

Re: Funding for Alaska Long Trail projects

Dear

We urge you to support the 14 Alaska Long Trail project for inclusion in the FY2024 state capital budget, especially the two Fairbanks-area projects: “Isberg 4-Season Trails” and “Equinox Marathon Trail – Parks Highway to Fairbanks via Ester Dome.”

All 14 projects have been submitted into CAPSIS. They total \$9.5 million and will fill key shovel-ready and planning-ready gaps along the length of the planned Seward-to-Fairbanks Alaska Long Trail route ([www.alaska-trails.org/the-alaska-long-trail](http://www.alaska-trails.org/the-alaska-long-trail)).

The Alaska Long Trail, when complete, will become a world-class trail system connecting 500+ miles of Alaska’s iconic terrain and diverse communities from Seward to Fairbanks, embracing the many ways (motorized and non-motorized) Alaskans recreate outdoors and bolstering the Alaska economy by attracting visitors from all over the world.

The two Fairbanks-area projects will benefit locals daily. The Isberg project will improve lowland trails in the Isberg Recreation Area so that they can be used in summer as well as winter. The Equinox Marathon Trail project will secure easements and build new trail sections for a route that is sometimes used currently but is in poor shape and includes sections without a public right-of-way. These projects will help improve access to trails for Interior Alaska residents as well as visitors. These improvements will help our economy while also helping give our citizens places to maintain their physical and mental health.

Last year, the State Legislature generously included 15 Alaska Long Trail projects in the FY2023 budget, though only seven of them stayed in the budget after the vetoes. We hope that this legislative session you will support the new set of the Long Trail projects, including the four that didn’t make it through the vetoes last year.

### **BENEFITS OF THE LONG TRAIL**

With some of the world’s most stunning wild places, Alaska is overdue in creating a world-class, long trail system of its own. Goals and outcomes of building the trail include:

- **Improve Access** – Expand year-round non-motorized, motorized, and multi-modal outdoor recreation access; increase the supply of outdoor recreation opportunities which has fallen behind demand.
- **Build a Stronger, More Durable Economy** – Outdoor recreation infrastructure is *essential* infrastructure, building on Alaska’s global competitive advantage, and supporting local jobs, business opportunities, and a stronger, more durable AK economy. Long trails are potent, proven attractions that will increase the time and money travelers spend in Alaska, growing jobs for residents, spawning business opportunities, and invigorating the economies of trail towns and communities along the

route and statewide. If typical year's out-of-state travelers had reasons to spend one more day in Alaska, the result would be an additional \$250M in annual spending in our state.

- **Enhance Alaskans' Quality of Life** – Make Alaska an even more attractive place to live for current and prospective residents.
- **Encourage Healthy Lives** – Make it easier and more inviting to be active and healthy outside.
- **Celebrate Heritage** – Support, preserve, and celebrate Alaska's vibrant traditional cultures and ways of life.
- **Sustain what Makes Alaska Unique** – Be good stewards of outdoor recreation resources: our wild spaces and healthy ecosystems, lively communities, and access to abundant, diverse recreational experiences. The Long Trail will become a national treasure, benefiting Alaskans, and creating a legacy for future generations.

### **USE & USERS**

The ultimate goal is a network of routes accommodating a variety of uses, including some braids open to motorized use, and others for non-motorized hiking, biking and skiing. Some segments may include the Alaska Railroad or, such as in Nenana Canyon, with a local rafting guide company. The Long Trail will be an Alaska long trail: a braided, four-season trail system designed for hikers, bikers, skiers, ATV's, snowmachines, for both day and multi-day use.

**We ask that you support the inclusion of the Alaska Long Trail projects, submitted into CAPSIS, in the FY2024 state capital budget.**

Sincerely,