

# **INTERIOR ALASKA TRAILS NEWSLETTER**

Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska

APRIL 2024

## **BLM TO HOLD MEETINGS REGARDING ALASKA LONG TRAIL STUDY**

**PARTICIPATE** The Bureau of Land Management Alaska (BLM-A) is hosting five public meetings – one in Fairbanks and one in Cantwell – in April to help determine whether to recommend naming the Alaska Long Trail (AKLT) as a National Scenic Trail (NST).



BLM-A is conducting a feasibility study to evaluate the characteristics of the work-in-progress Alaska Long Trail (AKLT) to determine its eligibility as an addition to the National Trails System. Results of the trail study will be shared with Congress, which has the sole authority to

enact legislation to designate new NSTs. Following that, rights-of-way, authorizations, and easements must be secured for the entirety of the route. Only after completion of that process could construction begin on the project. This feasibility study does not authorize any activities. You can read more about the study here: <https://www.alaska-trails.org/national-scenic-trail-study>

**Please consider attending one of these public meetings and share your thoughts on the project.**

The project needs people who support it to show up! Please share this news with your colleagues and friends who might be interested.

### Public Meetings:

- Anchorage: April 8th 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM | Z.J. Loussac Library Learning Commons Room, 3600 Denali St
- Seward: April 9th 5 PM – 7 PM | Gateway Hotel, 1115 4th Ave
- Wasilla: April 10th 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM | Wasilla Public Library, 500 North Crusey St
- **Cantwell: April 11th 5 PM – 7 PM | Cantwell School Gym, 299 Hawk Lane**
- **Fairbanks: April 12th 5 PM – 7 PM | Birch Hill Recreation Area, 101 Wilderness Drive**

See the BLM AKLT NST Feasibility Study webpage here: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2030342/510>

## **TRUST NEEDS DONATIONS FOR LAND, TRAILS IN CHENA RIDGE AREA**

Great news! There is the chance to expand the upland trails in the Isberg Recreation Area, off Cripple Creek Road! And the Interior Alaska Land Trust (IALT) needs your help!

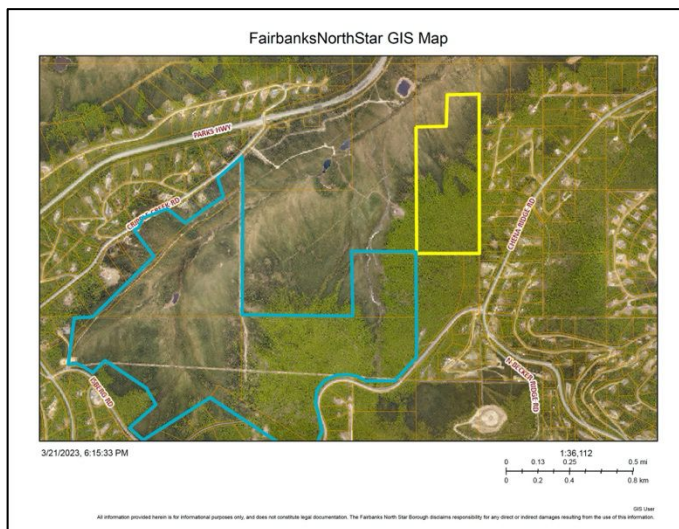
The Isberg Recreation Area (blue outline in graphic) has been growing in popularity in recent years, largely because it has some of the best winter trails in Fairbanks. But it also offers some rare upland trails on Chena Ridge for both summer use and the chance to get above the inversion in the winter. Now we have a chance to expand those trails and connect some loops.

### **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))

The IALT has come to a purchase agreement to buy 90-acres of (mostly) upland forest (yellow outline in graphic) on the edge of the Isberg Rec Area, which will expand the trails and make an existing loop trail much better. The trail currently follows a section line on a powerline that goes straight down the hill. I'm a good skier, and it's a terrible trail. With this parcel acquisition, the trail can be moved to a more reasonable alignment, making a much better experience. On the included map, the parcel, known as Graceland Estates, is outlined in yellow, and the Isberg Rec Area is outlined in blue.

Land acquisition, and building out greenspaces in general, is a somewhat messy patchwork. Graceland will be a piece of a puzzle. But the IALT has been working for years on this and other places in the Fairbanks area. (While the land trust is not a trails-specific group, it does recognize the importance of trails so that people can use and connect with land preserved for greenspace.)



To see more about this effort and how you can donate read the rest of this post here:

<https://tinyurl.com/esymcjjh>

You can also just donate directly to this effort at this GoFundMe page: <https://tinyurl.com/y8ky22w4>

*Graphic courtesy of the IALT: blue outline shows the Isberg Recreation Area, yellow outline shows Graceland Estates.*

*Story by Seth Adams, IALT board member*

## SPRING TRAILS ARE VULNERABLE, PLEASE USE WITH CARE

**TREAD LIGHTLY** Please keep in mind how your trail activities might affect other trail users, especially in the spring.

As snow melts and the ground thaws, the trails become extremely muddy. Using muddy trails at this



time can result in ruts that stay all summer when the trails dry out. Those ruts can make the trails difficult to use all summer and into the next winter. They help create erosion by keeping water on the trails.

But with a little thought this problem can be greatly reduced.

- **Try to be patient.** Stay off the trails if you can. If you are unsure if a trail is ready to be used, check it out with the commitment to turn back if you are doing too much damage.
- **Choose low impact.** If you use the trails in several different ways, choose the method of travel that will cause the least amount of damage if you do run into some muddy sections.
- **Pick your trails carefully.** Use well-drained trails with lots of southern exposure. They typically dry out the quickest. If you must get muddy, please limit your activities to trails that are already thrashed.

An alternative to using trails in the spring is to get out on foot or by bike and go explore quiet subdivision roads new to you. You get to be outside, be active, and probably find out new things about your community.

*Photo: Erosion on Ester Dome Singletrack Trails*

## HELP SLOW CLIMATE CHANGE: JOIN OUTDOOR ALLIANCE, COMPOST

Climate change affects everyone, including trail lovers.

For winter trail lovers, a warming climate can mean shorter snow seasons, and more extreme events like snow droughts and rain-on-snow events. For summer trail lovers, climate change can bring more droughts, wildfires, flooding, and permafrost thawing, all of which can hurt trails and the lands through which they run. These impacts will just get worse unless we slow climate change, which means we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

**Here are two things you can do right now to help make a difference.**

### *Join Outdoor Alliance*

Outdoor Alliance is a nonprofit coalition that mobilizes outdoor enthusiasts to protect public lands and waters. This includes, but is not limited to, climate change.

The coalition is made up of several national advocacy organizations, including Winter Wildlands Alliance, the Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, American Canoe Association, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association. The group also relies on individuals.

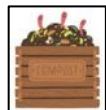
According to Outdoor Alliance, "Public land and conservation policy is complex, and we know how to effect meaningful change. We do the hard work, ensuring that we're not just talking but making a measurable impact on all public lands and waters. That means building relationships with decision makers, enthusiasts, and activists to preserve trails, create new legislation, share maps, and empower others to protect the places in their backyards and beyond."



As an individual, you can donate or sign up for action alerts. Find out more here:

[www.outdooralliance.org/get-involved](http://www.outdooralliance.org/get-involved)

### *Take a personal action*



Find ways to not waste food. If thrown into the trash and to the landfill, rotting food creates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Be more cognizant of your how you make and use your meals. Consider composting, even if you don't garden.

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.

## SEEN RECENTLY ON INTERIOR FACEBOOK PAGES

FAIRBANKS TRAIL AND WATERWAY USERS

March 27

If you missed Tom Moran's "Nights in the Whites" talk earlier this winter, you can catch it here on Facebook: <https://fb.watch/r3Z2pAoEYs/>

March 7

Good KTVF story on efforts to complete the Fairbanks end of the Alaska Long Trail. Includes interviews with FNSB Mayor Bryce Ward, Explore Fairbanks CEO Scott McCrea, and Mariyam Medovaya of Alaska Trails. [www.webcenterfairbanks.com/video/2024/03/06/alaska-long-trail-upgrades/](http://www.webcenterfairbanks.com/video/2024/03/06/alaska-long-trail-upgrades/)

## UAF NORTH CAMPUS

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March 12

Farewell Jason Garron, Welcome Todor Yakimov

Hello, Campus Trails community. Today, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to an individual who has devoted the past 16 years to the development, growth, and maintenance of our campus trails system: Jason Garron. Having spent more than a decade caring for our North Campus Trails, Jason has decided that it's time to embark on a new chapter in life and is ready to pass the maintenance torch to another committed individual.

With Jason's departure, we were tasked with finding someone who could match his level of care and dedication to our trails. It is with great pleasure that we introduce Todor Yakimov to our team. Todor brings with him a profound love for the outdoors and a wealth of experience in outdoor recreation.



Excerpted from a longer UAF North Campus FB post. See the entire text here: <https://tinyurl.com/36utv8v6>

## FAIRBANKS CYCLE CLUB

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March 23

**Who is interested in sponsoring the Fairbanks/North Pole Bikeways Map?** The map is a great way to help people navigate Fairbanks and North Pole via bike.

>Shared from

Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation Planning

👉 Sponsor the 2024 Bikeways Map! - <https://mailchi.mp/fastplanning/bffbx24>

## INTERIORWIDE LINKS

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- FNSB Winter Trails Challenge: <http://tinyurl.com/4en7rcx5>
- A Bike Day Adventure on the Yukon Quest Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/5by4k673>
- Chena River to Ridge Run - Another Step Closer to an Overall Goal: <https://tinyurl.com/4pwnz47c>
- Struggling to the Finish – A Well-Earned Sonot Slog: <https://tinyurl.com/5c4mvmt5>
- PCT Thru-hike Presentation, Beaver Sports (April 9): [www.facebook.com/events/7406213882802989/](http://www.facebook.com/events/7406213882802989/)
- Nikolai to McGrath: Helping A Friend Finish the Iditarod Trail Invitational: <https://tinyurl.com/y25zsyuz>
- ITI 350 – 2024 (Peter Delamere, third place): <https://tinyurl.com/mmbdzfur>

## SLIGHTLY OFF TRAIL

- Arctic Traverse Presentation & Book Launch at Silver Gulch – April 9: <https://tinyurl.com/4fufk7j>
- Paddling Film Festival – April 25: <https://tinyurl.com/4c9brwr5>
- Volunteering at Rohn for the ITI and Iditarod: <https://yak.spruceboy.net/2024/03/rohn.html>



## STATEWIDE

### TRAILS CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN APRIL IN HYBRID FORMAT

**ATTEND** Please mark your calendar for our annual Statewide Trails Conference coming up soon!

The conference will be held April 10-12. It will have both in-person and virtual options this year, allowing Alaska Trails to bring in presenters from the east coast, Canada and across the state. The in-person version will be held at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage.

More information on the conference, including how to access it virtually is posted on our Trails Conference page: [www.alaska-trails.org/trails-conference](http://www.alaska-trails.org/trails-conference)



Trails and outdoor recreation are a public health asset and an economic engine for the state and the trails conference seeks to raise the profile of trails and their importance to Alaska.

To view recorded sessions and presentation slides from past conferences see our archives at: [www.alaska-trails.org/conference-archive-links](http://www.alaska-trails.org/conference-archive-links).

### ALASKA STATE PARKS POSITIONS CAN INCLUDE TRAIL WORK

Alaska State Parks has a variety of seasonal positions through its the Alaska Conservation Corps (ACC),



which are paid jobs, and its volunteer program. Tasks will vary and may include trail work, maintenance, fee station, or office work. Most positions begin in late May or early June. Some offices will start recruitment as early as March. You may wish to call the office in the area you wish to work in, to find out what positions they are offering this year and when applications are being accepted. For more information see:

- ACC: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/misc/accinstr.htm>
- Volunteer Program: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/vip/index.htm>

### 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:

[www.fws.gov/alaska-bird-nesting-season](http://www.fws.gov/alaska-bird-nesting-season)

Photo from Denali 101: [www.denali101.com/denalinationalpark/birds\\_of\\_denali.html](http://www.denali101.com/denalinationalpark/birds_of_denali.html)

## SEEN RECENTLY ON STATEWIDE FACEBOOK PAGES

### ALASKA STATE PARKS

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March 27

**We want to hear your opinion on our Commercial Use Permitting!** 🤔🌟 DPOR has posted the public notice for scoping for CUPs until 4/12/2024.

The link to the PN is located here: <http://notice.alaska.gov/214259>

See entire notice here: <https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/misc/regs/dporscopingsuspregs24.02.13.pdf>

### ALASKA SAFE RIDERS

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March 10

*This dramatic video footage demonstrates the dangers of traveling on river ice. While this video shows the particular danger of having a heavy machine fall on top of you, collapsing river ice can be a danger to anyone, including dogs. Be extremely careful out there.*

Don't ride alone. Ride with a strong team of riders that can provide you with help when needed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mH8-BwMGlrA>



### STATEWIDE LINKS

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- Winter's Gifts: Bikepacking 1,000 Miles on The Iditarod Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/vkjpvnzu>
- Alone Time: Ana Jager's Solo Ride on The Iditarod Trail: <https://tinyurl.com/32k3466d>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- Several trail-related episodes on Outdoor Explorer podcast recently: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2mkbbf>
- Federal Highway Administration approves Alaska DOT&PF STIP: <https://tinyurl.com/48mdkf9j>

## NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

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### 2024 NORTH AMERICAN TRAIL SECTOR SURVEY OPEN

**COMPLETE SURVEY** American Trails is partnering with Trans Canada Trail to launch the inaugural North American Trail Sector Survey. If you manage, build, maintain, or plan trails, please take this important survey. The results of this survey will inform the trail community across North America about the current health of trails, trail systems, and trail organizations, identify pressure points and obstacles for growth, and arm advocates with the data they need to make the case for trails in their region.

Census Details:

- **This survey is for professionals working or volunteering in the trail sector, it is not for trail users.**
- Results of this survey will be tabulated and distributed to all respondents and made available on the American Trails and Trans Canada Trail websites.
- The survey will likely take about a half hour to complete.
- You can view a past report from the 2022 Canada Trail Sector Survey (<https://tinyurl.com/5f9vemf6>) to get an idea of the types of information that we will be gathering for the first time in America as well.

Please Note: There is an open-ended response option at the end along with "not applicable" options on all questions. Your responses matter!

Thank you for participating in this important research. We look forward to sharing the results with the North American trails community.

See survey here: [https://tctrail.ca/2024-north-american-trail-sector-survey/?blm\\_aid=41528](https://tctrail.ca/2024-north-american-trail-sector-survey/?blm_aid=41528)

Deadline: April 30

*From American Trails email*

## ADVOCACY SECURES CONSISTENT FUNDING DESPITE CHALLENGES

Because of the efforts of the trails community including organizations, advocates, and user groups, funding for trail-specific line items in the Fiscal Year 2024, Interior and Related Agencies appropriations will largely remain level year over year, when many other programs and overall land management funding is facing steep cuts.

While trails and public lands still don't receive anywhere close to the funding fully needed to fulfill staffing, conservation, or maintenance mandates, the trails community recognizes the position of congressional appropriators and staff to make difficult funding decisions in the current climate. We express our appreciation that the value and importance of trails was recognized in this process to the extent that circumstances allowed.

While the topline cuts to federal land management agencies, insufficient staffing levels, and the zeroing out of funding for the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program within the Department of Transportation will negatively impact the experience of all trail users, the trails community remains dedicated to supporting robust funding for federal land management agencies going forward and ensuring that conservation and recreation receives the funding it desperately needs and deserves.

*From American Hiking Society story; read rest of the story here: <https://tinyurl.com/5dfbswbm>*

## 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 2024 Volunteer Vacations: <https://americanhiking.org/volunteer-vacation-trips/>
  - Alternative (to Spring) Break: <https://americanhiking.org/volunteer-vacations/alternative-break/>
- Conservation International VIP newsletter (Mar 2024): <https://tinyurl.com/2rsxrxs7>

### FUNDING

- FOX Factory Trail Trust (applications reviewed quarterly): <https://trailtrust.com/>
- Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative (OHVs, quarterly deadlines): <https://yamahaoai.com/>
- Community Change Grants, deadline to apply is November 21: <http://tinyurl.com/54mztbsv>
- Apply Now! \$45 Million in ATIP Grants Available (deadline June 17): <https://tinyurl.com/24wryeum>

### OTHER LINKS:

- New program helps connect trails across the US: <https://tinyurl.com/2v7y7w9k>

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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.