunities for more passive outdoor experiences, we need to offer more ways to enjoy outdoor Alaska that are active, accessible, affordable, and memorable, but that do not require much gear, experience, or fitness. These experiences ideally allow visitors and locals to get outside and enjoy engaging with their surroundings, but also provide a warm bed, food and drink, and fast internet at the end of the day.

WORLD CLASS MULTI-DAY TRAILS

While serving the "missing middle" is mostly focused on one-day adventures, Alaska also needs a handful of well-developed, signature "long trails." These trails, like the routes in Europe, the Milford Sound Track in New Zealand, or the popular Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails in the United States, have proven to draw users from all over the world. Alaska particularly needs the international style of hut-to-hut, hotel-to-hotel trails, summer and winter, for motorized and non-motorized users.



Part of the hut-to-hut system in the Dolomites, a convenient piece of infrastructure that invites hikers to trek through the mountain range with a warm bed and meal waiting for them each night.

GATEWAY TOWNS

From Whitehorse, Canada, to Bend, Oregon, to Talkeetna and Sitka, Alaska, more and more communities around the world are attracting visitors and residents by providing:

- A concentrated, walkable center with lodging, food, bars, and other services
- Inviting trails, transit so it's easy to reach nearby outdoor recreation places
- Strong marketing promoting active recreation destinations and experiences
- Great outdoor-focused events

Alaska needs to support more locations with features that attract visitors and residents to compete with destinations all over the world.



Whitehorse. Source: C Robson, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki>

HIGH VOLUME OUTDOOR RECREATION DESTINATIONS

Alaska needs more outdoor recreation destinations that have the drawing power and capacity to attract and please large volumes of visitors. The core attraction can't be "created," but supporting infrastructure can make a big difference in how these destinations function. Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau is one of a few excellent examples in Alaska. Another is the wide, well-maintained trail along the Russian River in the Kenai, a destination that, while not high-volume, does attract a range of walkers, strollers, and bikers. Anchorage and the adjoining Chugach Mountains have the potential for such a destination, but lack the capacity for large-volume motorcoach tours.



Yehliu GeoPark in Taiwan: beautiful, wave-sculpted peninsula with capacity to delight both thousands of daily motorcoach travelers and walkers who head past the crowds to a quiet, windswept viewpoint. Source: Chris Beck

2. STABILIZE AND EXPAND RESOURCES FOR TRAILS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

For decades, Alaska has significantly underfunded outdoor recreation infrastructure. One example: in a state where most visitors and residents are intimidated by the wilderness and weather, there is not a single multi-day hiking, snowmachining, skiing, or biking route that would allow visitors to travel light and arrive each night at warm, dry, comfortable lodging. Many benefits would follow if our state could begin to match the investments in trail construction, maintenance, marketing, and information found in competing states and countries.

For the near term, the key priority is sustaining existing outdoor recreation funding. The state should continue to make the investments— in staff and matching dollars— needed to leverage larger sums from federal trails and highways programs and user group and volunteer resources. Examples below support better trails and recreation access throughout Alaska:

- Pittman Robertson Programs
- Recreational Trails Program (RTP) reinstatement for non-State projects and outside organizations
- Land Water Conservation Funds (access to \$1.5 million with a 50% match)
- Maximizing use of federal transportation dollars
- Renewed support for the Snow Trac Program

In the longer term, more basic approaches need to be found to provide substantial, sustained outdoor recreation investments. A particular issue to address is the "Alaska disconnect." This is the term given to describe the lack of fiscal policies at the state and local level that link growing demand for services with growing resources to meet that demand.

RTP TWO-STEP LEVERAGE

1. State of AK Division of Parks invests \$106,000 in staff time, gets \$1.5 million of federal funds in return

2. Trail organizations get grants and translate this into thousands of hours of volunteer labor.

Example: in Delta Junction, a community of just 847, volunteers have invested 14,000 hours in local trails, worth \$340,000 at the federal volunteer rate



Source: BLM

3. STREAMLINE AUTHORIZATIONS FOR USE OF STATE LAND

PROVIDE REGULATORY RELIEF FOR DEVELOPMENT

Reserving right-of-ways through state land for trails in Alaska today is costly, slow, and difficult. New approaches are needed that respect the need for flexibility in the future use of state land but still allow reasonable assurance that important trail right-of-ways can be reserved through a process that is attainable by local communities and user groups.

4. IMPROVE OUTDOOR RECREATION MARKETING AND USER INFORMATION

BETTER RESOURCES FOR ALL USERS

Better information and marketing offer cost-effective means to maximize the value of trails and outdoor recreation infrastructure, making it more inviting for a broad range of users to get active outside. Most effective is a fully-integrated package, as outlined below:

- Diverse tourism marketing materials that stoke interest
- Online user information that makes it easy to set up adventures, from a one-day hike with shuttle service to a multi-day snow machine trip
- High-quality, hard copy collateral material - maps, trail descriptions
- Visitor Information Centers staffed by people armed with helpful maps and other collateral information and personal, up-to-date knowledge
- Informative, clear, interpretive wayfinding signs on trails
- Well-developed, multi-town itineraries for all abilities and timeframes that highlight the best Alaska has to offer around the state



(left) Visit Anchorage brochure; (below) Arctic Interagency Visitor Center. Source: BLM, Bob Wick



Lynx Trail Build for the BLM Public Lands Day. Source: BLM

5. ESTABLISH A STATE OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

CENTRALIZED OVERSIGHT AND DEDICATED ADVOCACY

Starting in Utah in 2013, 14 US states have established cabinet-level positions or task forces for the oversight of statewide outdoor recreation. These states are: California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. Other states including Minnesota and West Virginia are actively seeking to establish these offices.

Leadership at this level has resulted in substantial advancements in the quality and diversity of outdoor recreation attractions, a higher level of coordination between different interest groups, and increased resources for outdoor recreation development. Creating comparable leadership in Alaska could help our state develop and implement strategies to take greater advantage of our natural resources.

6. SPREAD THE BENEFITS TO ALL USERS IN ALL REGIONS

STATEWIDE SCOPE WITH TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL

From remote rural villages to Southeast rainforests to accessible lands on the railbelt, all of Alaska has real potential to expand outdoor recreation opportunities. That statewide scope is one of the real benefits of focusing on outdoor recreation as an economic strategy. By expanding efforts and particularly state funding to communities outside of the metropolitan centers of Alaska, we can increase the spread of tourism and resources around the state and ensure that the benefits of these tremendous natural resources are felt by all Alaskans, not just those who live close to urban areas. This statewide approach is necessary and must constantly be revisited.

Most importantly, this means listening to communities to understand their needs and wants before taking any action. For some communities, especially as climate change takes its toll on traditional routes, safe travel options may be the highest priority for new trail development. For others, it may be the improvement of subsistence hunting trails and resources for better land access. For still others, it may in fact be the development of visitor resources to attract tourism to a smaller community and attempt to direct visitor spending to these areas directly. Not all policies or ideas that apply to areas like Anchorage or Juneau will apply to communities around the state with varying needs.

This statewide approach is essential if this push is to be a fully Alaskan effort. It is only through involvement and direct support of communities across Alaska that any policy can be fully successful. If we are to develop while keeping Alaska's greatest and most unique traits intact, we must constantly incorporate entities from all across Alaska.



Unalaska/Dutch Harbor. Source: NPS



Unalaska/Dutch Harbor. Source: NPS

7. BE OPEN TO OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ON "WORKING LANDSCAPES"

RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND TRAIL DEVELOPMENT CAN BE COMPATIBLE



Alaskans tend to fall into polarized viewpoints, some supporting fully unconstrained growth; others pushing to leave natural landscapes unaltered. Examples in Alaska and around the world show how resource development can benefit outdoor recreation. Access to past and ongoing mining areas has created some of Alaska's most popular destinations-- Hatcher Pass, McCarthy, and Hope are all good examples. Two of the world's most successful, high profile mountain biking areas share a trail system with active timber harvests, as shown above. These trails are found in Bend, Oregon.



Hope, AK. Source: Meg Pritchard

8. ACTIVELY GUIDE GROWTH: ALASKA LAND MANAGEMENT/LAND STEWARDSHIP

BALANCING DEVELOPMENT WITH THE WILDNESS OF OUR LANDS

Alaska has never taken a strategic approach to managing outdoor recreation. Yet a broad, thoughtful, and historically-informed approach is needed to ensure outdoor recreation meets its full potential while simultaneously addressing the need to allocate public funds equitably and address concerns of local communities. With additional strain put onto local infrastructure and way of life by visitors, this approach must carefully balance competing needs, desires, and priorities. Given these realities, this last section presents a starting approach to how we might better guide the expansion of outdoor recreation in Alaska.

Some starting reference points:

- **Focus on stewardship.** In a state with vast public lands, including 100 million acres of State land (an area the size of California), we have a tremendous opportunity to do what we have never done - to consciously maximize outdoor recreation opportunities. While many trails in Alaska have been developed purely in response to social trails, now is an opportunity to approach trail development with comprehensive consideration of what will bring the most benefits to our communities.
- **Growing outdoor recreation can create problems.** Alaskans are understandably skeptical about expanding outdoor recreation, especially for visitors. There is justifiable concern about whether or not Alaska's public infrastructure— roads, parking lots, campgrounds, and most importantly lavatories— can accommodate a growing number of visitors every year.

Source: BLM, Nora Berner





Source: BLM, Bob Wick

- **Planning at multiple scales.** Planning is needed at local, regional, and state scales. Comprehensive plans for communities like Bristol Bay or the Upper Copper River Basin help guide local government and administrators to make decisions that work towards a common, well-thought-out goal. Where plans do exist, more resources are needed to act on the directions set out in the plans.
- **Planning with multiple partners.** As explained in the economic benefits chapter, the outdoor recreation industry represents a variety of interests and is at times divided. Effective planning - for infrastructure, for marketing, for funding - requires working with diverse user groups, agencies, and non-profits
- **Maximizing benefits requires balancing growth and restraint.** Alaska's core competitive advantage - what distinguishes our state from prominent outdoor recreation destinations like Switzerland or New Zealand - is our intact ecosystems, wildlife, and wilderness. Good planning is needed to both grow jobs and businesses but also retain these unique values.
- **Minimize trail user conflicts** through education, good trail design, signage, special use restrictions, and smart, informed management decisions.
- **Provide for a range of experiences.** Alaska needs to deliberately provide a range of intensities of outdoor recreation environments, from wild/quiet to developed/active. Focusing growth in a handful of high capacity, "must-see" destinations can help keep other places quiet for resident use.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Improving outdoor recreation and trails offers tremendous potential to boost economic growth in Alaska. Quality growth is possible, but it doesn't happen by accident— it requires engagement on a whole new level of active outdoor recreation and tourism planning.

Our current top priorities for near term actions are listed below:

- Continue to play a strong convening and support role on Feature Trail projects

For example, in the week preceding publication of this draft, we submitted a letter to the State Department of Transportation/PF regarding the "Turnagain Arm Connector" trail project, and, at the request of the Division of Parks, a letter to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game regarding use of Pittman Robertson funding for Crow Pass Trail improvements

- Work with major land management agencies to present the economic case for trails and outdoor recreation, and advocate for the improved land management strategies outlined in this chapter

For example, in early April, the "working landscapes" concept was presented and was very well-received by the Alaska State Board of Forestry

- Continue to advocate for sustaining and growing funding for trail improvements, in particular for federal funds that are leveraged through partnerships with trail organizations

- Work with current and new financial sponsors and add capacity within Alaska Trails and our partners to sustain the momentum of this project

Caribou Bluff. Source: BLM, Bob Wick



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