

# INTERIOR TRAILS NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

January 2020

## INTERIORWIDE

### **FIRST DAY OUTING TO BE HELD AT QUARTZ LAKE NEAR DELTA**

The Delta Junction Trails Association and Alaska State Parks will be holding a First Day Hike at Quartz Lake State Recreation Area on **January 1**. The event happens from noon to 2 p.m. and includes skiing, hiking and/or snowshoeing followed by a bonfire and snacks.

To read more about this and other First Day Hikes across the state see the Alaska State Parks Facebook Events page: <https://tinyurl.com/svxnrej>

These free, guided events are part of the national First Day Hikes initiative sponsored by state park systems throughout the United States. For more about First Day Hikes see: <https://tinyurl.com/www5cu7>

### **BORO PARKS AND REC AGAIN HOLDING WINTER TRAILS CHALLENGE**

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department is hosting another Winter Trails Challenge.

The sign list was revealed in late December for this popular ongoing event, which is free and open to anyone. Participants have until April 1 to find at least 10 Trails Challenge signs hidden around local trail systems and share their photos with each sign.

This winter's challenge features trails at local recreation areas including Birch Hill, Tanana Lakes, Chena Lake, Skyline Ridge Park, Pearl Creek Nordic Ski Park and more. The farthest flung trails are in Salcha and the Chena River State Recreation Area. Three of the trails are ski only, and several are non-motorized, but four are motorized, multi-use, so there is something for everyone. There's even an indoors sign at the Big Dipper Ice Arena.

(The Colorado Creek Trail sign in the Chena River State Recreation Area was not installed at the same time as the others due to frigid temperatures. Plans were to install it in January or when weather allows.)



The first person to post a photo the Trails Challenge Facebook Page was Jennifer Wright, who posted on December 21: "12/21 Skyline Ridge left the house at -28 thinking this was a crazy idea 🤪. It was a balmy -18 at the trail head... the color through the trees was beautiful and taking the Secret Trail back made for a fun walk."

Anyone can participate by finding the Trails Challenge signs and

### **LINKS TO INTERIOR TRAIL INFORMATION**

A lot of information about trails in interior Alaska exists, but it's often hard to find. Here is a collection of trail-related resources: <https://www.interioralaskatrails.org/resources/>. (If you find any broken links or other problems please send an email to [fbxtrails@gmail.com](mailto:fbxtrails@gmail.com))



means that the board voted to protect the requirement for trail easements during the subdivision process, which is one of the strongest trail protections the borough can offer. (Another related UA-Conservation Fund land deal involving 320 acres to be added to the refuge is unaffected by the board's decision.)

The platting board's decision can be found here (<https://tinyurl.com/r37sz7s>). That document does not include the board's reasoning or vote tally. However, local trails advocate Stan Justice, who supported the variance, said the vote was 3-2.

John Wros of The Conservation Fund has filed an appeal to the Planning Commission, which is the appeal body for Platting Board decisions. It is scheduled for the Feb 11 Planning Commission agenda.

## **TRAIL PROJECTS INCLUDED IN BORO PUBLIC WORKS RANKING LIST**

**COMMENT** Several trail-related projects are included in borough public works list being considered by the administration and assembly.

The borough is forming a capital improvement plan and must decide which projects to include on the plan. The borough administration has selected a list of projects. The assembly is now reviewing those projects and wants to hear from the public.

Plans are for a public hearing to be held on January 16 on which projects to include and how to rank them. If you can't make the public hearing, please consider submitting comments to the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly at: <http://co.fairbanks.ak.us/assembly/Pages/Assembly-Members.aspx>

The trail-related projects include:

- Equinox Trail Extension and Completion
- Peede Trail Head and Trail Development
- Isberg Recreation Area Master Plan Implementation
- Tanana Lakes Master Plan Implementation (several phases)
- Chena Lake Area Revitalization
- Fairbanks Lions Recreation Area (FLRA) Revitalization

For more information

- The resolution with the complete list of projects being considered can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/spaefus>
- A page on the process for ranking the projects can be found here: <http://co.fairbanks.ak.us/CIP/Pages/default.aspx>

Also, the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner has done a couple of stories on the process:

- Assembly to review 66 potential building projects: <https://tinyurl.com/uwb5v72>
- Fairbanks North Star Borough seeks comments on public works projects: <https://tinyurl.com/tbt7g6k>

## ADMA TRAILS OFFER MILES OF WINTER MULTI-USE RECREATION

Recent stories involving the Alaska Dog Musher's Association trails have brought attention to this nearly 30-mile winter trail network on the edge of the Fairbanks urban area.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly recently exempted ADMA property (Musher's Hall and the Jeff Studdert Trails trailhead and parking) from borough property tax. (Read more on that here: <https://tinyurl.com/rb44w8x>). ADMA trails have also been involved in an attempted land deal between the University of Alaska and The Conservation Fund. (Read more above and here: <https://tinyurl.com/r29c5vx>.)



The trail network, also called the Jeff Studdert trail system, officially starts at the Musher's Hall on Farmer's Loop Road. Most of the trails in the network are on the Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, but trails in the outer part of the network also run across a patchwork of public and private lots.

The ADMA trails also connect to two smaller networks: the Creamer's Field trails (open to skiing, ski-joring and walking) and the Fairbanks Golf Course trails (open to skiing and ski-joring). (Note: to access the ADMA trails from the golf course you have to squeeze through a chained gate.) Stan Justice also grooms a ski trail loop that starts and ends at the golf course and crisscrosses the ADMA trails. See a map here: <https://tinyurl.com/ugo2cbf>. Besides Musher's Hall, the golf course, and Creamer's Field, trailheads are also located off Henrik Court (closer to Ballaine Road), and Echo Acres Drive (closer to the Steese Highway). There is also an official refuge trailhead off Midnight Sun Street, where the street meets Farmers Loop Road at mile 6. It has a small parking area suitable for 4-6 cars. A narrow trail starts on the east side of Midnight Sun.

While the ADMA trails are considered primarily mushing trails, they are open to all non-motorized users. However, non-mushers on the trail system should always be on the lookout for dog teams and pull over if necessary. They should also be aware of the ADMA race schedule (which can be found at: <http://alaskadogmushers.com/>) and try to avoid the trails on those days, especially during the North American Championships in March.



Fatbikers, runners, and hikers should also avoid making trenches or foot holes, which can hurt dogs. Fatbikers in a group can help by not riding single file, as this spreads out their tracks. Runners and hikers should use snowshoes unless the trail is very hard.

Anyone who uses the trail system should either donate to the ADMA (<https://tinyurl.com/tyeyk7e>) or buy a membership/trail pass (<https://tinyurl.com/rjjpzvb>).

Because many of the trails are in wetlands, quite a bit of snow is needed in order to bring the trails into

prime condition. Check the ADMA trail reports here: <http://alaskadogmushers.com/trail-report>

For more information on the ADMA trails, check the flyer (<https://tinyurl.com/rj7oxnz>), the ADMA trail map page (<http://alaskadogmushers.com/trail-maps>), or this webpage (<https://tinyurl.com/uvksy7p>).

*Mushing photo from ADMA website; fatbike photo by Heath Sandall from FCC website*

## **FAIRBANKSANS SHOULD REMIND MAYOR OF TRAIL BENEFITS**

Borough Mayor Bryce Ward and his administration are in the process of developing a budget for the next year. Please remind the mayor how important trails are to our community.

Trails bring many benefits that we sometimes take for granted, such as:

- Providing access to natural resources, such as game, berries, and the great outdoors.
- Improving the physical, mental, and social health of our citizens by helping to get people exercising outdoors, alone and with other people.
- Increasing tourism by providing a place for tourist-friendly events, such as the North American Sled Dog Championships and the Iron Dog Snowmachine Race, as well as giving visitors a place to enjoy the wild expanse of Alaska.
- Encouraging human-powered transportation, improving health and reducing car traffic.

Later in the year, the Fairbanks Borough Assembly will be presented with the budget and the public will have a chance to comment. However, it's beneficial to have the mayor provide a budget that recognizes the importance of trails. One way to do that is to make sure the Parks and Recreation Department has a healthy budget, especially one that continues to include a full-time trails coordinator. Contact the mayor by email (<http://tinyurl.com/ybvd4kpv>), phone (459-1300) or mail (PO Box 71267-1267; Fbx, AK 99701

## **SEEN RECENTLY ON THE INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES**

### **ALASKA STATE PARKS**

December 23: The Compeau Cabin! We have a new Public Use Cabin in the northern region, and it is available to book on Reserve America.



This cabin was funded through the Federal Recreational Trail Grant Program and is located at mile 2 of the Compeau Trail. Access the cabin from the Compeau Trailhead located at 29.8 mile Chena Hot Springs Road.

Start planning your adventure! For more info on this cabin and a link to book in Reserve America, visit our website:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspcabins/compeaucabin.htm>

December 6: Looking to get out into the TRUE Alaska Wilderness? We have the deal for you.

Stay at the Olnes Pond Cabin in the Lower Chatanika State Recreation Area for \$10 off per night on from now through January 31!



It's a great place to cross-country ski, snowshoe, snow machine, and see the stars and Northern Lights! Make sure to bring plenty of your own wood for the wood stove, and bundle up nice:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspcabins/olnespondcabin.htm>

December 3: Northern region update: The Colorado Creek Trail in Chena River State Recreation Area has been re-opened. The bridge across Colorado Creek has been replaced. Happy Trails to you.

## INTERIORWIDE LINKS

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- Loose dogs on Creamer's trails (News-Miner letter): <https://tinyurl.com/wh3mqhy>
- The constant buzz of winter trail maintenance: <https://tinyurl.com/vs9o7c7>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Fairbanks REI classes and events: <https://www.rei.com/events/p/us-ak-fairbanks>
- Outdoor Adventures OLLI Class (for those at least 50 years old) starts in March: <https://tinyurl.com/umchkmr>
- Fairbanks North Star Borough Winter 2020 Activity Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/rhn4vv9>
- Assembly allows Parks and Rec Commission to select parks for ban on smoking, vaping: <https://tinyurl.com/wxzh4ey>
- Mushing club gets tax break: <https://tinyurl.com/wcfap8g>
- 4 million acres open to snowmachiners at Denali: <https://tinyurl.com/v6jw62m>
- Park Service may close Denali road for 2020 season due to landslide: <https://tinyurl.com/ye7pwrxc>

## STATEWIDE

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

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



opportunity to donate using money from your PFD. If you do, please remember Alaska Trails.

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

For more information on "Pick. Click. Give" (<http://www.pickclickgive.org>). To go directly to the Alaska Trails "Pick. Click. Give." page <http://www.pickclickgive.org/index.cfm/pfdorgs.info/Alaska-Trails>

## SUPPORT STATE, NATIONAL TRAILS BY PURCHASING PARK PASSES

**BUY A PASS** Many of the great trails in Alaska and the rest of the United States are in state and national parks. Buying a pass helps support these agencies even if you never use the pass. Of course, if you do use the pass, then so much the better. That means you are out having fun!

- Alaska State Parks annual pass: Support state parks during a time of tight state budgets. Permits are \$50 and, of course, your parking is then paid for when you park at a state parks trailhead that requires a fee. Passes are good for the calendar year. Annual boat launch passes are also available for \$100:

<https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/passes>

- National Park Service annual passes: The park service offers general passes for \$80. It also has a variety of other discounted or free passes for seniors, fourth-graders, people with disabilities, some volunteers, and members of the military:

<https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm>



## KEEP TRAILS IN THE PUBLIC EYE DURING TOUGH BUDGET TIMES

**ADVOCATE** The Alaska State Legislature will be meeting soon and the budget outlook continues to be bleak. More cuts are being called for and revenues, such as taxes, are being hinted at. Trail advocates need to speak loudly if trails are to be treated fairly. There are several ways trails could be affected.

- Staffing for the Recreational Trails Program could be cut, This would be a huge mistake as \$200,000 in state funding brings in more than \$1 million from the federal government, but that \$200,000 has been considered for the budget axe before.
- Staffing for the Department of Natural Resources could be cut. Very few people in state government work solely on trails, but many deal with trails as part of their jobs. If positions are cut, other duties may take precedence over trails.
- Pullouts along roads that offer parking for access to trailheads could see less maintenance, including snowplowing, as the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities focuses on keeping high-traffic roads clear. (This has already started happening in some areas.)
- Direct state grants for trail projects could dry up.

So, what can trail advocates do? Let your voice be heard.

- Call or write your legislators. Our legislators will have many things vying for their attention this session. If they don't hear from trail advocates they may think that trails are not important to Alaskans. Contact information for senators and representatives can be found at: <http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/>
- Call or write the governor: <https://gov.alaska.gov/contact/>
- Write an editorial or letter to the editor for your local newspaper.
- Have your trail-related group pass a resolution, then send that to your legislators, the governor, and the local newspaper.

## STATEWIDE LINKS

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- Community Transportation Program Project Evaluation Board Public Meeting (Jan 8-9): <http://notice.alaska.gov/196390>
- Arctic Circle Skate (Luc Mehl): <https://tinyurl.com/qpqgjccq>

## NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

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### BUDGET AGREEMENT INCLUDES BENEFIT FOR TRAILS PROGRAM

After months of delay, the House and Senate have sent a budget to the President. The agreement raises the debt ceiling, increases defense and non-defense spending.

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) also got a boost. Off-road motorized recreation (including snowmobiles) generates nearly \$300 million in annual revenue for the highway trust fund with approximately 33% of the revenue returned to the states for the RTP.

In an effort to return a more equitable share of these resources for recreational trails, Congress has directed the Federal Highway Administration to conduct a study to identify how much money is contributed to the Highway Trust Fund by non-highway motorized recreation. This will provide a clearer picture of how much gas tax revenue is generated by motorized recreation.

*(From American Council of Snowmobile Associations newsletter)*

## NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

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*WEBINARS, MEETINGS, CONFERENCES, TRAINING, ETC.*

- For a listing of upcoming trail webinars workshops, conferences, and other meetings, see the American Trails calendar at: [www.americantrails.org/Calendar.html](http://www.americantrails.org/Calendar.html)

*TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS*

- American Trails "Trail Tracks": [www.americantrails.org/communications/newsletter](http://www.americantrails.org/communications/newsletter)

### **VOLUNTEER**

- American Hiking Society's Volunteer Vacations: <http://tinyurl.com/ydh95kp8>
- Volunteer Stewardship Tools: [www.americantrails.org/resources/volunteer-stewardship-tools](http://www.americantrails.org/resources/volunteer-stewardship-tools)
- American Trails Volunteer Portal: [www.americantrails.org/connect/volunteer](http://www.americantrails.org/connect/volunteer)
- Conservation International VIP newsletter (December): <https://tinyurl.com/u77ocv7>
- American Hiking Society's 2020 Alternative Spring Break schedule: <http://tinyurl.com/yxbnlema>

## *FUNDING*

- National Forest Foundation Matching Awards Program (deadline Jan 16): <http://tinyurl.com/px7y6ke>
- Clif Bar Family Foundation grants (for groups, projects; ddline Feb 1): <http://tinyurl.com/y5es3wjc>

## *TRAIL GUIDES*

- 10 Trails Where You Can Find Long-Distance Solitude in 2020: <https://tinyurl.com/t4crqd7>
- 7 helpful hiking guides for Tucson trails: <https://tinyurl.com/szzbs9u>

## *STUDIES*

- Mental Health Benefits of Trails: [www.americantrails.org/mental-health-benefits](http://www.americantrails.org/mental-health-benefits)
- Health Benefits of Trails: [www.americantrails.org/health-benefits](http://www.americantrails.org/health-benefits)
- Business Owners Along Continental Divide Trail Say Trails are Vital: <https://tinyurl.com/ttowak6>
- Riding as Little As 20 Minutes a Day Can Ward Off Heart Disease in Older Adults: <https://tinyurl.com/yxxv4mee>

## *TRAILS AND ECONOMICS*

- New Idaho Economic Impact Study Added to NOHVCC's List of Studies: <https://tinyurl.com/rmwpk4k>

## *OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:*

- 6 Trails with the Worst Weather—And Why You Should Go Anyway: <https://tinyurl.com/yx5qbf6m>

## *INTERNATIONAL LINKS:*

- Opening of 10 new walking trails a win-win situation for landowners and walkers (Ireland): <https://tinyurl.com/rzp6wfr>
- Top 15 Most Beautiful Trekking Trails In Vietnam: <https://tinyurl.com/qggy3xt>
- Lace up your skates for these top skating trails in Canada: <https://tinyurl.com/sc5e89a>

## *SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL*

- This Artist Uses Snowshoes to Carve Massive, Ephemeral Artworks into the Snow: <https://tinyurl.com/vaawd6g>

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Interior Trails Newsletter is a free monthly email newsletter written and distributed by Eric Troyer, a lifelong Alaskan and trail user. To submit items, get on or off the mailing list, report problems, or anything else email Eric at [fbxtrails@gmail.com](mailto:fbxtrails@gmail.com). Note: submissions may be also be used in the statewide Alaska Trails newsletter, from which this newsletter is excerpted.

DISCLAIMER: Interior Trails Newsletter is not a product of any organization. However, I am a board member of the Interior Trails Preservation Coalition, a member of several Interior trail user groups, and a member of Alaska Trails and editor of its newsletter.