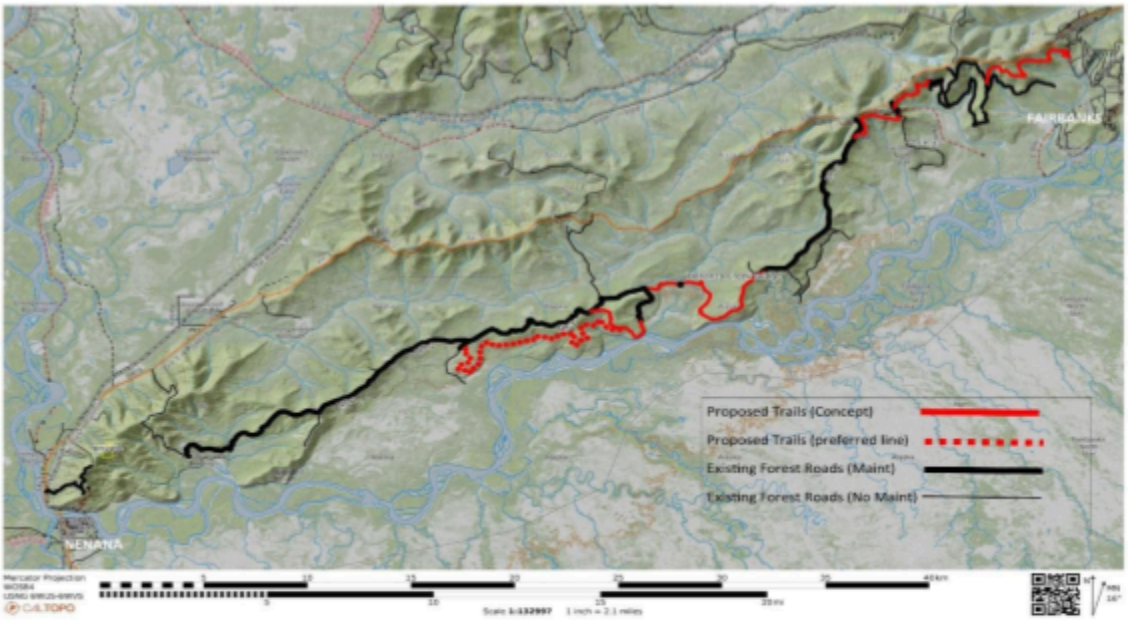
**Connected system of trails through Nenana Ridge, Management Unit 5 of the TVSF**

I am writing to you on behalf of Alaska Trails, a statewide nonprofit, to provide comments on the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan Revision 2025. We are recommending the inclusion of the development of a continuous trail system in Management Unit 5 (Nenana Ridge) to create a key segment of the Alaska Long Trail (AKLT) connecting Nenana and Fairbanks.

This section takes advantage of many scenic miles of unpaved forestry roads that currently offer excellent year-round opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists. However, the roads are not continuous and do not provide a complete route from Fairbanks to Nenana. Our recommendation for the plan revision is to include the construction of 18 miles of multi-use trails through TVSF, connecting about 35 miles of existing forestry road system between Rosie Creek and Nenana to create a continuous multi-use recreation route.

This proposed route remains entirely within the TVSF: heading west from Rosie Creek trail system, it ends following the existing Maisch forestry road onto the Parks Highway about five miles north of Nenana, thus providing an almost complete link from Fairbanks to Nenana and requiring a recreationist to travel only a short stretch on the highway to Nenana. There are several route options, including a loop section that takes advantage of a scenic, south-facing hillside (shown on the map as a dotted red line).




**Map Key.** Solid Red: proposed trails; Dashed Red: scenic alternative trails; Black Thick: forest roads, maintenance; Black Light: forest roads, no maintenance.

This recommendation aligns with the current TVSF Plan Revision Draft, which states:

- “Residents will continue to demand high quality, accessible recreation opportunities.” Page 63
- “Recreational use of the State Forest is recognized and protected in the State Forest enabling legislation, AS 41.17.230(a).” Page 63
- “Allow and encourage a wide range of recreational uses of the State Forest.”

"Allow for the development of recreation areas, trails, rivers, and sites that provide a range of year-round outdoor opportunities for a variety of ages, abilities, and use preferences near population centers and major travel routes." Page 64

- In the Trails section: "Anticipate increased use with population growth." Page 67

The proposed recreation connections are desirable because they:

1. provide excellent recreation opportunities for day-trip recreationists starting either in Fairbanks or Nenana;
2. complete the northern link of the Alaska Long Trail from Fairbanks to Nenana for use by Alaska residents and visitors;
3. provide for maintenance on timber roads to support future timber harvest.

Current supporters and willing partners of this project include Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation (IATPF), Happy Trails Inc, Alaska Trails and the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

**Estimated Budget:**

- Build 18 miles of 7' wide multi-use trails at $100,000 per mile = $1,800,000
- Brushing, regrading, resurfacing, and repair of 35 miles of forestry roads: (12' wide, naturally surfaced, full bench, with 3% outsloping) x $5,280 per mile = $192,500
- Map kiosk, directional signs: $40,000
- Bridge over Bonanza Creek: $200,000
- Design and environmental review: $150,000
  **Subtotal: $2,382,500**
- Project oversight and management (10%): $238,250
  **Total: $2,620,750**

As the estimated budget shows, the investment in these trail connections is just over $2.6M (which can be raised through various sources by partnering organizations) but the benefits will be significant. The 2015 economic study in the Mat-Su Borough found that for every dollar that the Borough invests in open spaces and trails, the payoff is more than $5 which includes health and community benefits to local residents. Link:
https://matsugov.us/docs/general/16748/earth-economics-mat-su-parks-roi-report-2015.pdf

The current TVSF Plan Revision Draft states:

- "Few developed recreation facilities are anticipated to be constructed in the State Forest in the next twenty years. Potential recreation facilities are listed in Chapter 4 in Table 4.2." Page 66

We propose that the suggested connecting trails in Unit 5 are included in Table 4.2 in Chapter 4 as potential recreational facilities, as well as included in the Chapter 3 under the Management Unit 5.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Mariyam Medovaya

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