

INTERIOR TRAILS NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

February 2020

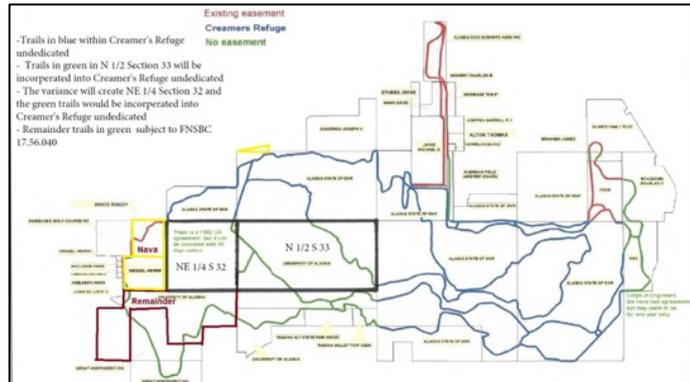
INTERIORWIDE

BOARD TO HEAR APPEAL OF VARIANCE AFFECTING ADMA TRAILS

COMMENT The public will again have a chance to comment on a request for a variance from dedicated trail easements involving portions of some Alaska Dog Musher's Association trails.

The variance was denied in December by the Fairbanks North Star Borough Platting Board. An appeal of that decision is scheduled for the February 11 FNSB Planning Commission agenda. The commission is the appeal body for

Platting Board decisions. The public can comment on the trails portion of the appeal (which also involves a land subdivision request.) According to Kristen Walker of the FNSB Community Planning Department:



*For trail dedications, members of the public are allowed to submit written or oral comments on the appeal of the variance. Public comment is limited to the topic of dedicating these trails, and not the rest of the subdivision application. The Planning Commission will hold a **public testimony period during consideration of this appeal**, separate from "citizen comments" at the beginning of the agenda. The public are given 3 minutes each for verbal testimony on a case, excluding any questions from the Planning Commission. Written comments will be considered by the Planning Commission during this appeal, but **written comments should be submitted no later than noon on the day of the hearing** to ensure that they are received by the Planning Commission. Affidavits are not required.*

Emails can be submitted at fnsbpc@fnsb.us.

Local trail advocates disagree on whether the variance should be approved. Those who oppose the variance believe it would unnecessarily put the trails at risk and would have set a bad precedence for trails involved in future subdivisions. Those supporting the variance believe it would have ultimately protected the trails involved as well as large chunks of land from development. The issue is highly complicated and was outlined in this Interior Alaska Trails blog post from mid-December: <https://tinyurl.com/r29c5vx>. Another blog

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)

post is planned soon. *(The editor of this newsletter is also the writer of the blog post.)*

The platting board's decision to deny can be found here (<https://tinyurl.com/r37sz7s>).

BORO TRAILS COMMISSION SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR VACANCIES

APPLY The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department is seeking applicants to fill four vacancies on the Trails Advisory Commission. The commission is still looking for representation from North Pole and Salcha and currently lacks any dedicated snowmachine riders. However, it's more important that commissioners have a general interest in trails and trail access than in one specific activity. Anyone who would be willing to serve or would like to know more should contact Bryant Wright, FNSB Trails Coordinator (BWright@fnsb.us; 907/459-7401)

SEEN RECENTLY ON THE INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH PARKS & REC

December 27: Each year brings new beginnings and we are excited to share with you the first Activity Guide of 2020. Whether you're looking for ways to spend time with your family and friends, or you're trying to stay active over the winter months, this guide has what you're looking for!

Use this link to view and download: <https://tinyurl.com/wah6smr>

December 31: Good news for Trails Challengers! The Colorado Creek Trails Challenge sign is installed! The trail guys took advantage of yesterday's warm weather and placed the Colorado Creek sign along the trail. They even ran into one of the friendly Alaska State Parks rangers on a trip to stock the Colorado Creek cabin. Thanks to State Parks for the great trails and all you do in the Chena River State Rec Area!

Park at the trailhead at MP 31.6 Chena Hot Springs Road. Look for the Trails Challenge sign in the first two miles of the Colorado Creek trail. We think you can find this one without having to cross any major overflow. But if you're going further, be prepared for a bit of ice and/or slush!



INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- Interior Alaska Land Trust works to expand Fairbanks-area greenbelts: <https://tinyurl.com/wsfqc52>
- Connecting Fairbanks trail user groups: <https://tinyurl.com/u2lc2du>
- Video: KC Deane Mines For Hidden Gems in Fairbanks, Alaska: <https://tinyurl.com/rcoq5np>
- The Fairbanks North Star Borough Trails Challenge is happening!
 - Trails Challenge page at <https://tinyurl.com/wgwillza>
 - Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/463758124331854/>
 - List of trails and directions to trailheads: <https://tinyurl.com/yx7r3zbb>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Special Land Use Permit: UAF Greenhouse Gas Study Boardwalk in Goldstream Public Use Area: <https://tinyurl.com/wea3qeb>
- Fairbanks REI classes and events: <https://www.rei.com/events/p/us-ak-fairbanks>
- Outdoor Adventures OLLI Class (for those at least 50) starts in March: <https://tinyurl.com/umchkmr>
- Fairbanks North Star Borough Winter 2020 Activity Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/rhn4vv9>

STATEWIDE

PUT THE STATEWIDE TRAILS CONFERENCE ON YOUR CALENDAR

Alaska Trails Statewide Trails Conference will be held **April 23-25**.

Alaska Trails' annual conference provides trail users and the wider public a statewide opportunity for training and networking with trail professionals. Government agencies, trail builders and non-profits will be able to share what they have learned and engage in conversations with others to share best practices and new ideas. There are many



ways to enjoy Alaska's trails and the conference brings them together all under one roof. Trails and outdoor recreation are a public health asset and an economic engine for the state and the trails conference seeks to raise the profile of trails and their importance to Alaska.

Some highlights from this year's conference include:

- Alaska Trails Initiative on Friday
- Active Transportation Track on Friday
- Mountain Bike focus on Saturday

For more information see our Facebook Event page at: <https://tinyurl.com/tybe22j>

BIG thanks to ConocoPhillips Alaska for their generous sponsorship of our Trails Conference! Their annual support means a lot to this gathering. If your business is interested in a sponsorship, please contact us at: office@alaska-trails.org

(Photo of "Physics for Trail Builders" session from the 2016 Statewide Trails Conference)

APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR PITTMAN-ROBERTSON GRANTS

APPLY The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for the Hunter Access Grant Program. Program funds utilize Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson) funds, which are administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a pass-through grant to the DWC.

Program funds are used to improve opportunity and access to Alaska's public lands for hunters, trappers, and other recreational users. Eligible applicants include public and non-profit organizations who are eligible to do business with the federal government and must be able to provide the required 25% non-federal match. If selected for award, the Hunter Access Grant Program will reimburse 75% of total eligible costs.

In 2020, the DWC anticipates that approximately \$1.5 million in federal funds will be available. Proposals with a federal budget exceeding \$30,000 are preferred, though those with smaller budgets may still be considered for funding on a case-by-case basis. Future funding availability may vary from year to year depending on the federal appropriation and State of Alaska legislative authorization.

Proposals must develop or enhance public access to wildlife resources for hunting, trapping, and other recreation to be considered for funding. All proposals will be evaluated, ranked, and scored using established criteria that can be found on the Hunter Access Grant Program website along with the application package, FAQ's, and more at: <https://tinyurl.com/wqtzxhk>

The deadline for proposal submission is **4:30 p.m. Alaska Daylight Time on Monday, April 20, 2020**. Background information and more about the Hunter Access Program can be found online at www.hunteraccess.adfg.alaska.gov.

(From Alaska Department of Fish and Game press release)

SAFE ROUTES PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES PHOTO CONTEST

ENTER Do you or your family and friends walk and roll in rain, shine, sun, and snow? Show us how you get around when the weather is gloomy, gray, gusty, or just great! The Safe Routes Partnership invites you to submit your photo to the Safe Routes in All Weather photo contest.

Prizes will be awarded to three winners. In each category, one winner will receive a \$50 gift card. See more information about the categories and criteria below.

All photos submitted to the Safe Routes in All Weather photo contest will be made publicly available in a shared online photo album with photo attribution, so you and your organization can use and feature them to promote Safe Routes all year round. All photo entries must include signed waivers for each individual who appears in the photo.

The deadline to submit photos is **February 28**. See more information here: <https://tinyurl.com/vnfhwh7>



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>

STATEWIDE LINKS

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- **ENTER** Alaska State Parks 50th Anniversary Photo Contest (run **monthly**): <https://tinyurl.com/qnssp93>
- "Active mass movements" are increasing along the Denali Park road: <https://tinyurl.com/utcuubx>
- Alaska raises fees for parks, boat launches and some public-use cabins: <https://tinyurl.com/vdxgho9>

NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

CHANGE PROPOSED TO SHORTEN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS

COMMENT Earlier this month the Council on Environmental Quality issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking - Update to the Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - <https://tinyurl.com/tn9lsyv>. This proposed rulemaking is intended to "...revise and modernize... NEPA regulations to facilitate more efficient, effective, and timely NEPA reviews by Federal agencies."

As many in the off-highway vehicle (OHV) community are aware, NEPA reviews can often be time consuming endeavors which can produce reports hundreds of pages in length. The proposed changes are intended to "...advance the original goals of the CEQ regulations to reduce paperwork and delays, and promote better decisions consistent with the national environmental policy..."

The National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council encourages everyone in the OHV community to take a look at the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and submit comments to encourage a reduction in paperwork and reporting required under NEPA while still ensuring that resources remain adequately protected.

Comments are due **March 10, 2020**.

From National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council email

NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

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

TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- American Trails "Trail Tracks": www.americantrails.org/communications/newsletter

VOLUNTEER

- American Hiking Society's Volunteer Vacations: <http://tinyurl.com/ydh95kp8>
- American Trails [Volunteer Portal: www.americantrails.org/connect/volunteer](http://www.americantrails.org/connect/volunteer)

FUNDING

- Polaris T.R.A.I.L.S. grants (ATV trail projects; due March 1, Sept 1): <http://tinyurl.com/zcz8u7a>

TRAIL GUIDES

- 7 best hikes from 2019 in Colorado Springs and beyond: <https://tinyurl.com/yjjckpb3>
- The 25 Best Accessible Trails in America: <https://tinyurl.com/rzjm7mr>
- The 5 LA Trails You Should Resolve to Hike in 2020: <https://tinyurl.com/roj8ch3>

STUDIES

- Latest in Health: step off the treadmill, hike into the great outdoors: <https://tinyurl.com/tmwr66s>
- Two Studies Highlight Trails' Economy, Environment & Health Benefits: <https://tinyurl.com/uhoez7w>

TRAILS AND ECONOMICS

- Recreational trails are seen as an economic boon: <https://tinyurl.com/wrk59sl>
- Outdoor Recreation Spurs Local Economic Growth, But...: <https://tinyurl.com/ydtuz7ue>
- Ten Examples That Show Trail Tourism Works: <https://tinyurl.com/ws5rzhf>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- I Picked Up 80 Pounds of Trail Trash in 2019. Here's What I Learned: <https://tinyurl.com/tquybcy>
- Sustainable vs. Social Trails: Take the Road Most Traveled: <https://tinyurl.com/sgp457p>

INTERNATIONAL LINKS:

- 4 equestrian travel destination ideas for 2020: <https://tinyurl.com/ukqzxf>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Wayfinding: Science, Mystery of How Humans Navigate (book review): <https://tinyurl.com/ye6bjn9r>

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. 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.