

Coordination of SCORP/Long Trail/Trails Initiative working groups

The current **SCORP** update led by RTCA provides the long overdue opportunity for a legitimate, comprehensive, project-focused, locally driven process for guiding investments and strategies for outdoor recreation. This includes addressing needs for infrastructure like parks and trails, for open space acquisition, but also for broader strategies for funding, marketing and partnership building. To reach these outcomes, RTCA and the Division of Parks are establishing a statewide group of SCORP Advisors and a set of regional and sub-regional working groups.

The regional and subregional working groups will include public land managers, local government park and recreation departments, tourism organizations, Native organizations, recreation-focused non-profits, user groups. Their specific tasks:

- Develop regional-scale outdoor recreation goals and strategies
- Identify specific priority projects and actions needed reach these goals
- Play an active role in carrying out identified priorities
- Gather and incorporate relevant existing plans that inform the steps above

Alaska Trails – the statewide non profit¹ – has created comparable working groups as part of the **Alaska Long Trail** and **Alaska Trails Initiative (ATI)**. In addition, Alaska Trails is now creating trails/outdoor recreation working groups in SE Alaska under contract to the USFS. Like the SCORP, ATI working groups focus on collaborative planning, decision-making and expertise of key individuals in each region.

While SCORP addresses Outdoor Recreation as a whole, and the Alaska Trails’ projects focus on trails, in most cases there is significant overlap in the goals, interests and expertise of the potential working group members for both SCORP and Alaska trails. In the interest of maximizing the time and participation of the regional working group members, the agreement among the leadership of all three projects is to collaborate on the assembly of the working groups.

Working groups structure

The SCORP process uses the term “**regions**” for 5 big chunks of Alaska - Arctic, Interior, Southwest, Southcentral, and Southeast. In some cases these regional categories are too broad to capture the variety of opportunities, challenges and issues within them. Thus, some regions have been further divided into “**sub-regions**” resulting in subregional working groups.

Proposed Regions and Subregions

| Region | Arctic | Southwest | Interior | Southcentral | Southeast |
|-------------------|---------------|------------------|--|--|--|
| Subregions | N.A. | N.A. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denali Borough • Fairbanks & Interior | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenai/Chugach NF/PWS • Anchorage • Mat Su/Copper River Basin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North • South |

¹ ATI is a broad coalition of local governments, state and federal land managers, outdoor industry representatives, and user groups who work together towards an improved trails recreation in the state identifying statewide shovel-ready projects and funding opportunities. <https://www.alaska-trails.org/alaska-trails-initiative>

Proposed structure of the regional/subregional working groups

- **Core Group** - smaller leadership subset of the full working group in each sub-region. This group will structure the process, identify and add members, and set up objectives and meetings. AK Trails and RTCA will be part of and help support t these core groups, but someone based in the region should be the facilitator(s).
- **Extended Working Group** – members of the subregional group organized by the Core Group, adding details on specific topics (e.g., developed recreation facilities within Municipal boundaries) and/or details on specific geographical areas (e.g., in Mat Su – up the Glen Hwy vs. Talkeetna and the northern Borough).

Responsibilities and tasks of the working group members:

- Build from statewide goals: economic and physical health, greater user diversity, etc.
- Incorporate work-in-progress/previous plans
- Develop locally driven, regional scale outdoor recreation strategies (e.g., more winter activities, more overnight stays in the region)
- Identify specific locally-driven project priorities – a database of “Shovel Ready” projects
- Take the lead in building local support and generating local funding

Near Term Schedule

The current deadline is March 31st for assembling the groups and having their initial meetings.

Sequence of events:

1. Feb/March: Assemble Core Groups with an identified facilitator(s):
 - Facilitator’s role is to set the meetings, invite working group participants, hold space for the discussion, take notes and distribute them, coordinate and exchange notes with facilitators in other regional/subregional groups to ensure continuity of efforts.
2. Feb/March Core Groups invite extended working group members, facilitator(s) schedules and holds monthly meetings.
3. Feb/March Statewide and regional/subregional groups get started on their respective tasks. Ideally the Statewide Advisory team can produce a “working draft” of statewide strategies and themes as a reference point for the regional and sub-regional working groups.

One helpful point along this path is Alaska Trails’ annual Trails Conference April 15-17th. Thursday April 15th will be dedicated to SCORP / Long Trail / Trails Initiative working groups. This will be an opportunity for the working groups to receive public input via chat and breakout rooms in a Zoom environment.