

# **INTERIOR ALASKA TRAILS NEWSLETTER**

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

JAN 2024

## **FAIRBANKS PARKS AND REC WINTER TRAILS CHALLENGE IS LIVE**

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 need to be registered to be eligible for prizes and awards. See "Trails Office page" link below to register.



The Fairbanks Trails Challenge is an all-ages, all-abilities, outdoor scavenger hunt designed to get you out with your friends and family to explore our wonderful local trails, both new and familiar. Each summer and winter season, Parks Department staff temporarily installs special signs in secret locations along a dozen or so local trails. While the signs are up, we invite everyone to visit the trails and try and find the signs. Along the way we hope you have a chance to learn new skills, see new places, and make positive memories.

Participants who find at least ten signs during the event can win prizes from local sponsors and the coveted Trailblazer Award. Participants under the age of 10 can find at least five signs to win the Junior Trailblazer Award, and seniors aged 60+ can find 5 to get win the Sourdough Trailblazer Award! To claim

- Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/313549044989446/313549048322779/>
- Trails Office page: <http://tinyurl.com/mr4zr7ec>

*Photo from Evangeline Orr from the Facebook Event*

## **PROPOSED MURPHY DOME WIND FARM CREATES CONCERNS**

**COMMENT** If you recreate on trails and roads in the Murphy Dome area, a proposed wind farm project will be of interest to you.

The Shovel Creek Wind LLC has applied for a lease from the state to install wind turbines and other facilities along ridges in the Murphy Dome area. A public comment period is open until 5 p.m., Monday, January 29.

This project will have negative impacts, such as changing the viewshed and developing currently raw land, but it will also have positive impacts such as a projected lower community power costs and a reduction of fossil fuel emissions by the Golden Valley Electric Association. The project has caused a lot of heated discussion in Fairbanks.



### **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))

Whether you support it, oppose it, or support it with caveats, you should comment.

<http://notice.alaska.gov/213611>

To find out more see the rest of this story here: <http://tinyurl.com/568j29d2>

*Eric Troyer photo: A biker passes beneath a wind turbine at Eva Creek Wind Farm*

## LETTER SHOWS HOW LAND TRUST WORK SAVES TRAILS

**DONATE** The Interior Alaska Land Trust is not a trails-specific group, but the work it does preserving greenspace also saves a lot of trails. And the group understands that when people have an opportunity to use trails in greenspace areas, they become more invested in keep that land as greenspace. Saving land equals saving trails equals saving land.

IALT board member Seth Adams recently wrote a great fundraising letter for the group, showing how the group has saved trails in the Fairbanks area. Read it here:

<http://tinyurl.com/24t32d96>

If you agree with Adams, please consider donating to the group. Here's a link to the group's website: <https://interioraklandtrust.org/>



## SEEN RECENTLY ON INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

### FAIRBANKS TRAIL AND WATERWAY USERS

*December 20*

There's a Facebook page for Alaska low-tech trail groomers: [www.facebook.com/groups/alaskatrailpackers/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/alaskatrailpackers/)



*December 26*

After a couple of bad recent incidents with snowmachines hitting dog teams, a couple of groups have started a fundraiser to provide lighted collars for the lead dogs of mushing teams. Find out more here: <http://tinyurl.com/4xmv8wck>

*December 26*

Here's a useful resource on "How To Pass a Dog Team On The Trail." While the article doesn't include bikes, the same advice for skiers would apply to bikers.

<https://stinkypup.net/2016/12/23/how-to-pass-a-dog-team-on-the-trail/>

*December 19*

The Fairbanks Borough Assembly unanimously passed an important trails-related resolution at its meeting last Thursday. The resolution (Resolution No. 2023 – 44) added a long list of projects to the Capital Improvement Program list. Many of those projects are trail related.

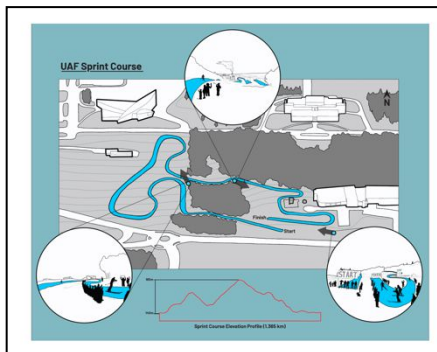
Thank you to everyone who advocated for the resolution and/or the projects in the resolution. While passage of the resolution does not guarantee any of the projects will happen, it is an important step in that direction.

This post has information on the resolution and the trails-related projects that were included:

<http://tinyurl.com/4uete36c>

December 17

An interesting proposal to create a trail system on the main south-facing slope at the University of Alaska Fairbanks is making its way through the university's planning process. At last report, the proposal has neither been approved nor denied.



The main focus of the proposal is to create a ski trail system that could be used for practice and competition by the UAF Nanook ski team. However, the proposal has been devised to take into account other trail users and seasons.

The proposal also has several "layers," each with increasing cost and impact on the area, which would be between the Student Recreation Center and the UA administrative building.

For those interested in finding out more, a copy of the proposal can be found here. I do not know of any opportunities for public comment on this. <https://tinyurl.com/4ayvux2n>

December 8

This graphic focuses just on cyclists and walkers/runners, but it's a good reminder that we should ALL be aware of how our actions affect others. If you are doing something that will ruin another person's experience on the trails, please reconsider. Sometimes it can't be avoided, but if it can, then please avoid it. Other activities include using any wheeled vehicles on trails, going too fast around blind corners, and letting your dog run loose or leaving your dog's poop on the trail when you could have stopped to move it off.

If we all try to out-polite each other, we can all have a great time on the trails!



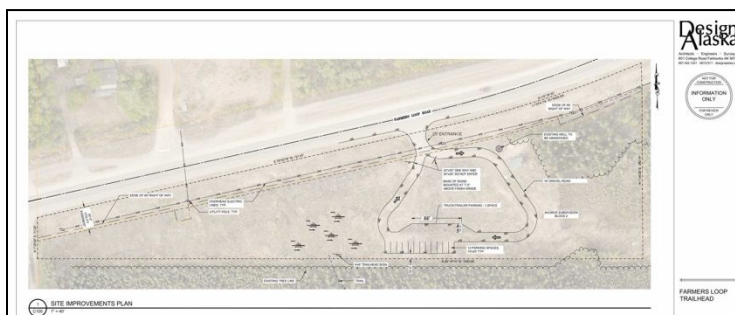
December 6

New trailhead for the ADMA Creamer's Refuge trails. And the Interior Alaska Land Trust is looking for volunteers to help keep the trailhead plowed.

*Shared from Stan Justice*

Interior Alaska Land Trust has provided a new trailhead for the ADMA trails. It is adjacent to the parking at Midnight Sun road. It is a little hard to spot. It is across from Shuros Drive and a tad W of Bible Baptist Church. 1341 Farmers Loop Road might work on your phone/car app. We are trying to get snowplowing set up. Open for use!

Few people probably care about these messy details but in the conditional use process the FNSB planning commission made the new parking area "non-motorized" even though the ADMA trails allow snowmachines. The entrance point has been upgraded to block snowmachines. Snowmachines can still use Midnight Sun access. Hopefully we can change zoning to be trail friendly. The Outdoor Recreation zoning should not require conditional use for trailheads in my opinion.



December 3

This story will be of interest to Birch Hill Rec Area trail users and any trail users who need or want to cross the Steese Expressway in the Birch Hill area.

[www.nscfairbanks.org/2023/12/03/fairbanks-assembly-passes-two-resolutions-that-will-help-skiing/](http://www.nscfairbanks.org/2023/12/03/fairbanks-assembly-passes-two-resolutions-that-will-help-skiing/)

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## FAIRBANKS PADDLERS

December 14

**COMMENT UPDATE:** As a result of public input, the deadline for comments has been extended to February 1, 2024.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation posted public notices of public scoping for possible updates and revisions to DNR regulations involving PWCs (personal watercraft or jet skis) and UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles or drones ) on November 15, 2023. The current deadline for public input is December 29. Please read the letter from Fairbanks Paddlers president, Don Pendergrast, who learned of these notices as a member of the Citizens Advisory Board for Alaska State Parks, Northern Region posted on our website: <http://tinyurl.com/3m8asesd>




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## NORDIC SKI CLUB OF FAIRBANKS

December 21

A note about the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) temperature reading on our mobile weather page <https://www.nscfairbanks.org/mobile-weather/>:

The weather station is on the roof of the Geophysical Institute just above the IARC building, so during inversions the temperature could be considerably cooler several stories down at the West Ridge Ski Hut, which is one of the higher places on the UAF trail system. So, if you use the UAF temperature reading to plan your outings, take that into account.

You can actually see parts of the weather station from the ski hut or if you are on the parking lot in front of IARC looking to the Geophysical Institute; right at the front corner is a pole with a panoramic camera. Images are updated every 20 minutes at the frontpage of <https://akclimate.org/>

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## DELTA JUNCTION TRAILS ASSOCIATION

December 10

**DONATE** We are raising money to help Delta Junction Trails Association maintain your local trails. Your contribution will make an impact, whether you donate \$5 or \$500. Every little bit helps. Thank you for your support. <https://www.facebook.com/donate/875136414290385/741662481336888/>

**Other ways to donate:** Bring it to Mt McKinley Bank and tell them it's for Delta Junction Trails Association. If you do, send us a PM so we know. Or mail a check to PO Box 710. The Delta Junction Community Library is also an easy drop off point for donations.

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## INTERIOR LINK

- Solstice Light (fatbike trip on White Mountains Nat Rec Area): <http://tinyurl.com/c3xfyj7t>

## STATEWIDE

### STILL TIME TO ENTER THE VIRTUAL RACE ACROSS ALASKA

*From Alaska Trails:*

**ENTER/DONATE** Alaska Trails is once again EXCITED to be part of the Virtual Race Across Alaska Winter Challenge!

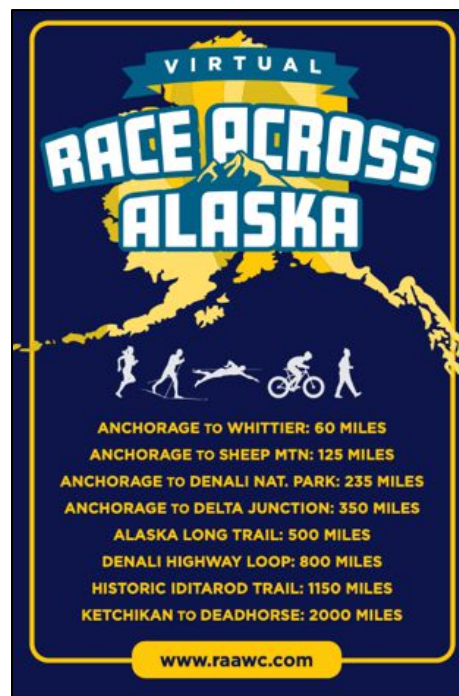
Our board and staff have signed up and have already hit the trails starting December 21 when the race kicked off! In addition to inspiring healthy activity in the dark months, this year the race has already raised over \$40,000 for non-profits, including Alaska Trails, the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, and Challenge Alaska.

There's still time to join the fun! The virtual race began on December 21 but you can still sign up and log your miles – we hope you will.

Registration and more info at: [www.RAAWC.com](http://www.RAAWC.com)

Here's how it works. You run, walk, fatbike, indoor bike, XC ski, swim, or any activity you like. You can choose from eight different virtual distances – from 60 miles to 2,000 miles, which is a whopping 22.3 miles per day. Now that's a challenge. The goal is to log as many miles as you can over the three months of winter to get (virtually) from location A to B. You can also participate as a team (friends/family/school).

You will have the ability to log your miles, track your progress, collect virtual badges, so how you rank up to others on the leader board daily. You can invite other to this challenge to help you to stay motivated all winter long.



### 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. 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: <https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/passes>
- National Park Service annual passes: The park service offers general passes. 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](http://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm)



## JOIN POW, CHANGE YOUR DIET TO HELP SLOW CLIMATE CHANGE

**JOIN, ACT** Climate change affects everyone, especially winter sports enthusiasts like snowmachiners, mushers, cross-country skiers, and fatbikers.

A warming climate can mean shorter snow seasons, and more extreme events like snow droughts and rain-on-snow events. These will just get worse unless we slow climate change, which means we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Here is something you can do right now to help make a difference.

### Join "Protect Our Winters"

"Protect Our Winters" is a group of outdoor people organized to "protect the places and lifestyles they love from climate change." Several Alaska athletes are part of the group, including biker Lael Wilcox and cross-country skiers Gus Schumacher and Kikkan Randall.



POW was founded in 2007 by pro snowboarder Jeremy Jones. Jones saw that many of the resorts he'd counted on for

good snowboarding were closed more often due to lack of snow. He felt a need to act, but he couldn't find any organizations focused on mobilizing the snow sports community on climate. So, Protect Our Winters was born.

The group is made up of pro athletes, individuals, resorts, brand partners and other outdoor enthusiasts. It organizes for lobbying and other actions to help fight climate change.

You can help the group by donating and/or joining. If you join, you can sign up to be a volunteer: <https://protectourwinters.org/>



*Photos: Top - Kikkan Randall by Fouganthin, bottom - Lael Wilcox from POW profile page*

### Take a personal action

**Eat less commercial meat, especially beef.** Unfortunately, commercial meat production is a big contributor to greenhouse gases. Forbes has an article about it: <https://tinyurl.com/yssz3uun>

On the bright side, wild meat is as natural as you can get. And trails are a great way to go hunting!

Climate change may seem like an overwhelming problem, but we humans created it one step at a time, and we can solve it that way, too. Let's do what we can to ensure that future winters still have usable snow for us and for our children, grandchildren, and beyond.

## GROUP ADVOCATES FOR RESPONSIBLE USE OF PUBLIC LANDS

**JOIN** Responsible Stewardship is a volunteer 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering stewardship together for the betterment of our public lands, outdoor spaces and communities for everyone to enjoy responsibly. The group does this through examples and through "Education Through Action."

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- Consider your digital impact before posting on social media
- Use broader location geotags and hashtags like states or countries vs specific locations like parks, mountains, lakes.. etc.. Or use NO geotag location at all.



- Consider the following before you post. Is there adequate: parking, restrooms, roads, and enforcement?

If your answer to any of these is NO, then choose No geotag on that location.

Castner Glacier along the Richardson Highway is a good example of an overused, under-serviced area for parking, bathrooms etc. It's a wonderful place, but parking along the highway has at times made for some dangerous situations and people have gone to the glacier very underprepared, especially in winter.

So, please think before you post and tag.

See more of the group's ethics here: <https://www.responsiblestewardship.org/ethics>

Find out more about the group here: <https://www.responsiblestewardship.org/>

## SEEN RECENTLY ON STATEWIDE FACEBOOK PAGES

### DENALI HIGHWAY TRAIL CLUB

*December 14*

The Denali Hwy Trail club would like to offer our sincere condolences to those involved in the recent snowmachine/dogsled tragedies on the Denali Hwy. Those of us that live, and make our living out here, are saddened and discouraged that this had to happen at all, let alone in our back yard.



As we move forward from this, we can keep pointing fingers at each user group and get nowhere, or we can decide where we go from here, and how to keep this from happening in the future.

We are planning on starting the grooming program first of Jan, and I believe that will help by making a wider trail where users are not stuck riding in the same trench. We are having signs made for both trails heads warning users that they are not the only ones out there.

All lodges along the highway, have also committed to help, by verbally reiterating to our customers the importance of caution while running the road.

Snowmachiners:

- At night and in bad weather, please do not outride your headlight.
- Also, Do not drink and drive!!
- Understand that when meeting a dogteam head on, the dogs will most often veer towards the machine. So if you are not stopped or close to it, this can make things very exciting for both mushers and machine riders.
- Dog teams will most likely be on the inside of the corners so be prepared for that.

Dogmushers:

- You need to be lit up, and at least your lead dog needs to have a light on it. Please do not use a red light on your leader as this looks like a taillight, and riders may assume you are going to same direction as them, instead of closing the distance.

As Jeff King pointed out yesterday, "this is not a war", we need to work together to make sure these incidents never happen again.

Alan Echols, Denali Hwy Trail Club

*Photo from Bureau of Land Management Alaska*

## ALASKA OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

December 1

The outdoor recreation is primed for takeoff! We're tracking the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor



Recreation Experiences Act (EXPLORE) which was introduced earlier this week in the US House of Representatives with strong bipartisan - and we hear, bicameral - support. In a nutshell, the EXPLORE Act would: Enable permit streamlining to ease burdens on outfitters and guides and improve access to outdoor experiences; improve access to recreation on public lands and waters; ensure access to green spaces in underserved communities; develop, improve, and complete long range trails; and invest in rural economic development.

### STATEWIDE LINKS

- Hike Castner Glacier Ice Cave Trail: <https://andreakuipoabroad.com/hike-castner-glacier-ice-cave/>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Outdoor Rec Trails Advisory Board meets in January for RTP, LWCF: <http://notice.alaska.gov/213480>
- Alaska Among Top States in US Outdoor Recreation Economy: <https://tinyurl.com/ycx7v567>
- Confluence Heading to the Anchorage Museum in April: <http://tinyurl.com/ymcs93kv>

## NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

### 'HIKE THE HILL' TRAILS ADVOCACY EVENT STARTS IN JANUARY

**ADVOCATE** American Trails presents the virtual issue briefings of the annual Hike the Hill® advocacy event for 2024, a joint effort of the Partnership for the National Trails System and American Hiking Society.

This event has options for both virtual participation (issue briefings January 22-26) and meeting resources for scheduling your own congressional meetings) and in-person participation in Washington, D.C. (February 11-15) (group meetings and a Trails Celebration Party).

This exciting event will bring together the diverse trails community, with a focus on the National Trails System, to advance shared trail priorities with congressional and federal agency leaders including trail funding, public lands management and conservation, equitable access, and other top priority issues that sustain trails and improve access to public lands.

Registration is now open, and a tentative schedule of events is available: <https://americanhiking.org/advocacy/hike-the-hill/>.

For more information about the event please contact Tyler Ray at [tray@americanhiking.org](mailto:tray@americanhiking.org).

*From American Trails Facebook post*





## AMERICAN TRAILS OFFERS FREE SUSTAINABLE TRAILS COURSES

**LEARN** American Trails is proud to announce the newly launched Foundations of Sustainable Trails, developed and hosted in partnership with the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands and the U.S. Forest Service.

These short self-directed courses are perfect for new crew members, volunteers, and students heading into in-person programs in trail planning, design, maintenance, construction, and management. The course curriculum focuses on core trail concepts, emphasizing what it means for a trail to be sustainable. The introductory course describes the lifecycle of sustainable trails, and four self-assessed mini courses cover the basics of trail hydrology, structures, tools, and tread & alignment.

Find out more about the Foundations of Sustainable Trails online training on the American Trails website: <https://tinyurl.com/52bb2833>

*From American Trails email*

## TRAILS CAPACITY GRANT PROGRAM DEADLINE IN JANUARY

**APPLY** American Trails administers the Trails Capacity Program and invests in building nationwide trails community capacity by funding trail stewardship training, maintenance, research, and education. This grant program targets funding for small local trail projects that engage the community and connect trail assets to a broader spectrum of users. Project applicants may include nonprofit organizations, businesses, or agencies at the state or local level. American Trails is administering this grant program, and is soliciting applications for funding, with awards between \$5K and \$10K per project. **Deadline is January 15, 2024, by 11:59 PM Pacific Time.** Find out more here: <https://www.americantrails.org/the-trails-capacity-program>

*From American Trails newsletter*

## APPLY TO BECOME A NEXTGEN TRAIL LEADER IN 2024

**APPLY** American Hiking Society invites applications for its seventh class of NextGen Trail Leaders!

NextGen Trail Leaders are rising stars in the outdoor community and the voice of young hikers who take part in a yearlong program of advocacy and stewardship to protect public lands.

AHS is seeking five individuals, aged 18-40, from across the country who are interested in gaining advocacy experience and being a voice of young hikers for advocacy and stewardship.

2024 will be an important year in outdoor advocacy, and AHS is looking to support new voices to lead the way! **Applications to become a NextGen Trail Leader in 2024 are open now through January 3.**

<https://americanhiking.org/advocacy/next-gen-apply/>

*From American Hiking Society newsletter*

## TAKE ACTION FOR TRAIL ACCESS

**ADVOCATE** Help ensure that EVERYONE has access to enjoy and explore trails and public lands!

Congress is on the cusp of passing a bipartisan outdoor recreation package that would ensure everyone can enjoy the outdoors, improving the recreation experience on trails and public lands and expanding access.

Add your voice to leave the outdoor community better than you found it! Trails and public spaces are in dire need of support — and your voice can help.

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

*From American Hiking Society newsletter*

## 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/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/>
  - Alternative (to Spring) Break: <https://americanhiking.org/volunteer-vacations/alternative-break/>
- Conservation International VIP newsletter (Dec 2023): <https://tinyurl.com/5c84ct44>

### FUNDING

- FOX Factory Trail Trust (**applications reviewed quarterly**): <https://trailtrust.com/>
- Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative (OHVs, **quarterly deadlines**): <https://yamahaoai.com/>
- Clif Family Foundation grants (for groups; ddlines March 1, August 1): <https://tinyurl.com/5bku286n>

### OTHER LINKS:

- Recreation bill aims to foster biking, target shooting on public lands: <https://tinyurl.com/nhp2a79f>
- Three Trails Designated as Units of the National Park System: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8ebbjh>
- Forming & Running State or Regional Trail Coalitions: <http://tinyurl.com/ypp27nzy>
- Trails as Resilient Infrastructure: <http://tinyurl.com/yvct69rd>
- Tribal Development of Trails, Dedicated Pedestrian, Bicycle Infrastructure: <http://tinyurl.com/yxvz6chj>

Interior Alaska 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 Alaska Trails Newsletter is not a product of any organization. However, I am a board member of the Interior Trails Preservation Coalition, president of the Fairbanks Cycle Club, a member of several Interior trail user groups, and editor of the Alaska Trails newsletter.