

INTERIOR TRAILS NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

March 2020

INTERIORWIDE

PLANNING BOARD APPROVES VARIANCE AFFECTING ADMA TRAILS

At its February 11 meeting, the Fairbanks North Star Borough Planning Commission voted 7-1 to approve an appeal for a variance request from dedicated trail easements involving portions of some Alaska Dog Musher's Association trails. Local trail advocates disagree on whether that decision is good for trails.

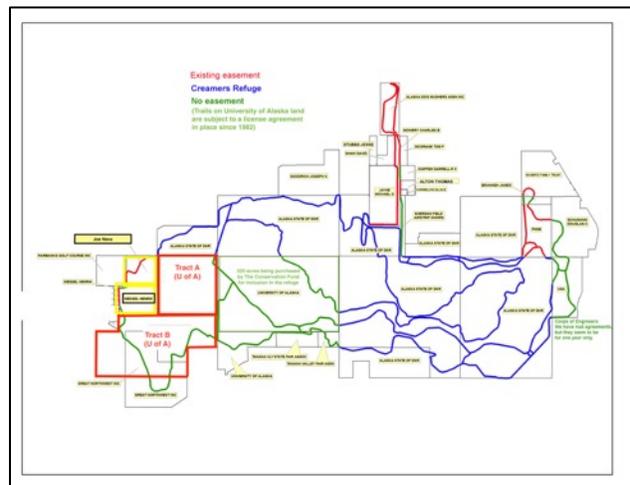
The request, which was made by John Wros of The Conservation Fund, was originally denied by the FNSB Platting Board. Wros appealed to the commission.

Local trail advocates disagree on whether the variance should have been approved. Those who opposed the variance believe it will unnecessarily put some of the trails at risk and will set a bad precedence for trails involved in future subdivisions. Those supporting the variance believe it will ultimately protect the trails involved as well as large chunks of land from development.

Briefly, the University of Alaska and The Conservation Fund are trying to make a land deal that would expand Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge by 160 acres to the west. Both entities asked for the trail easement variance. That land deal would allow another, smaller, plot of land to be added to the refuge. (And possibly another one as well.) A few of the westernmost Alaska Dog Musher's Association trails cross the lands involved. A majority of the ADMA trails are on refuge land already. The UA-Conservation Fund land deal requires subdividing a larger piece of land. With any subdivision, borough code requires dedicated easements for trails included in the FNSB Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan. The ADMA trails are included in that plan.

The issue is highly complicated and was outlined in two Interior Alaska Trails blog posts, one on December 10 (<https://tinyurl.com/r29c5vx>) and one on February 7 (<https://tinyurl.com/wbh8xph>). (The editor of this newsletter also wrote the blog posts.)

While the appeal of the trail easements variance was approved, the land deal is not done with borough



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)

boards. The subdivision application, which has another variance request regarding whether a survey needs to be done, goes back to the Platting Board. That request is on the board's March 18 agenda. However, the subdivision can take place with or without survey variance request being approved. Once that is all done, then the land deal has to take place.

So, trails involved in the land deal are not yet protected in the refuge, but things are looking good that they will be. Trails that will not be included in the refuge will remain without easements.

CONTACT REP. DON YOUNG TO SUPPORT THE REC TRAILS PROGRAM

ADVOCATE The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) calls on all trail organizations and trail enthusiasts to take action immediately to continue and to expand the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), the national trails assistance program that aids all trail activities nationwide through use of federal non-highway recreational fuel taxes.

A huge step occurred late last year when the Congress instructed the U.S. Department of Transportation to develop a timely estimate of the fuel tax generated through non-highway recreational activities in its FY2020 budget and included RTP reauthorization in key Senate legislation creating the next-gen surface transportation program. Now, action in the House of Representatives is underway and underscores the bipartisan and coast-to-coast support RTP enjoys in the Congress.

Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/spfhfhp>

From Coalition for Recreational Trails website

- Video – Cosponsors of Recreational Trails Program Legislation Discuss Their Bill:
<https://tinyurl.com/um5p6qs>

ASSEMBLY SUPPORTS WORK ON NEW FAIRBANKS TRAILS AREA

A resolution supporting work toward creation of a "recreational trail system and wildlife area" was passed unanimously by the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly at its February 27 meeting.

According to the resolution, some Fairbanks citizens "are seeking support from and working with the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department, the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, other Federal Land Managers, the Alaska Congressional Delegation and other local user groups to solicit funding for project planning and development."

The resolution states that the assembly "supports and encourages collaboration between Borough departments, other agencies, and interested citizens to create the Greater Fairbanks Recreation Area Trails System and Wildlife Area, and it endorses the work of citizens to secure external funding for project planning and development."

A map of the area being considered for the area has not yet been distributed, but it reportedly would include some of the lands bordered by Farmer's Loop, Steese, University and College roads.

For a copy of the resolution see: <http://data.fnsb.us/assemblyvoting/viewpdf.aspx?idx=2882>

UAF TRAILS CLUB JOINS UAF OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

DONATE/JOIN The UAF Trails Club is moving. Since its beginning in about 2001 University of Alaska Fairbanks club has been a campus club out of Wood Center. It has found a more compatible home with Outdoor Adventures (<https://tinyurl.com/wbw3a8e>). With this change the club set up an account with the University of Alaska Foundation and moved all its funds to that account.

There are two electronic forms for making donations to the club's account. To complete your membership online (with an option to donate more), use this link: engage.alaska.edu/uaf/uaf-trails-club. To simply donate to the club, use this link: <https://tinyurl.com/w4p4o8d>.

You can also donate to UAF trail maintenance through the UA Foundation: (Designation > Other > then type in "UAF X Country Ski Trail Maintenance Fund #21256") <https://engage.alaska.edu/>

2019 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM PROJECTS ANNOUNCED

The Recreational Trails Program has awarded matching funds for 22 trail projects in Alaska last year, with many projects underway or already completed. These are reimbursable, grant-funded projects happening throughout the state between 2019 and 2021. The total allocated for these projects is just over \$1.2 million.

This list would normally have been made public in autumn of last year, but due to disruptions caused by budget cuts, it was not made available until just recently.

The trails program is managed by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) and receives its funding for trails projects from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. For more information about the Recreational Trails Program, visit the program's website: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm>.

Below is a list of the awards for interior Alaska. For more details see the complete list at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trailsgrantpage/rectr2019.pdf>

INTERIOR ALASKA

- Delta Junction Trails Association, Bluff Cabin Trail Phase II: RTP Funds (Federal Award) \$89,894, Other Funds (Match) \$9,985.
- DNR DPOR Northern, Compeau Trail Public Use Cabin: RTP Funds (Federal Award) \$59,655, Other Funds (Match) \$6,628.
- DNR DPOR Northern, Granite Tors Boardwalk Phase II: RTP Funds (Federal Award) \$55,906, Other Funds (Match) \$6,211.
- DNR DPOR Northern, Mastodon Trail Cabin: RTP Funds (Federal Award) \$48,412, Other Funds (Match) \$5,378.
- DNR DPOR Northern, Olnes Pond ATV Trail: RTP Funds (Federal Award) \$50,261, Other Funds (Match) \$5,585.
- Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks & Recreation, Isberg East-West Multi-Use Trail: RTP Funds (Federal Award) \$99,356, Other Funds (Match) \$11,039.

SNOWTRAC DISTRIBUTES SNOWMACHINE GROOMING FUNDS

The SnowTRAC board distributed more than \$150,000 to 16 organizations for grooming operations this season from the Snowmobile Trails Program. Several of those organizations are in the interior, from the Denali Highway north. For a full list see: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/snowlist/snowmo19.pdf>. To learn more about the program at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/snowmotr.htm>

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

ALASKA STATE PARKS

February 19: This week's FIND YOUR TRAIL: The Compeau Trail in Chena River State Park provides year-round access to the back country and several public use cabins.

For a short ski or hike, reserve the Compeau Cabin at mile 2. At the end of Compeau Trail, mile 18, is the Colorado Creek Cabin, which can also be accessed from Colorado Creek Trailhead, mile 31.6 Chena Hot Springs Road.

The distance from the Colorado Creek Trailhead to the cabin is 5.7 miles. Folks can do the entire loop starting and finishing at the Compeau Trailhead. The loop is roughly 26 miles long.

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/maps/compeatrailguide.pdf>

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH PARKS & REC

February 26: We want to hear from you!

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation programming staff are seeking input from the community to help determine Summer Program and Event needs. Please complete this short survey with your household's input and get ready for a fun-filled summer in Fairbanks! 🌞🌈🏀

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Y7MYT9S>

February 24: Spring Break fun! No matter the weather, there's something for everyone - ice skate on the 1/2 mile trail or rink, ski or walk on one of the many groomed trails, enjoy a warm fire with s'mores, participate in the 4th annual Winter Try-Athlon (Run - Ice Skate - Ski), create art with special snow paint and more! See event here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/240509396945782/>

Try-Athlon event page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/952105985184290/>

FAIRBANKS PADDLERS

March 5 event: Fairbanks Paddlers' first presentation of our Spring Slideshow Series will be **Thursday, March 5, 2020** at 7:00 pm at the Dog Musers Hall at 925 Farmers Loop Road.

Come enjoy a slide show presented by Cameron Baird as he takes you down 150 miles of the Alsek River's ice age wilderness: <https://www.facebook.com/events/210586353467077/>

FAIRBANKS TRAIL USERS OPEN GROUP

February 27: Don't let the name throw you off, yes our name has baby in it. Yet it's a group of wonderful parents encouraging a generation to love the outdoors. We host all types of walks, hikes, and park n play dates. If you would like to join us, you can find more information at www.hikeitbaby.com and you can also join our FB group <https://facebook.com/groups/hikeitbabyfairbanks>

BLM-WHITE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

February 25: White Mountains alert: Vehicles have recently been broken into at both Wickersham Dome and Colorado Creek trailheads on the Elliott Highway. Please keep valuables out of sight -- or better yet, at home -- if leaving your vehicle at a trailhead.

DELTA JUNCTION TRAILS ASSOCIATION

March 7 event: Join DJTA for some outdoor fun at Quartz Lake Rec Area. ADF&G will be there for ice fishing (bring your license), there's lots of snow for snowshoeing and XC skiing. We will have ice bowling, beach volleyball, and cornhole boards set up, and there will be dogsled and skijoring demos. Also, become a member and be entered in a chance to win a beautiful fur hat. See poster in comments below for more information! <https://www.facebook.com/events/211929586866304/>

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- The 10 Most Memorable Hikes in North America (incl Mt. Eielson in Denali National Park): <https://tinyurl.com/tw2p75a>
- Application for Public Easement for Trail to Marion Creek Falls (comment **deadline March 31**): <http://notice.alaska.gov/197250>
- The Fairbanks North Star Borough Trails Challenge ends April 1.
 - How to tackle the Winter Trails Challenge in just one day: <https://tinyurl.com/svbshnk>
 - Trails Challenge page at <https://tinyurl.com/wgwlza>
 - Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/463758124331854/>
 - List of trails and directions to trailheads: <https://tinyurl.com/yx7r3zbb>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Local Alaskans step up to fill gaps in state parks budget: <https://tinyurl.com/qm4hzup>

- Assembly reviews ranked and scored public works proposals: <https://tinyurl.com/v46p5hm>
- Worries about the fate of the Denali Park Road persist as tourism season looms: <https://tinyurl.com/u5onul9>
- Fairbanks REI classes and events: <https://www.rei.com/events/p/us-ak-fairbanks>
- Fairbanks North Star Borough Winter 2020 Activity Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/rhn4vv9>
- Recent stories about the “Magic Bus” off the Stampede Trail near Healy
 - Families voice support of bridge across river to reach 'Into the Wild' bus: <https://tinyurl.com/upav3bw>
 - Five tourists rescued after trying to reach 'Into the Wild' bus: <https://tinyurl.com/upttsej>
 - Denali Borough proposes moving 'magic bus' east of Teklanika River: <https://tinyurl.com/sfpsf2t>
 - Build a bridge? Move the bus? 'Into the Wild' still lures the unprepared into the Alaska wilderness: <https://tinyurl.com/ql7qveh>

STATEWIDE

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR STATEWIDE TRAILS CONFERENCE!

REGISTER People can register for the Alaska Trails Statewide Trails Conference, which 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:

- The National Saw Program Manager for the US Forest Service will be there to explain the new saw program and how partner groups can participate.
- Our conference is collaborating with the Rocky Mountain State Parks Executive Conference – which will bring nearly 100 attendees from out of state.
- A Backcountry Emergency Response presentation from the State Search and Rescue Coordinator
- Pre-eminent Trails Consultant Mike Shields will be teaching a two-day Trail Design and Layout training.
- Saturday in-depth focus on two areas: Trail Mapping and Mountain Bike Trails.
- Alaska Trails’ continued focus on the Economic Benefits of Trails



A 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

For more information see:

- Facebook Event page: <https://tinyurl.com/tybe22j>
- Conference webpage at: <https://www.alaska-trails.org/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)

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

- 2019 National Recreational Trails Photo Contest winners (incl on from Alaska): <https://tinyurl.com/sjq39p>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- 2020-2023 Draft STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Program) Open for Public Comment, **Closes March 20**: <http://notice.alaska.gov/196983>
- Student Conservation Association crew applications **due April 17**: <https://tinyurl.com/rc2kj4q>
- State Board of Forestry plans March 17 meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/s77w8l7>
- Alaska State Parks Mark 50th Anniversary with Summer Celebrations: <https://tinyurl.com/u2htf5c>
- The story behind the Alaska State Parks 50th Anniversary poster: <https://tinyurl.com/use8gdh>
- **ENTER** Alaska State Parks 50th Anniversary Photo Contest (run **monthly**): <https://tinyurl.com/qnssp93>

NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM NOT IN PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) has been around for over 2 decades. The program is funded by federal gas taxes that you pay -- every time you fill your sled, or other off-road vehicle. Because you are paying federal gas taxes, but not using the vehicle on federal highways, it makes sense.

When the program was first started, a use study was completed, which resulted in averages being determined on amount of gas taxes paid. Those averages, in addition to miles driven, number of registered off-highway vehicles and other factors determined a formula for the those dollars being returned to each state. About 1/3 of the money that was paid in, was being returned to the trails programs each year.

There has been an effort to recover more than the 30% of our money as well as update the use study. The legislation requesting 100% of the funds was formally introduced last week.

This week, however, when the President's Budget was released, the RTP program, was not included. Yikes!

The legislative process, which includes the budget process, is fluid. This is not the first time the RTP program has been eliminated. Just another battle that is now before us!

ACSA has been an active participant in the Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) for over twenty years. The CRT is made up of motorized and non-motorized user groups with it's focus being RTP. The CRT meets regularly -- and ironically had a meeting already scheduled for today, February 14th.

RTP is very important to the snowmobile community. We will work with the other user groups and put together a plan. We may need assistance from you -- and we will let you know exactly what we need once the plan is finalized.

Stay tuned!!

From American Council of Snowmobile Associations newsletter, Feb 14

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)
- I Did Trail Work Once and Felt Smug for a Lifetime: <https://tinyurl.com/rnfen35>

FUNDING

- National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partner Funding Program grants (**deadline March 30**): www.wildernessalliance.org/trail_funding
- Federal Highway Administration funding chart (has trails-related categories): <https://tinyurl.com/zqz2m8p>
- House Lawmakers Propose \$2.5 Billion for Bike, Pedestrian Projects: <https://tinyurl.com/wgrwmol>
- Legislation to Increase RTP Funding Introduced in House: <https://tinyurl.com/t5pamkv>

TRAIL GUIDES

- 15 Ledge Hikes That Will Make Your Palms Sweat: <https://tinyurl.com/vrpnfun>
- 30 Hazardous Hikes (That You Should Do Anyway): <https://tinyurl.com/wu9dngj>

TRAILS AND HEALTH

- Why doctors are now prescribing a day in the park or a walk on the beach: <https://tinyurl.com/sqz3owb>
- Neuroscientist: To Keep Your Brain Young, Go Hiking: <https://tinyurl.com/vvjwge>
- Why Long Walks Will Change Your Life: <https://tinyurl.com/wydb957>

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

- USDA Forest Service Announces Challenge to Increase Focus on Problems Facing Nation's Largest Public Trail System: <https://tinyurl.com/vqd5u8t>
- Maintenance Management Systems for Trails: <https://tinyurl.com/srkpp7a>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- Northwest Youth Corps is Recruiting: <https://www.nwyouthcorps.org/m/>
- BLM drops plan for oil and gas drilling rights near Moab's Slickrock Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/uu8ox2g>
- Hike the Hill 2020 Urges Action on Outdoor Access, LWCF, Public Lands Maintenance, and Trails: <https://tinyurl.com/snrn3pd>

INTERNATIONAL LINKS:

- 7 Long-Distance Trails You Should Hike This Year: <https://tinyurl.com/qgop6q9>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Book Review: The Greenway Imperative: <https://tinyurl.com/ueaw7ju>

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.