

# INTERIOR TRAILS NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

JULY 2023

## FAIRBANKS COMPREHENSIVE TRAIL PLAN UPDATE PASSES

In June, the Fairbanks Borough Assembly passed the Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan update – almost fully intact and by a 7-2 vote.

A last-minute compromise deal devised by Assemblyman Aaron Lojewski, and then refined by Mayor Bryce Ward and his staff, assuaged most of the private property concerns of several assembly members. In the end, only Assemblymembers Barbara Haney and Brett Rotermund voted against the plan update. And during comments at the end of the meeting, Assemblyman Rotermund said he was pleased to see the compromise work.

“Even though I stuck to my ‘no’ vote, I’m pretty happy this thing passed,” he said.

To get the compromise, the plan update was changed in two significant ways.

- The definition of C trails was changed so that it now gives borough staff more latitude to expend resources on those trails.
- Several trails new to the plan were reclassified from A and B trails to C trails.

To find out more detail about the compromise and the meeting, see this Interior Alaska Trails blog post: <https://www.interioralaskatrails.org/2023/06/21/fairbanks-borough-assembly-passes-trail-plan-update/>



## BLM DENIES PERMIT FOR HELICOPTER DAY TOURS AT TOLOVANA

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has denied a permit for day tours at Tolovana Hot Springs that would have included helicopter landings. The decision was made on May 4. A public release announcing the decision was dated May 24. Below is from the decision statement:

A field inspection was conducted by BLM staff in mid-February, 2023, which illustrated a number of issues with the proposal for which no reasonable mitigations could be identified. The rationale for denial included increased noise and reduced bather privacy resulting from the proposed action that would likely create recreation conflicts and diminish user experiences of Tolovana Hot Springs Ltd guests. Other issues noted were a lack of



### LINKS TO INTERIOR TRAIL INFORMATION

- List of apps that have many interior Alaska trails: [www.interioralaskatrails.org/resources/web-sites/](http://www.interioralaskatrails.org/resources/web-sites/)
- Interior Alaska Trails (a collection of trail-related resources): [www.interioralaskatrails.org/resources/](http://www.interioralaskatrails.org/resources/). (If you find any broken links or other problems please send an email to [fbxtrails@gmail.com](mailto:fbxtrails@gmail.com))

sufficient water flow and water temperature from the seeps near the proposed tub location to support the proposal, and safety concerns arising from helicopter operations in close proximity to public recreational use. Due to the decision to deny the permit for the above stated reasons based on a field inspection by BLM staff, an environmental analysis was not completed.

According to the proposal submitted late last year, a hot tub would have been brought in for the operation and tours would have been done via helicopter with a maximum of three landings per day.

You can find the public release regarding the decision, as well as other documents including a scoping report on which the decision was based here:

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2021127/570>

*Photo by Nathaniel Wilder/Alaska Public Media: Skiers make their way toward Tolovana Hot Springs in 2012*

## CHALLENGE OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO FIND TRAILS IN INTERIOR

The Fairbanks Summer Trails Challenge is live with 20 signs up and ready to find all over the borough.

The challenge started June 20 and lasts until September 30.

There are again three award categories: Trailblazer, Junior Trailblazer, and Sourdough Trailblazer. Trailblazers are 10 years old and up and must find at least 10 signs. Junior Trailblazers are up to 9 years old and must find five signs. Sourdough Trailblazers are at least 60 years old and must find five signs.



This event, put on by the Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department, is an all-ages, all-abilities, outdoor scavenger hunt. The challenge is designed to get you out with your friends and family to explore our wonderful local trails, both new and familiar.

Anyone is allowed to participate in the search. When you find a sign, mark it off on your checklist, which you get when you register. You no longer need to prove you nabbed a sign by taking a selfie, but participants are still encouraged to take the photos and post them on

social media with the hashtag “#FNSBTrails”. Putting it on the Trails Challenge Facebook page is a great way to share. And of course, leave the sign to be found by the next trail challenge participant.

Participants who find the minimum number of signs for their category get their official award and can win prizes from local sponsors. Whether you find one or find them all, challenge yourself to get outside and enjoy nature!

To register, find out more and see a list of signs, see the Fairbanks Borough Trails Office webpage: <https://tinyurl.com/mscu47zu>

And check out the Trails Challenge Facebook Event here: <https://tinyurl.com/3tumm6am>

Get your Trails Challenge Guide here:

[https://issuu.com/fnsbparksandrec/docs/summer\\_trails\\_guide\\_23](https://issuu.com/fnsbparksandrec/docs/summer_trails_guide_23)

*Photo from Evangeline Orr post on Facebook Event page.*

## PRIVATE DONATIONS HELP IMPROVE DOG MUSHING TRAILS

Several miles of Alaska Dog Mushing Association trails were improved earlier this year thanks to two \$20,000 private donations from the Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation.



The trails were mowed and mulched, which levels the trail by trimming tussocks and stumps. This helps make grooming easier, especially early season grooming when uneven trails can make for a wild ride for groomers. The mowing also helps improve sight distance around corners.

About 14 miles of trail were mowed, making up nearly half of the total ADMA trails. The bulk of the work was done in May, though some mowing was done last fall. Much of the work was done on the Creamer's Field Migratory Wildlife Refuge. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, which manages the refuge, oversaw the work.

Funding for the project from a private endowment. The work was done by Greenstone Station, a Fairbanks-based business. The company owner, Shaun Patterson, built Shaun's Trail at Pearl Creek Nordic Park as an Eagle Scout project and also mowed the "ski field."

Organizers hope to continue mowing and mulching more of the trails next spring.

## BOROUGH SEEKS COMMENT ON COMPREHENSIVE ROAD PLAN

**COMMENT** The Fairbanks Borough is seeking comments on its Comprehensive Road Plan. This process has been underway for a while. They took comments last year and now have a revised plan that is available for review and comment. While the people working on the Road Plan worked closely with those on the Comprehensive Trail Plan, trails advocates should still look closely at the revised road plan. Look for conflicts with roads and trails. Make sure your voice is heard.

Please note: THIS IS JUST A PLAN. It is a guiding document for where roads should go IF AND WHEN they are built. This does not mean the borough is going to start building all these roads right away. (The borough will not build most of the roads on the plan, maybe none.)

This is a good approach to development. While there may be some road/trail conflicts with the revised plan, it is better to get these issues figured out early and with some thought to how everything is integrated.

Take a look at the revised plan and leave your comments. All information should be found on this page: <https://fnsbroadsplan.com/>

## DO GOOD FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS WHILE OUT USING THE TRAILS

When you are out enjoying the trails, remember that you can be a force of good. That starts by acting responsibly: respect private property, don't shortcut switchbacks, keep your dog under control, be quiet around homes. But you can do more than that. You can also be the eyes and ears for the community. If you see a problem with a trail, a problem with wildlife, or something suspicious, please report it.

Trail apps sometimes have a way to report an issue with the trail. For example, with OuterSpatial (<https://www.outerspatial.com/>), which is used by several agencies in Alaska, users can report issues on specific trails. (See "How can I explore specific Trail information?": <https://tinyurl.com/mk4je4hm>)

If the problem is wildlife related, you can report that to Alaska Fish and Game here: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=reportwildlifeencounter.main>

If the problem is related to crime or public safety, you can report it to the Alaska State Troopers online or via texting: <https://dps.alaska.gov/AST/Home>

## ALASKA TRAILS HAS TOOL TRAILER READY FOR TRAIL PROJECTS



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](mailto:gcorth@straydogs.us)).

## SEEN RECENTLY ON INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

### ALASKA STATE PARKS

June 15: \*\*Northern Region Update\*\*

The ATV Trail at Olnes in the Lower Chatanika River SRA is eroding into the river creating a public safety hazard. 😞

Staff in the Northern Region have set up some flags to alert riders, but they will be blocking the washed out areas, please be aware if ATVing in this area. Thank you!



### INTERIOR ALASKA TRAILS AND PARKS FOUNDATION



June 4: Randy (VP) and Brian (Treasurer) went out to trim up Table Top Mountain Trail today.

We knocked back the dwarf birch with hedge trimmers from the alpine area to below the boardwalk (about a mile and cleaned up fallen trees and new growth to the trailhead covering 2 miles). Tough work for sure!

The eastern side of the loop has not looked this good in decades!

Lots of water on the trail. Snow still blocks the top from easy access. Spring is just coming to Nome Creek! Let us know what you think of the trail!

### SKARLAND & PEARL CREEK TRAIL USERS

Stan Justice, June 26: I have been out benching another section of the Skarland that is hard to groom because the side slope is so steep that the snowmachine wants to tip over and the drag tracks low. As you use the reworked section try to stay on the high 1/3 of the trail. The high 1/3 is the cut bench so naturally compacted Loess. The middle third is boot packed loess and the lowest third is where I toss the duff and roots. The lower side of the trail will revegetate if we keep traffic off.

I have done a lot of digging along the Skarland and only in this area found buried pebbles. They seem to be buried 4-5 inches deep. I understand loess accumulates at a rate of an inch every 1000 years. By what process did these pebbles get incorporated into the loess thousands of years ago? Location is above Red Fox Rd. near the tire swing.

Thanks



Stan Justice; June 14: I attended the Joint Mobility Task Force, a group of DOT, Cities, and borough folks with BPAC (Bicycle Pedestrian Advisor Committee). The BPAC is part of FAST Planning and advocates for bikes and pedestrians. On the agenda was the Skarland Trail issue at Ballaine and Yankovich where the path gets obstructed every winter by loader over clearing the road. Head of DOT operations offered to install marker posts as a temporary measure to hopefully show loader operator where to stop. Great to see the issue get some attention.

Was interesting to hear discussion about our post covid world. DOT has only half their positions filled limiting what they can do. FNSB puts jobs out to bid and gets no bids. Or they get a bid at 5 times what the job should cost.

## NORDIC SKI CLUB OF FAIRBANKS



June 24: **Volunteers are needed** to do trail work at Birch Hill Recreation Area. It's part of a project to improve the Birch Hill trails and make them easier to groom and otherwise maintain. The SCUM were out recently helping.

If you'd like to help with this project, here's the most pertinent information.

--Contact Tom Helmers at [trails@nscfairbanks.org](mailto:trails@nscfairbanks.org) and he'll direct you to the appropriate trails. After you've finished, let Ann Jamieson know what trails you worked on and how much time you spent. She can be contacted at: [treasurer@nscfairbanks.org](mailto:treasurer@nscfairbanks.org)

--But surely you want to see pics of these buff guys out working the trails!

<https://sonotkkaazoot.org/2023/06/23/scum-volunteer-18-hours-of-trail-work/>

## FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH PARKS & REC

May 8: Tanana River Recreation Access Improvements Project  
CONSTRUCTION UPDATE (6/20):

Construction is ramping up at Tanana Lakes Recreation Area with traffic control and parking lot closures starting soon. Only one lot (swim beach lot, motorized boat launch lot, and non-motorized boat launch lot) will be closed at a time during weekdays throughout the summer, with no closures on weekends. Plan for potential delays on park roads and alternative access points for your activities.

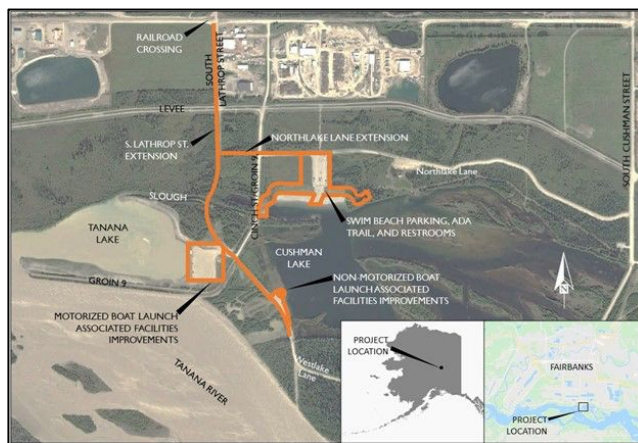
This project will provide a multitude of much needed improvements to the park. Before heading to Tanana Lakes Recreation Area for some fun this summer, be sure to check our Facebook page or the Federal Highway Administration project page. We will post newsletters periodically throughout the summer to provide updates on areas affected by construction.

Thank you for your patience!

For more information, visit the links below:

<https://www.fnsb.gov/1005/Ongoing-Projects>

<https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/projects/ak/fnsb-tanana-1>



## SALCHA SKI CLUB

June 23: Summer trail etiquette. Dogs are OK during the summer. They **MUST** be on a leash or 100% responsive to voice commands. We do not want any conflict between trail users or other dogs!

No motorized vehicles. No bikes, sorry, but they erode the trail quickly. Clean up after your pet! Bag it or scoot the poop well off the trail. Mosquitos, well, let's just say bring along a lot of repellent! Remember we share the trails with moose, bears traveling thru the area, and other wildlife. Make some noise and enjoy our trail system! Donations for trail maintenance can be made at Salcha Store.

## INTERIORWIDE LINKS

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- Solstice Sub-24 Adventure: <https://tinyurl.com/4dvr5nw6>
- Land Use Permit to Alaska Renewables for trail construction and meteorological towers (comment deadline July 7): <http://notice.alaska.gov/211597>

## SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- FNSB Parks & Rec- Intro To Hiking, July 12: [www.facebook.com/events/781126250143226/](http://www.facebook.com/events/781126250143226/)
- Off Road Vehicle Park Coming Together (Fairbanks): <https://tinyurl.com/47wj6v4s>
- Tanana Lakes Recreation Area undergoes expansion project: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7uc8yc>
- Off-road vehicle park starts to take shape: <https://tinyurl.com/y7kd6hap>
- AlaskAcross 2023: Eagle Summit to Chena Hot Springs: <https://tinyurl.com/2bpenjh9>

## STATEWIDE

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### THREE ALASKA LONG TRAIL PROJECTS SURVIVE BUDGET PROCESS

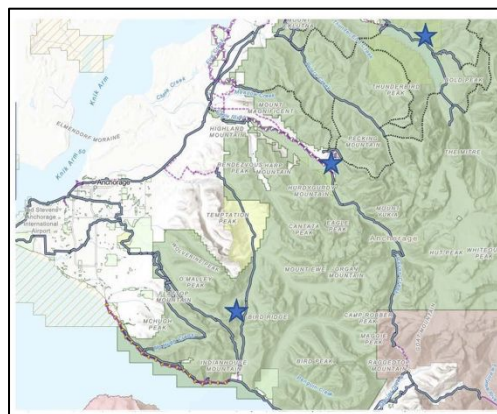
Great news for trails this summer! On June 19th, Governor Dunleavy enacted the FY2024 state budget, and THREE Alaska Long Trail projects totaling \$1.434 million are in it, thanks to an amendment submitted by Senator Wielechowski and support from Senator Merrick and Representative Saddler!

The three projects are in Chugach State Park:

- Eklutna Trailside Improvements: <https://tinyurl.com/4nem272p>
- Ram Valley - Reestablishing Access: <https://tinyurl.com/6nvv653m>
- Indian Valley Trail Reroute: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9c64jw>

Alaska Trails is the funding recipient for all of these projects and will be working closely with the Chugach State Park's staff and local contractors over the next couple of years.

We are excited and grateful to see funding for trails in the state capital budget for two years in a row now. This support in the bipartisan state legislature and Governor's administration is a testament to the economic viability of the long trail concept and to the importance of specific trail segments to communities. Each of the funded projects will bring economic and health benefits to local residents but will also contribute to the growth of statewide outdoor recreation economy in the heart of Alaska.



Thank you to everyone who wrote letters of support for these projects!

See projects details on Alaska Trails' Alaska Long Trail page: <https://www.alaska-trails.org/state-budget-funding-for-alt>

## ALASKA MOUNTAIN BIKE SUMMIT TO BE HELD IN OCTOBER

**REGISTER** Please save the date and join Chugach Mountain Bike Riders, Alaska Trails, Arctic Bicycle Club, and Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers on Saturday and Sunday October 14 and 15 at the scenic Government Peak Chalet, for the second Alaska Mountain Bike Summit.

The Alaska Mountain Bike Summit seeks to bring together nonprofits, clubs, and mountain biking advocates from across the state to share information and plan a way to maximize the knowledge and expertise in the state to build, maintain, and ride more mountain biking trails.



At a glance:

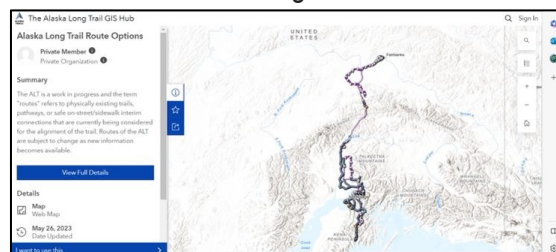
- What: Alaska Mountain Bike Summit
- Where: Government Peak Chalet, 10690 North Mountain Trails Drive, Palmer, Alaska
- When: 9am - 4pm Saturday, 14 October and Sunday 15 October
- Why: to build a strong statewide mountain bike coalition
- Cost: (includes meals, facility, swag)
  - Scholarships available
  - Individuals \$85 (includes lunch both days)
  - Club table \$1000 (up to 5 participants)

More information including registration, agenda and other pertinent news will be coming soon. For questions contact: Will Taygan [will@ChugachMTB.org](mailto:will@ChugachMTB.org)

## NEW HUB ALLOWS YOU TO EXPERIENCE THE ALASKA LONG TRAIL

Alaska Trails is excited to announce the online mapping resource for the Alaska Long Trail. Visitors to the brand-new Alaska Long Trail ArcGIS Hub can:

- Explore interactive maps of the ALT with links to trail guides
- Share suggestions and feedback about the entire ALT or specific segments
- Plan an Alaska Long Trail adventure and hike, bike, or packraft portions of the most completed section between Seward and Eagle River.



If you are interested in adventuring on any of the Alaska Long Trail segments between Seward and Eagle River this summer, Alaska Trails will be grateful for your feedback at the end of your journey. You can sign up to be contacted here: <https://tinyurl.com/4ts299xz>

Check out the hub here: <https://the-alaska-long-trail-hub-alaska-trails.hub.arcgis.com/>

## SEEN RECENTLY ON STATEWIDE FACEBOOK PAGES

### ALASKA STATE PARKS

June 23: #DYK that Alaska State Parks has a partnership with OuterSpatial to provide you easy access to our trails and facilities in an easy to follow mapping format? 😊

Check it out and let us know what you think!

<https://www.outerspatial.com/>

📸 Anu Maraimpillai, Kachemak Bay Sunrise



## STATEWIDE LINKS

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- Application for Public Easement Nenana-Dune Lake Trail-Public **Comment Period Extended** (deadline July 14): <http://notice.alaska.gov/211561>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Completion of Denali Park Road bridge pushed back to 2026: <https://tinyurl.com/45kpah7y>
- BLM **Extends Comment Period** for Public Lands Rule (ddline July 5): <https://tinyurl.com/42z63yc2>
- White House awards \$2.2B in transportation grants: <https://tinyurl.com/3a67xr6n>

## NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

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### ADD YOUR VOICE IN SUPPORT OF THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ACT

**SEND LETTER** Congress has an opportunity to pass the largest outdoor recreation package in decades this year! Bipartisan legislation, America's Outdoor Recreation Act (S. 873) has been introduced in the Senate and similar legislation is being considered in the House.

It's up to all trail users to contact their Members of Congress to tell them to pass this critical legislation NOW to transform equitable access to the outdoors and recreation opportunities for all trail users and all visitors to public lands!

The American Hiking Society has a letter already written that you can sign and add to, if you like:

<https://americanhiking.org/national-trails-day/advocacy/>

### NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

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*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/training/calendar](http://www.americantrails.org/training/calendar)

### TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- American Trails "Trail Tracks": [www.americantrails.org/newsletter](http://www.americantrails.org/newsletter)

### VOLUNTEER

- Am. Hiking Society's 2023 Volunteer Vacations: <https://americanhiking.org/volunteer-vacation-trips/>



### FUNDING

- FOX Factory Trail Trust (**applications reviewed quarterly**): <https://trailtrust.com/>
- Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative (OHVs, **quarterly deadlines**): <https://yamahaoai.com/>

### OTHER LINKS:

- Man walks 14,000 to map the American Perimeter Trail: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMNvUsDPK64](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMNvUsDPK64)
- 9 New National Recreation Trails Added to the National Trail System: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3cypvh>
- ITS 2023 Impact Report - ITS in Reno Breaks Attendance Records: <https://tinyurl.com/bdmvy75j>

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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](mailto: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 and of the Fairbanks Cycle Club, a member of several Interior trail user groups, and a member of Alaska Trails and editor of its newsletter.