

INTERIOR TRAILS NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

JANUARY 2021

FAIRBANKS PARKS AND REC AGAIN HOLDING 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 30 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. Five of the trails are ski only, and several are non-motorized, but six are motorized, multi-use, so there is something for everyone.

The first person to post a photo the Trails Challenge Facebook Page was Tracey Martinson, who posted on December 21: "Collected sign #1 this morning: Chena River Walk."

Anyone can participate by finding the Trails Challenge signs and sharing their photos on social media using the hashtag "#fnsbtrails" or by emailing their photos to parks@fnsb.us. Anyone who finds at least 10 signs will receive the Trailblazer Award and be entered in a prize drawing. Participants under age 10 need to find at least 5 signs to win the Junior Trailblazer Award.

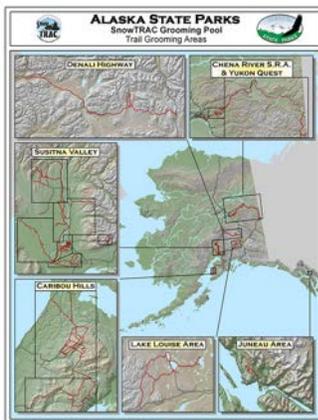
For more information on this year's challenge, see:

- Trails Challenge page at <https://tinyurl.com/y8mlkkuv>
- Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2687304928198988/>
- List of trails and directions to trailheads: <https://tinyurl.com/ybklr6u5>

(Photo of Tracey Martinson from Winter Trails Challenge Facebook page.)



WINTER TRAIL GROOMING PROGRAMS NEED YOUR HELP



DONATE/SERVE Winter is upon us. Many winter trails activities require (or at least are much improved by) grooming, such as snowmachining, skiing, mushing, and fatbiking. If you engage in an activity that is improved by grooming, please remember to support those efforts. There are several ways you can help.

If you use an area that is clearly groomed and has a grooming fund, make sure to donate. Not all trails that are groomed have a specific grooming fund, but you can also join or donate to the group that is doing the grooming. Look for signs that tell you how you can help.

The best place to find out where to donate (and grooming reports) for cross-country skiing and multi-use trails is on this page by the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks: <https://www.nscfairbanks.org/trails/other-local-trails/>

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)

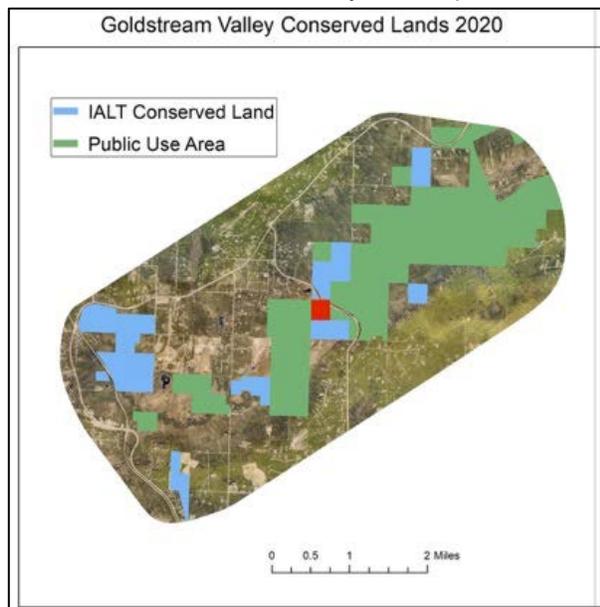
Another thing you can do is support the Alaska Snowmachine Trails Program, which provides funds for grooming in several areas of the state. The grooming this program provides benefits more than snowmachiners. Anyone who uses the groomed trails benefits, including fatbikers, skiers, mushers, and hikers. You can't donate to the Snowmachine Trails Program, but you can help it by making sure to register your snowmachine, which is what funds the program. You can also serve on the SnowTRAC board, which advises the state administration on how the funds are spent. Finally, you can advocate for the program. In years past, administrations have tried to cut the program as part of budget cutting measures. However, strong advocacy has kept the program alive.

To find out more about the program see: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/snowmotr.htm>
Most importantly, get out there and enjoy all the great winter trails we have in Alaska!

LAND TRUST SEEKS DONATIONS TO PRESERVE TRAIL CONNECTIONS

DONATE The Interior Alaska Land Trust is still seeking donations to help preserve critical trail connections in the Goldstream Valley.

The trust was recently able to purchase a critical piece of land -- the 40-acre Steffensen parcel -- in



the Goldstream Valley. (See red square on map.) A trail that connects Goldstream Valley trails on either side of Ballaine Road runs across that land. It is the only place in the valley where the trails connect and cross the road.

The trust plans to keep that parcel, and the trail, open to the public. However, in order to close the sale, the trust had to borrow money from another account. The trust needs to repay that account as well as set aside stewardship funds so it can maintain the property in perpetuity.

The trust is also looking to purchase another piece of property that could help save another critical Goldstream Valley trail section – where the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail crosses Sheep Creek Road at the railroad tracks near Ann's Greenhouse.

So, if you love Goldstream Valley trails, you've got some good reasons to support the Interior Alaska Land Trust. To find out more about the trust and **how to donate** see: <https://interioraklandtrust.org/>

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>



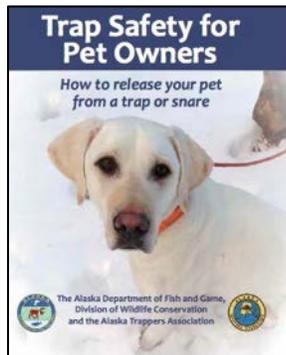
- National Park Service annual passes: The park service offers general passes for \$80. It also has a variety of other discounted or free passes for seniors, fourth-graders, people with disabilities, some volunteers, and members of the military:

www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm



RESOURCES HELP REDUCE PET/TRAPPING CONFLICTS

Trapping season is here, so trail users who let their dogs run loose should make sure they know some basic information about traps and trap lines. A pamphlet and videos are available.



PAMPHLET: A pocket-sized pamphlet titled “Trap Safety for Pet Owners” describes the types of traps and snares that may be encountered and provides illustrated instructions on how to free pets swiftly and safely. It is produced by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Alaska Trappers Association (ATA). Copies are available free of charge at department offices or may be viewed on the website at: <http://tinyurl.com/m6oulhk>. More information, including video footage featuring trap removal instructions, is found on the department’s website at www.adfg.alaska.gov (see “Sharing the Trails” under the “Hunting > Trapping” dropdown menu), and on the ATA website (www.alaskatrappers.org).

VIDEO: The ATA also sells a 30-minute video, "Sharing Alaska's Trails," that includes information such as how to know if you are on a trap line, trap line safety, the physics of handling and opening traps and snares, and tips for first-aid for pets accidentally caught in traps. The video doesn't promote trapping but deals with the practicalities of sharing the trails. A three-minute excerpt of the DVD can be found on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jk242jZwEAQ). To order a copy of the DVD check the ATA store (www.alaskatrappers.org).



Most trapping seasons run from November 1 to the end of February, but the season for a few species lasts longer. Wolf traps could be active well into April.

GET OUT ON THE TRAILS TO RECREATE BUT DO SO RESPONSIBLY

Are you in the know for snow? At the start of the pandemic in the United States, the #RecreateResponsibly campaign became the go-to resource for how to get outside responsibly. As seasons change, so do our practices to stay safe outside and to protect the places we play.

Winter is a beautiful time, but with the new season comes new challenges and safety considerations to take into account. The winter environment changes quickly and access points may be more limited. We want everyone to be able to enjoy this incredible time of year, and we want you to stay safe while doing it. Check out these tips to gauge your winter safety awareness, and do your research to #RecreateResponsibly this season.

- Know Before You Go – Some areas can become dangerous with winter conditions. Research your destination, as roads and facilities may be closed in winter.
- Practice Physical Distancing – Be prepared to cover your nose and mouth. When possible, opt to eat and rest outside. If you feel sick, stay home.
- Plan Ahead – Check local conditions and prepare for the elements, packing extra layers, waterproof clothing, and avalanche safety gear for the backcountry.
- Play It Safe – Know your limits and your gear. Slow down and choose lower-risk activities to reduce your risk of injury.

- Explore Locally – Consider exploring locally, as driving and parking may be more challenging in winter. If you travel, be mindful of your impact on Native and local communities.
- Leave No Trace – Did you know that the snow is our water supply? Keep our winter playgrounds clean. Pack out any human or pet waste. Be respectful of the land.
- Build an Inclusive Outdoors – Everyone deserves to experience a winter wonderland. Be an active part of making the outdoors safe, accessible, and welcoming for all identities and abilities.



For more information, including how to spread the message, see: <https://tinyurl.com/y6zlyrc3>

From Winter Wildlands Alliance

SEEN RECENTLY ON INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

UAF NORTH CAMPUS

December 7: Reminder to the Fairbanks ski community:

Please be sure to wear your mask/face covering when entering the ski hut on the UAF campus. As long as social distancing can be maintained, masks are not required outdoors, however, COVID protocols must be followed when inside the building.

Additionally, if you are unable to social distance, please wait outside the structure until there's room to enter and still maintain 6' of physical distance from anyone who isn't in your household.

Thank you for helping us keep the ski hut open, and the campus safe this winter.

Enjoy your ski time on the UAF trails!

SKARLAND & PEARL CREEK PARK TRAIL USERS

Stan Justice

Dec 14: Please do not park in the (Fairbanks Golf Course) parking lot (to access the groomed skiing trails on the course)! They have restarted construction (of the lodge) so the gate may be open but their insurance is suspended so no public parking is allowed.

Alternative Access to golf course skiing:

- Henrik Road cul-du-sac - take the ADMA trail around to golf course E gate.
- 7 day Adventist Church - not Sat. mornings during service. Don't block water/oil deliveries.
- Christ Lutheran Church - not Sun. mornings if their services resumes, ski along Farmers Loop sno go trail to gate at 7 Day Adventist.
- Hole in the fence at Ballaine/Farmers Loop intersection.

Thanks!

Comment from Barbara O'Donnell >

Please if you take your dogs-take a clean up bag. I removed 4 large piles at the Seventh Day Adventist fence entrance. That is standard to prevent getting shut down by private property owners complaining of dog crap. It was on the golf course. Thankyou

FAIRBANKS TRAIL USERS OPEN GROUP

Allen Bondurant >

Dec 24: Just a reminder that by this time of winter, ATVs use on our trails is totally incompatible with other trail user groups

Reply by Jacob Buller: And if you, say, drive a 4 wheeler with tracks on it, at least drag a groomer behind you.

BLM-WHITE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

December 10: This video, made by frequent White Mountains visitor Corrine Leistikow, captures why so many of us hold the place near and dear during the holidays! <https://youtu.be/FEeG2PtW8d>

DELTA JUNCTION TRAILS ASSOCIATION

EVENT > FIRST DAY HIKE

Friday, January 1, 2021 at 11 AM AKST – 3 PM AKST

Little Lost Lake, Quartz Lake State Recreational Area

Alaska State Parks and Delta Junction Trails Association encourages the public to join in on January 1st, for a ski/ snowshoe/ hike at Quartz Lake State Recreation Area. This year's hike will start and end at Little Lost Lake. Due to COVID-19, there is no dedicated start time - just show up any time from 11 am to 3 pm. Bring your own snacks and drinks, and stay at least a ski pole distance from others outside your family. We will have warming fires going. This is an all ages event, and sociable pets on a leash are welcome



INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- Safety focused resources abound for trappers and trail users (FDNM): <https://tinyurl.com/y5w74tnk>
- Land trust adds important piece to Goldstream conservation puzzle (FDNM): <https://tinyurl.com/y3dk8pf4>
- Cache Mountain Cabin with the dogs (Jay Cable blog): <https://tinyurl.com/yd6neggx>
- Delta Junction Trails Association Trails Challenge: <https://tinyurl.com/ya2hnrcr>
- A quick trip to Caribou Bluff... (Jay Cable blog, photos only): <https://tinyurl.com/ybetxp8y>
- Agreement reached to restore Tolovana Hot Spring access near Fairbanks: <https://tinyurl.com/yarqxfcu>
 - Fairbanks Daily News-Miner story: <https://tinyurl.com/y7qof5zp>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- BLM podcast: Interview with Garrett Jones, recreation planner, White Mountains National Recreation Area: www.blm.gov/blog/2020-12-16/podcast-white-mountains-national-recreation-area

STATEWIDE

CALL TO ACTION: SUPPORT GOV. DUNLEAVY'S BUDGET FOR LWCF

ADVOCATE Alaska Trails and our partners are working to ensure Alaska takes full advantage of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a generous federal program that provides a one-to-one match for trails and other outdoor recreation investments in Alaska.

With the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, Alaska's potential LWCF share is now expected to double to \$3.5 million each year. We need your help to ensure Alaska does not leave its share of LWCF dollars on the table.

NEXT STEPS: WHAT IT TAKES TO PUT LWCF FUNDS TO WORK IN ALASKA

Governor Dunleavy's recently released budgets include the in-state funding needed for Alaska to access LWCF dollars (<https://tinyurl.com/y8de7o8e>). We need everyone to express support approval of the Governor's budgets by the State Legislature. Four specific actions are needed:

1. Legislative approval of the Governor's Fiscal Year FY 2021 Supplemental Budget. This secures pending 2019 & 2020 LWCF dollars, providing required receipt authority and covering the State's administrative costs and the State's half of the required match (remainder covered by local/tribal governments).
2. Legislative approval of the Governor's FY 2022 Budget (covers same requirements for 2021 LWCF dollars).
3. DNR hires a LWCF grant administrator – fill the unfunded, currently vacant position.
4. DNR & partners carry out the required update of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

WHY IT MATTERS – HOW DOES INVESTING IN OUTDOOR RECREATION BENEFIT ALASKA?

1. Creates jobs and businesses that strengthen local and tribal economies. Employment in Alaska's outdoor recreation industry is sixth highest per capita in the nation.
2. Expands the foundation of Alaska's \$4.5 billion tourism industry. If just half of a typical year's out-of-state visitors spent one more day in Alaska, it would generate an additional \$137M in annual spending.
3. Trail investments support the broader outdoor recreation sector. According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation economy provides 2.2% of the total US GDP, larger than commercial fishing, farming, forestry, utilities, or telecommunications.
4. Helps fill the growing gap between our current outdoor infrastructure and the expanding demand for outdoor recreation.
5. Makes it easier for Alaskans to be active outside, improving physical and mental health. Investing in trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure helps grow Alaska's struggling economy and generates more ways for Alaska residents to be active, healthy and happy outside.



WHAT YOU CAN DO: A SCHEDULE FOR ACTION

1. Learn more about the program, so you can be a more effective advocate. See the Alaska Trails website for more detail on the issues and opportunities.
2. Leadership in the Alaska Legislature is still in flux. So the first step is to reach out to your local legislator, and then, in early January, once those decisions are made to reach out to leadership in key legislative committees. In both cases, the goal is to help these legislators better understand the Land and Water Conservation Fund program, and the benefits of securing federal dollars to invest in Alaska's outdoor recreation infrastructure, economy and health.

For more on funding for trails in Alaska see: www.alaska-trails.org/funding-for-trails

Story by Chris Beck; photo from Wikipedia by Paxson Woelber of Milo Lake, Lynx Lake Loop, in the Nancy Lake Canoe System, which has benefited from the LWCF

MAX ROMEY: SHINING A LIGHT ON ALASKA AND ITS TRAILS

Max Romey wants to tell stories about Alaska's world-class trails.

But Max's vision of trails extends beyond pathways and scenery, encompassing places, people, history, health and more. And his stories are not limited to words.



Max, a trail athlete, is an Alaskan multi-media phenom making a name for himself through his watercolor art and outdoor videography. His website has a great description:

A dyslexic Alaskan artist who found his voice through watercolors and film. Max works as an outdoor videographer all over the globe, but his true passion is being on Alaskan trails and in the community that they create.

Max has been involved in the Alaska Long Trail project, which seeks to create a continuous long trail in Alaska. He created a great video about the project that showcases his artistic ability and Alaska's incredible scenic wonders. See it here: www.alaska-trails.org/the-alaska-long-trail

During Alaska Outdoor Alliance's "Confluence AK" in October, Max was featured along with former Alaska Governor Tony Knowles and Chris Beck, Alaska Long Trail manager and former Alaska Trails Board Member, in a presentation about the project. During the presentation Max mentioned that he and some partners had done part of the Alaska Long Trail route. As the editor of both the Alaska Trails newsletter and Interior Trails Newsletter, I was curious. How much had they done? Were they planning on doing the whole thing? Were they documenting their travels?

Read more about Max and his project here: <https://tinyurl.com/y7grc36h>

By Eric Troyer, Alaska Trails newsletter editor; photo from Max Romey website: <http://maxromeyproductions.com/>

ALASKA OUTDOOR ALLANCE SETS PRIORITIES FOR NEW YEAR

STATE PRIORITIES

- Stateside LWCF: In 2020, the state forfeited \$615,000 in Land and Water Conservation Fund monies which would have translated into \$1.2 million in outdoor recreation infrastructure. Another \$3 million is in immediate danger. LWCF has helped fund trails, campgrounds, playgrounds, boat launches and more around the state. We need to work with legislators and the Governor to make sure LWCF funding stays in the state and gets put to work to benefit our people, our communities and our sector.

- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): A statewide SCORP is a basic federal requirement for states to receive LWCF funds. These strategic plans must be updated every five years. Alaska's SCORP expires at the end of next year. The state isn't funding the work to update the plan but thankfully, the National Park Service Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance Program is filling in the void. AOA will be working to ensure there is more public involvement than the last time this plan was updated so we end up with a robust strategy for an inclusive and equitable vision for Alaska outdoor recreation for the next five years (2022-2027).
- Focused interest groups forming: Proponents are rallying to amplify their voices on issues related to active transportation and winter recreation. Winter recreation advocacy already under way includes urging the state to restore plowing resources for Turnagain Pass and improving the statewide SnowTRAC program that supports community-based winter trail grooming that is enjoyed not just by snow machiners, but other winter lovers like dog sledders, fat bikers, and skiers.



FEDERAL PRIORITIES

- AOA Jobs Stimulus Package. The pandemic is not over and our sector and our state still need help to recover. A couple bills in Congress would support the objectives of AOA's jobs stimulus package. We'll be tracking and keeping you informed of ways to support measures including these:
- The CORPS Act. The proposed bi-partisan legislation would expand national service programs significantly to help the country respond to and recover from the public health, economic, and social crises facing the nation in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. Alaska is leading by example, as Juneau, Sitka and Anchorage invested some \$6 million in CARES Act funding to create community-based conservation corps.
- Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation (SOAR) Act. This bill would simplify and improve permitting processes for guides, outfitters and groups. SOAR revises provisions regarding special recreation use permits for recreational activities on federal recreational lands and waters.
- Challenge Cost-Share appropriations. Each federal land (and ocean) management agency usually has some money to allocate to challenge cost-share grants which create partnerships at the community level to achieve mutual land management goals. AOA has asked appropriations for these grants to be increased as the money directly benefits gateway communities and creates jobs.

If you're interested in keeping informed about issues pertaining to winter recreation email Lee Hart (lee@alaskaventure.org).

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 foxtrails@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.

WITH A NEW YEAR AHEAD, ALASKA TRAILS LOOKS BACK ON THE OLD

For over 15 years, Alaska Trails has teamed up with partners across the state to build, maintain and advocate for more and better trails. While 2020 didn't go exactly as planned, we still accomplished a lot. Check out some of the highlights from our year below!

www.alaska-trails.org/2020-highlights

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Articles on overflow:
 - The first step in extracting your snowmachine from overflow: Avoid overflow: <https://tinyurl.com/yapukw7s>
 - Overflow...It's About Staying out of Trouble: www.sleddogcentral.com/faq/may_overflow.htm

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Finding presence when movement isn't always an option (ADN): <https://tinyurl.com/y46zptsa>
- 2020-2023 STIP Amendment 1 approved: <https://tinyurl.com/y232rpq3>
- Snare some knowledge about trapping in Alaska and help keep your dog safe out there (ADN): <https://tinyurl.com/y39cy59h>
- Disabled veteran camping passes good through Memorial Day 2021: <https://tinyurl.com/y8ajzlx>

NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

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

FUNDING

- Clif Bar Family Foundation grants (for groups, projects; ddline Feb 1, June 1, Oct 1): <http://tinyurl.com/y5es3wjc>

HEALTH

- 11 Minutes of Exercise a Day May Help Counter the Effects of Sitting: <https://tinyurl.com/yxng462r>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- How to Support the Outdoor Destinations and Recreation Areas You Love: <https://tinyurl.com/y4qcad6h>
- Engaging Children in Nature through Trails: <https://tinyurl.com/yxbwrz3t>
- Hiker spends Christmas Eve dressed as an elf on Smokies trails: <https://tinyurl.com/yawt64jk>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- How does walking and cycling help to protect the environment?: <https://tinyurl.com/y9aqfxsw>

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.