

INTERIOR TRAILS NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

July 2020

INFRASTRUCTURE CHANGES CONSIDERED AT DENALI NATIONAL PARK

COMMENT (DEADLINE JUNE 30) The National Park Service (NPS) is considering implementing management decisions and constructing limited infrastructure to provide increased access and visitor opportunities in Denali National Park and Preserve (Denali) during the winter and shoulder seasons (approximately mid-September to mid-May)

Actions proposed in this environmental assessment (EA) are:

- Allow private vehicle access to the Denali Park Road (Park Road) west of Headquarters to the Teklanika rest area after the first winter weather event of the fall
- Plow a portion of the Park Road during winter months, up to approximately mile 12 beginning in February
- Install a seasonal footbridge near Mountain Vista to facilitate access to traditional winter routes
- Create a connector trail for mushing access at the Mountain Vista rest area
- Allow commercial guiding for non-motorized winter recreation in some areas of the Denali wilderness
- Groom trails in the park entrance area, and potential trails in the Nenana River area
- Allow concessioner transit and tour bus service starting May 10
- Allow parking on the Park Road west of the Savage River for private vehicles during the shoulder seasons
- Open the Savage River and Teklanika campgrounds earlier in the spring and later into the fall
- Install facilities at the Teklanika rest area including parking lines, signs, and informational kiosks
- Provide seasonally specific detail to established desired conditions



The purpose of the proposed actions is to equip the NPS to anticipate changes to winter and shoulder season visitation and more effectively manage visitor services and opportunities. Recent growth and diversification of off-season visitation necessitate a reexamination of the visitor experience offered in Denali during the winter and shoulder seasons, as well as the potential resource impacts from possible alterations to visitor services and facilities.

This EA is **open for public comment June 1-30, 2020**. Submit your comments using the menu on the left side of the screen. These menus will also take you to copies of the document, links to useful websites, and other information that will help you as you read the EA and develop comments.

From Denali National Park and Preserve webpage: <https://tinyurl.com/y73bye6m>

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)

dedicated trail easements involving portions of some ADMA trails. Some trails included in the land deal now have strong protections by being included in the refuge. However, some ADMA trails were left out of the land deal. Those trails are on University of Alaska land and have no legal protection, but they have historically been allowed to remain (though one trail has been rerouted).

More has been written about this issue on the Interior Alaska Trails blog:

<https://www.interioralaskatrails.org/2020/03/14/planning-board-approves-variance-affecting-adma-trails/>

FAIRBANKS CAPITAL PLAN INCLUDING TRAIL PROJECTS APPROVED

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly recently approved the borough's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which includes several trails-related projects.

Among many projects listed in the program are several trails and parks projects including Isberg Recreation Area Master Plan Implementation, Peede Trailhead and Trail Development, and Equinox Trail Extension and Completion. The main trails projects are farther out on the timeline (starting in 2028). The administration and Assembly will revisit the CIP every two years.

The CIP can be viewed here: <http://www.fnsb.us/CIP/Pages/default.aspx>

- Fairbanks Daily News-Miner story on Assembly approval of CIP: <https://tinyurl.com/ya9hhx29>

RECREATIONAL TRAIL PLAN OVERHAUL FUNDING

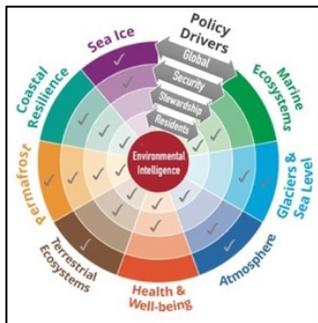
The assembly approved the CIP at its June 25 meeting. Another trails-related item, Ordinance 2019-20-2C, was on the agenda, but the meeting went long, and that item was not dealt with. The meeting is being reconvened on June 30.

Ordinance 2019-20-2C would appropriate money from a federal grant for several things, including an update of the Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan. The trails plan has been in need of an overhaul for a long time. The Trails Advisory Commission has been trying to tackle that job, but it's a big lift.

See Ordinance 2019-20-2C here: www.fnsb.us/assembly/OrdinanceResolutions/2019-20-2C.pdf

TRAIL USERS CAN HELP GUIDE ARCTIC RESEARCH WITH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

COMMENT The Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) is developing a five-year research plan and wants your input. (And trail users probably have something to say about this.)



The committee seeks input from a wide variety of sectors including citizens who live in Arctic areas, like interior Alaska. Residents are one of the four policy drivers of the plan. Of particular interest to residents is "Health and Well-being," one of nine topics that the research will explore.

If you believe federally funded science and engineering research can support your information needs for living or working in the Arctic, then the committee would like your input for the IARPC research plan for 2022-2026.

IARPC is committed to a transparent and equitable engagement process throughout the Plan's development and you can learn more about planned engagement events here: <https://tinyurl.com/yda36k75>

You may provide input in any of the following ways by August 2nd:

Email comments to: IARPCPlan@nsf.gov. Submit a comment through the Federal Register Notice which can be found online here: <https://tinyurl.com/y7jh9krt>. You may also direct additional questions to Meredith LaValley at 940-733-5675 (mlavalley@arcus.org)

ALASKA TRAILS HAS TOOL TRAILER READY FOR PROJECTS



ORGANIZE A PROJECT As you start planning trail building and maintenance projects, remember that Alaska Trails has a mobile tool cache available in the Fairbanks area to loan to organized trail groups in the Interior. The trailers were upgraded recently and have many trail tools including mcleods, pulaskis, rakes, gloves, and much, much more. If you would like to borrow one of the caches, please contact Geoffrey Orth (gcorth@straydogs.us).

WATCH FOR BIRD NESTS WHEN WORKING ON TRAILS

Trail work sometimes requires downing trees or clearing shrubs. When doing so make sure not to violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which makes it illegal for anyone to "take" migratory birds, their eggs, feathers, or nests. "Take" includes destroying or damaging active bird nests or eggs. Different areas of the state have different sensitive periods generally occurring between April 15 and July 25. However, if you encounter an active nest at any time leave it in place and protected until young hatch and depart. "Active" is indicated by intact eggs, live chicks, or the presence of an adult on the nest.

For more information and recommended time periods for avoiding vegetation clearing see: <https://tinyurl.com/y9ulmffg>

SEEN RECENTLY ON THE INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

ALASKA STATE PARKS

June 26 at 6:24: ****Northern Region update #2****

Chena River State Recreation Area: Mile 28 River Access is closed due to flooding. Thank you for your patience and cooperation! And spread the news.

BLM-WHITE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



June 25: White Mountains trail advisory: While most of the White Mountains summer trails are now open, the Quartz Creek Trail remains blocked by lingering snow along Little Champion Creek, about 6 miles from the trailhead. At this time the snow patches are too steep to cross with motorized vehicles. BLM photo by Garrett Jones.

June 16: Summit Trail advisory: We've had several reports from visitors about the brushy conditions on the Summit Trail. The worst section is a few miles from Beaver Creek where the trail climbs onto the ridge above the boardwalk section. The BLM had planned to clear brush from that part of the trail this summer, but the volunteer work crew's travel plans had to be postponed until next year. Those planning to hike the Summit Trail this summer should be advised that careful route-finding may be necessary for several miles where the trail is often obscured by brush.



Conditions are much better closer to the Elliott Highway. If you have questions, please call the BLM's Fairbanks District Office at 907-474-2200. BLM photo by Teri Balsler.

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- Rosie Creek area to get a recreation makeover: <https://tinyurl.com/y7y2dpxg>
- Cache Creek Exploration: <https://tinyurl.com/ybwvmjrz>
- From Eagle to Circle by river: 165 miles in Yukon-Charlie National Preserve: <https://tinyurl.com/y82cmklb>
- From trail lover to trail builder: <https://tinyurl.com/ybudts5c>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Solo overnight on the Denali Park Road: <https://tinyurl.com/y8bhphjv>
- Meet the northern region's new superintendent of state parks: <https://tinyurl.com/y9g5lmtq>
- Alaska Cross 2020: <https://yak.spruceboy.net/2020/06/alaska-cross-2020.html>

STATEWIDE

BIG NEWS FOR OUTDOORS IN LOCAL, FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

The Alaska Outdoor Alliance had this report from last week:

THANK LEGISLATORS *This past week has been a banner week for Alaska outdoors as elected leaders in Juneau, Anchorage, and Washington DC approved measures that will put Alaskans to work on conservation and restoration projects that will benefit residents and visitors to the state for years to come.*



Read the details below then take a moment to thank Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan. And don't forget to take time to thank your representative on the Anchorage and Juneau assemblies for their votes for conservation jobs programs.

Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan joined 71 other US Senators, in a rare bi-partisan show of support, voted in favor of passage of the Great American Outdoors Act.

By a vote of 7 - 1, the City and Borough of Juneau voted to approve an ordinance allocating \$1 million of its CARES Act Reserve Fund to a COVID-19 Conservation Corps. Funds are split fairly evenly between CBJ Parks and Rec, Eaglecrest Ski Area and Trail Mix for projects including ongoing work on the Treadwell Ditch Trail, more trails at Eaglecrest and a mountain bike skills track at Cope Park.

The Anchorage Assembly voted unanimously to allocate \$3 million of CARES Act funds for a Public Lands Jobs Program to fund two major initiatives. The first initiative provides for wildfire mitigation to remove swaths of spruce beetle infected trees. The second initiative focuses on shovel-ready soft-surface trail maintenance and construction projects in conjunction with muni nonprofit partners Alaska Trails and Singletrack Advocates.

See the rest of this Alaska Outdoor Alliance story here: <https://tinyurl.com/yd2keb22>

SEVERAL TRAIL-RELATED POSITIONS AVAILABLE ACROSS STATE

APPLY Alaska State Parks is looking for seasonal employees and volunteers whose duties often include trail work or oversight. Please note that opportunities are dependent on pandemic conditions.

- For more info on the volunteer program see: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/vip/index.htm>
- For more information on Alaska State Parks seasonal jobs see: <http://tinyurl.com/7mog8q3>

SEEN RECENTLY ON THE STATEWIDE FACEBOOK PAGES

ALASKA STATE PARKS

June 9: Recreational Trails Program Training: Mitigating High Risk – Technical and Management Assistance for Alaska RTP

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation will be hosting a teleconference training opportunity for the Alaska Recreational Trails Program!

This training is intended for current and prior Alaska grantees who are familiar with the Recreational Trails Program, but all who are interested are welcome to attend! The training will provide detailed information on the Alaska RTP requirements for grantees, and what the expectations are to ensure that awarded projects are successfully executed.

There will be two teleconference training opportunities:

- Tuesday, July 14, 2020, 9:00am – 12:00pm
- Tuesday, July 28, 2020, 1:00pm – 4:00pm



The weblink to join this training will be posted to the Alaska RTP webpage the week of the training at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm>

After the presentation, there will be some time available for a Q&A session. Please feel free to email any questions you may already have prior to the training session to Parks.RTPGrantApp@alaska.gov.

We look forward to providing this training and answering your questions!

MORE DETAILED STATEWIDE TRAIL NEWS IN ALASKA TRAILS NEWSLETTER



Most of the news in the Interior Trails Newsletter is also included in the monthly Alaska Trails newsletter, a statewide newsletter put out by the group Alaska Trails. The Alaska Trails newsletter also has news from other regions of Alaska, including Southcentral and Southeast. If you are interested in getting the Alaska Trails newsletter, which is also free, send an email to office.alaskatrails@gmail.com. Please include "Request Alaska Trails newsletter" in the subject line. Eric Troyer, editor and publisher of the ITN, is also the editor of the Alaska Trails newsletter.

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Alaska's trails aren't canceled. But do take care when using them: <https://tinyurl.com/y8kpm74a>
- Pay to play (Craig Medred): <https://craigmedred.news/2020/06/28/pay-to-play/>

BEARS AND SUCH

- Bear attacks happen in Alaska, but how often?: <https://tinyurl.com/y87qytqv>

THE MAGIC BUS

- 'Into the Wild' bus removed from Alaska backcountry: <https://tinyurl.com/y8tal4j5>
- Controversies continue for placement of 'Into the Wild' bus: <https://tinyurl.com/yav5f2na>
- FNSB looks into bringing 'Into the Wild' bus to Fairbanks: <https://tinyurl.com/yc9qz6z7>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Denali Park makes changes to tours, buses: <https://tinyurl.com/y7wsvwzc>
- State/federal coordination produces Alaska coastal mapping plan: <https://tinyurl.com/y989rjg8>
- **ENTER** Alaska State Parks 50th Anniversary Photo Contest (run monthly): <https://tinyurl.com/qnssp93>

NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

SENATE BIPARTISAN VOTE PASSES GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

The Senate passed the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) by a bipartisan vote of 73-25. A broad and effective coalition of supporters helped to bring about this landmark legislation, leading the effort to include maintenance backlog funding for several federal agencies; bringing together more than 100 outdoor recreation

businesses in support of GAOA; garnering Senate support and much more. We thank everyone that pitched in for their tireless work to pass this legislation.

"The Great American Outdoors Act is the single greatest piece of conservation and outdoor recreation legislation before Congress in decades," said Jessica Turner, executive director of Outdoor Recreation Roundtable. "Its overwhelmingly bipartisan passage in the Senate is proof that the outdoors crosses party lines and resonates with all Americans. We applaud Senate Republicans and Democrats for working together tirelessly to get this done. The entire outdoor recreation industry thanks every Senator who supported this bill and urges the House to move quickly to pass this measure so we can finally fully fund LWCF and begin the much-needed work on rebuilding infrastructure on our public lands and waters."

The bill now moves to the House where we hope to see quick passage.

From American Trails: <https://tinyurl.com/y9xp7qvu>

2020 REC TRAILS PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS ARE BACK ON

NOMINATE The Coalition for Recreational Trails will host the 2020 achievement awards to recognize outstanding trail projects funded by the national Recreational Trails Program (RTP) virtually this year and will invite winners to in-person celebrations next year.

Award winners will be selected from projects nominated by public agencies, trail administrators or other project sponsors. Projects must be completed in order to receive an award. In addition, projects completed before 2011 are ineligible.

Project award categories will include: construction and design; maintenance and rehabilitation; public-private partnerships and access to public lands; community linkage; education and communication; accessibility enhancement; multiple-use management and "corridor sharing"; use of youth conservation/service corps and community outreach; engaging public-sector partners; and enhancement of federal lands.

People are invited to nominate an outstanding project and are encouraged to solicit support from their members of Congress – both U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators – to build awareness of excellent RTP-funded projects and the RTP program itself.

The nomination form, including any supporting materials and pictures, should be completed by July 31, 2020, at 5 pm EST. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact the Coalition's Awards Committee Chairman Duane Taylor, Executive Director, National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, at coalitionforrecretrails@gmail.com.

For more information see: <https://tinyurl.com/y8jveffq>

WEBINAR USES COVID TO UNDERSTAND THE OUTDOORS, WELL-BEING

ATTEND As part of the #ResponsibleRecreation campaign, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is offering a two-part webinar series (detailed below), and an upcoming on-demand webinar that will help people understand the importance of outdoor recreation spaces for personal well-being and how to protect those spaces for future well-being for themselves, others and for the planet itself.

As part of the #ResponsibleRecreation campaign, one of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' goals is to "promote Responsible Recreation as a critical way to mitigate the stress and anxiety of the current COVID 19 crisis, supporting the health of America." This project will use COVID-19 as an opportunity to deeply connect participants to the environment/nature and attempt to go further to create advocates for public outdoor spaces. To be responsible is to have an obligation to do something and that something is to develop a relationship with the land, water and air nearby.

This is a series of two webinars held one week apart (July 15 and 22) and requires a pre-webinar homework assignment and completion of a survey of your homework reflections prior to the first webinar.

For more information and to sign up: <https://matlearning.org/>

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM NEEDS LETTERS OF SUPPORT

SEND A LETTER American Trails' partners always answer the call and we need your help once again! The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) faces a crucial time as the program is at risk of going dormant without Congressional approval before September 30th.

This sample letter of support (<https://tinyurl.com/yc4chym>), addressed to relevant committee leaders, requests "...that HR 5797, "The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Full Funding Act of 2020" sponsored by Congressman Welch of VT and Congressman Curtis of UT be included in the transportation reauthorization bill..."

Please use the language from the letter, modify it to address your specific needs, and put it on your organizational letterhead. It is important to note that while individual letters to Congress are valuable, this effort is primarily focused on getting our partner associations, clubs, and organizations to send organizational letters of support. If you have the authority to send the letters on your organization's letterhead, please do so. If you need to consult the board of directors or go through some other process before the letter can be signed and sent, please start that process ASAP.

The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) and partners with a Washington, D.C. presence are currently advocating for the continuation of RTP and these letters will be used to support those efforts.

If you send a letter, please email it to the following House of Representatives staff and the leadership at the CRT:

helena.zyblikewycz@mail.house.gov; Alex.Piper@mail.house.gov; jackie.schmitz@mail.house.gov;
Jake.Bornstein@mail.house.gov michael.falencki@mail.house.gov; cheryle.tucker@mail.house.gov;
CRTleadership@rectrails.org

NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

TRAILS AND THE PANDEMIC

- Recreate Responsibly publicity toolkit: <https://tinyurl.com/ya25g2fe>

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

- National Forest Foundation's Matching Awards Program (ddline June 9): <https://tinyurl.com/px7y6ke>

GUIDES

- The 10 Best Urban Walking Trails in America: <https://tinyurl.com/yawgslc9>
- 5 Best Hiking Trails in San Antonio: <https://kevsbest.com/hiking-trails-in-san-antonio/>
- 7 beginner-friendly hikes to check out this summer in Georgia: <https://tinyurl.com/y85kqppj>
- The best bike & hike trails in Northeast Ohio: <https://tinyurl.com/ybngy2te>

RESEARCH

- Association between trail use and self-rated wellness and health: <https://tinyurl.com/ybfpabcc>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- 1,028 Trail Projects Can Put Americans To Work: www.americantrails.org/shovel-ready-trail-projects
- Historical Perspective on Racism in the Outdoors and Looking Forward: <https://tinyurl.com/ycj8w3pt>
- 20 Photos of the Most Beautiful Hiking Trails in the U.S.: <https://tinyurl.com/yal6omhs>
- Stickers support Idaho's non-motorized trails: <https://tinyurl.com/y9vd3dwr>
- Historical Perspective on Racism in the Outdoors and Looking Forward: <https://tinyurl.com/ycj8w3pt>

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.