

LAND MANAGER FORUM AGENDA

NOVEMBER, 19th 2020



(Updated 11/10/20)

9:00 – 10:00 – TECHNOLOGY ON TRAILS – Innovations continue to improve the way we find, navigate and use trails. This panel will highlight a few new ways that those innovations are helping trail users bring new tech to trails in Alaska.

Presenters:

- Story Maps – Cameron Sanders, Renaissance Cyclist
- Outerspatial – Taylor Raftery, Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation
- E-Bikes – Kelly Chang, NPS Commercial Services Lead
- Zach Million, BLM AK Program Lead for Recreation, Travel Management & National Conservation Lands

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10:15 – 10:45 – AN ALASKA MODEL FOR A VOLUNTEER LED TRAIL CREW - In 2015, a group of volunteers began looking into the idea of a trail that would cross from the busy shores of Kachemak Bay to the open Pacific coast within Kachemak Bay State Park. They began this project with almost no knowledge of trail-building, nor of how to work with park administration, or even properly organize volunteers. Since then, volunteers have spent about 1300 days - 1000 by adults, and 300 by kids - on the project. The trail is easily followed across the peninsula and connects to previously built trails for a total of a 32 mile journey along the Tutka Backdoor Trail between Jakolof Bay and Tutka Bay along the north coast and Taylor Bay on the south coast. The success of this project is largely the result of successful collaboration between the volunteers, led by Hig of Ground Truth Alaska (a 501c3 nonprofit - formerly Ground Truth Trekking), and Alaska State Parks - especially Kachemak Bay State Park's trail specialist Eric Clarke. This relationship has been complex and at times difficult, but give-and-take on both sides has made it possible, and in fact a great success. Hig and State Parks personnel will present on the project, the mechanics, and the potential broader application of this sort of relationship for other land managers in Alaska.

Presenters:

- Eric Clarke - Park Specialist - Kachemak Bay State Park
- Brentwood “Hig” Higman – Ground Truth Alaska

11:00 – 12:15 - PROCESS FOR RESERVING TRAILS ON STATE GENERAL USE LAND AND 17B EASEMENTS

A. *Trail Reservations* (45 minutes)

For years, the process of reserving trail routes on State of Alaska “General Use Land” – the vast majority of Alaska’s 100 million acres – has been slow and costly. This seemingly obscure technical issue has proven to be a real obstacle to improving trails all over Alaska, and has led to a backlog of applications and frustrations for both applicants and the State at a time when the need to secure existing and planned trail routes continues to grow. Challenges for reserving trails include limited State staff, high costs for surveys, limited resources by trail advocates, and a limited set of regulatory options for reserving trails. This panel will clarify the issues and then set the stage for near term, practical solutions.

Presenters:

- AJ Wait – Alaska DNR, Northern Regional Office
- Jay Rokos – Alaska DNR, Southcentral Regional Office
- Mike Downs – Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance Program, NPS
- George Hoden – Matanuska Susitna Borough
- Bryant Wright – Fairbanks North Star Borough
- Trena Haugen – Denali Borough
- *Panel facilitator – Chris Beck, Alaska Trails*

B. *Establishment of an Alaska 17 (b) Working Group*, Discussion and Interest

Section 17 (b) of ANCSA provided for the reservation of public access easements across some private lands in Alaska. Many of these trails are utilized today to gain access for hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities on public lands. The location or condition of some of these easements has lead to longstanding issues related to resource degradation, trespass, and confusion for trail users. This segment will examine the idea of establishing a statewide 17 (b) working group and facilitating constructive discussions to work at solving recreational access and trails related issues regarding 17 (b)'s.

Presenters:

- Cory Larson - Bureau of Land Management, Glennallen Field Office
- Representative from Ahtna Incorporated, TBD
- *Panel facilitator – Chris Beck, Alaska Trails*

1:00 – 1:45 – THE FUTURE FOR TRAIL FUNDING

COVID has highlighted the importance of trails. For both mental and physical health, Alaskans have turned to trails for solace during the pandemic. Crowded parking areas, packed trailheads and well-worn trails are all in need of maintenance. And land managers are also hoping to add new trails and other facilities that will be an economic engine for the state when health conditions enable the economy to fully open again. This panel will explore several of the funding options that the State can employ to take best advantage of opportunities that will be available in 2021 and years to come.

Presenters:

- Great American Outdoors Act – Bobbie Jo Skibo, Regional Partnerships, Volunteer & Services Program Manager USFS
- LWCF and the Federal Pipeline – Chris Beck, Alaska Trails Initiative Coordinator
- ADF&G Hunter Access Program – Katie Sechrist, Access Defense Program ADF&G
- CARES Act – Ryan O’Shaughnessy, Trail Mix

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2:00 – 2:45 - COVID IMPACTS ON TRAIL WORK IN 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all of our lives in very serious ways. Many people are unable to work because of the virus. Many trail managers did not deploy their crews during the 2020 season to avoid spreading the virus and risking public and individual health. Some trail crews were able to successfully complete their work and stay safe. Tune in to hear how they dealt with COVID and how the lessons learned will affect plans for the future, growing trail demand, a renewed focus in AK on outdoor recreation and potential funding related to COVID-19 recovery.

Presenters

- Joe Hall - Crew Coordinator, Washington Conservation Corps
- Alan McClain – Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Outdoor Recreation Trail Specialist
- Tyler Glenn – Recreation Program Manager, Chugach National Forest
- *Panel facilitator – Steve Cleary, Alaska Trails*

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3:00 – 4:00 – TRAIL PROJECT UPDATES

The Land Manager Forum will wrap up with lightning round summaries of trail projects, policies and issues around the state. We will start off with several agencies who will take no more than three minutes to provide updates on one or more of these three subjects:

- 1) *accomplishments*: highlights over the last year
- 2) *looking forward*: opportunities or challenges on the horizon

3) *trail parables*: lessons learned, pitfalls hit or avoided.

We'll then open the discussion to all our zoom participants, on the same topics and with the same three-minute timeframe. The goal is to generate a helpful summary of what has been happening and what's coming up in the world of Alaska trails.

Presenters include:

- Stuart Leidner – State Parks Superintendent, Mat-Su Valley and Copper River Basin Region
- Joe Meehan - Statewide Program Coordinator, Lands and Refuges Program, ADF&G
- Zach Babb – NPS Program Manager - Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA)
- Tyler Glenn - USFS CNF Recreation Program Manager
- And others invited and TBD
- *Facilitator – Chris Beck, Alaska Trails*