

INTERIOR TRAILS QUARTERLY

ACTION UPDATE

August 2010

FAIRBANKS AREA

EFFORTS HELP INCREASE NEW SINGLETRACK TRAIL

A recent fundraising drive for the Ester Dome Singletrack trail system has helped expand the planned 5-mile outer loop to about 6 miles. The drive included a biking challenge by Fairbanks cycle Club and donations from local organizations.

The 12-hour mountain biking challenge held July 24 helped raise more than \$7,000. Riders collected pledges for the amount of laps they rode on the 3-mile inner loop, which was completed last year. The top earner was Tyson Flaharty, who raised \$1,400 and biked 35 laps. Raffle tickets were also sold to raise money at the event. Goldstream Sports and its employees also contributed significantly.

Also recently contributing to project are Banner Health / Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, with a donation of \$2,500, and Running Club North, with a donation of \$1,000. Both organizations said they would be willing to again donate in the future. Current supporters of the project include the Alaska State Parks Recreational Trail Program, Goldstream Sports, Fairbanks Cycle Club, and Gold Hill Imported Beer & Fine Wines. Golden Valley Electrical Association and National Park Service - Rivers Trails Conservation Program have also contributed to the project.

The increased length of the outer loop came after a careful survey of the project area. Trail organizers realized that they had enough area and terrain features for the increased trail mileage. However, more money was needed, hence the fundraising drive.

Volunteers are also still working on the project. Volunteer work parties are being held most Thursday evenings. To be put on the notify list contact Geoff Orth (geoffrey.orth@alaska-trails.org), who is with Alaska Trails, the organization that is facilitating the project. Joel Buth, owner of Goldstream Sports and another organizer of the project, will be leading weekday sessions behind the dozer and excavator Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. People interested in helping with those should give Joel a call at 455-6520.

FAIRBANKS LINKS

- Fairbanksan has completed more than half of the Appalachian Trail:
<http://tinyurl.com/2cd45y5>

PARKS HIGHWAY

REX TRAIL DECISION FOR TRACKED VEHICLES EXTENDED

The 2009 amended decision to issue permits for certain rubber tracked vehicles, Nodwell-sized or smaller, on the eastern Rex Trail has been extended through the 2010 season. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water has extended the decision in order to facilitate additional data collection regarding trail conditions, vehicle use, and impacts. The decision and required permit application is available on the DNR website at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/rextrail/>. This extension is effective August 28th, 2010 through April 15th, 2011.

You may also obtain a copy of the decision and permit application from the Public Information Centers located in the Fairbanks, Anchorage, or Juneau DNR Offices. Any person affected by this decision may appeal the division's decision, in accordance with 11 AAC 02. Any appeal must be submitted to the commissioner by August 19th, 2010 in the manner specified in the decision.

For additional information related to the trail management process contact:
 Jeanne Proulx, Natural Resource Manager (907/451-2722; jeanne.proulx@alaska.gov)
(From Alaska Outdoor Council email alert)

CHENA HOT SPRINGS ROAD

WORK CONTINUES ON TWO CHENA RIVER REC AREA TRAILS

The trail crew for Chena River State Recreation Area has been felling the last of the trees in the 5.5-mile Compeau Connector corridor. A Request For Proposals for final mechanized trail construction went out to bid in July and final construction is slated for August.

Also, final trail hardening is taking place on the Stiles Creek Trail re-routes constructed in 2009. The 4.5 miles of re-routes are a huge improvement over the previous boggy lowland swamp crossings and steep hills.

(From Eagle Watch, DPOR newsletter)

CHENA HOT SPRINGS ROAD LINKS

- Remember to practice caution when out on the trails. This Fairbanks Daily News-Miner article describes the rescue of a woman who fell while hiking the popular Angel Rocks Trail in the Chena River State Recreation Area:
<http://tinyurl.com/2cj92ma>

INTERIORWIDE/STATEWIDE

STATE PARKS OFFERS NEW ONLINE TRAIL TOOLS

Alaska State Parks has unveiled a new set of trail tools on the Alaska State Trails Program website.

The new section, *Explore Alaska State Park Trails*, allows users to get information about trails in Alaska state parks a variety of ways. Users can:

- Explore a state park trail system with the interactive Alaska State Parks Trail Browser
- Find a trail for specific interests with the Alaska State Parks Trail Reporting System
- Print a Trail Map & Guide to take with you on your next hike

These tools are new and many state parks trails are not yet included. Also, state parks plans to add two other features soon: downloadable Google Earth files of specific parks, and downloadable GPS tracks and waypoints.

To see the new tools, go to the Alaska State Trails Program web page (<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aktrails/>) and click on *Explore Alaska State Park Trails*.

STATE DOT NEEDS LIST IMPORTANT FOR FEDERAL FUNDING

One of the most important opportunities for surface transportation projects—including trails—in communities statewide is the opening of Needs List nominations for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program of the state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF).

While getting a project on the Needs List does not guarantee funding, it is the first step if the intent is to pursue federal funds in the next STIP (2012-2015). The STIP is a federally required document that shows how the state plans to spend federal funds. Putting a project on the Needs List is a good idea for people who plan to work with legislators to get state funding. Legislators often ask if a project is on the Needs List.

The Needs List also acts as a sort of “brain storming” list for state DOTPF regional planners so that they know what needs are out there and can manage which ones to pursue.

To find out more about nominating a trail to the STIP see: <http://tinyurl.com/34phjvv>

Also important, if you want federal funding, is to get a current government resolution in support of the project. Depending on the community, this can be complex and time-consuming, so people may want to start the process now.

A resolution should have the following elements:

- **Explicit support for the project** – The project should be named or described.
- **Willingness and ability to provide a funding match** – usually about 9 percent
- **Willingness and ability to take ownership** – If the proposed project is a trail, local road, or minor collector road, the community must have ownership, or be willing and able to take ownership.

If you have any questions, contact the state Regional Planner for your area – you can find who your planner is at the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/2amnzw7>

AOC NEWSLETTER DISCUSSES TRAIL ACCESS ISSUES

The Spring 2010 issue of *Outdoors Alaska* has a couple of articles about access that address issues of interest to trail users.

The quarterly newsletter is put out by the Alaska Outdoor Council and the Alaska Fish and Wildlife Conservation Fund. On its website the Alaska Outdoor Council states that it “is dedicated to the preservation of outdoor pursuits in Alaska - hunting, fishing, trapping, firearms ownership, and public access - and conservation of the habitats upon which they depend.”

In the newsletter “The Executive Director Report” by Rod Arno discusses a couple of public land management plans and a bill in Congress in the works that could restrict access to public lands. Arno encourages people to stay involved: “Access to public resources in Alaska can only be assured if outdoors people continue to participate in the planning processes underway by both state and federal land managers.”

Also in the issue is an article about the Hatcher Pass Management Plan that discusses the possibility of trail standards being redefined in the plan and the possibility of land in the southern part of the area being closed to motorized use without even a corridor for access to motorized areas.

To read the newsletter download the PDF from the AOC website at: www.alaskaoutdoorcouncil.org/newsletter.html

HISTORICAL RIVER DATA AVAILABLE ON THE WEB

Historical data for rivers, including levels, is available on the Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center page (<http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/>). On the left menu bar there is a link called “River Database” under “Climate and History.” The tools there allow users to plot data for extended periods.

(From Fairbanks Paddlers email)

STATEWIDE/INTERIORWIDE LINKS:

- In his blog, Ned Rozell describes two recent trips—one a family float from Eagle to Circle, the other a one-day hike of the Chena Dome Trail with a friend: www.alaskatracks.com/
- SPOT is a popular GPS-enabled locator beacon and it has a website that allows people to share their adventures. Many are in Alaska, some are trail related: www.spotadventures.com/
- Andrew Skurka is about three-quarters of the way done on his 4,700-mile Alaska-Yukon Expedition. This is a solely human powered trek through long stretches of Alaska and the Yukon. Check his website for links to his National Geographic blog and other information: www.andrewskurka.com/AK10/index.php

NATIONWIDE

NATIONAL REC TRAIL PHOTO CONTEST ANNOUNCED

American Trails is sponsoring the 2010 contest for photographs of National Recreation Trails (NRT) across the country. The annual contest provides awards in several categories and shows off entries (and previous winners) on the NRT website. The goal of the contest is to highlight the diversity of the trails and to make more Americans familiar with these great trails.

Contest organizers are looking for good photos of trail users as well as special facilities, art on the trails, management issues, construction, and volunteers. They are looking for entries that cover the many types and uses of National Recreation Trails throughout America. Deadline for entries is December 15, 2010. For more information see: www.AmericanTrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/photocon.html

FEDERAL DOT CREATES OFFICE FOCUSING ON LIVABILITY

The Federal Highway Administration's Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty is undergoing a reorganization to create a new Office of Human Environment. The new office will house a new Livability Team to address livability as an emerging context at Department of Transportation. This affects the National Scenic Byways Program, as the Byways, TCSP and Delta Programs Team will also be part of this office.

(From America's Byways newsletter)

RTC WEBSITE OFFERS FUNDING IDEAS FOR MAINTENANCE

A new section of RTC's Trail-Building Toolbox is dedicated to funding mechanisms for trail maintenance. It highlights four urban trails—in Michigan, New York, Ohio and Texas—that have taken different approaches to funding upkeep. The new resource includes documents that can help funding maintenance of trails: <http://tinyurl.com/2asjfsc>

REPORTS REVEAL HOW AMERICANS SPEND TIME OUTDOORS

American kids spend time outdoors, and some spend substantial amounts of time outdoors, according to evidence that contradicts the nay-sayers.

That and many other findings about outdoor recreation are from reports of the Internet Research Information Series (IRIS).

The National Kids Survey found that 64 percent of kids aged 6–19 reported spending two or more hours outdoors on a typical weekday, and over 75 percent reported spending two or more hours outdoors on a typical weekend day. Roughly 50 percent of kids also reported spending as much as four or more hours outdoors on a typical weekend day. See the full report at: <http://tinyurl.com/28z8xqc>

IRIS is an Internet accessible science report series covering outdoor recreation statistics (RECSTATS), wilderness research (WILDERNESS) and other human-dimension and demographics research (DEMOSTATS) related to natural resources.

Besides the National Kids Survey, the reports cover a variety of subjects of interest to

trail users, including off-highway vehicle recreation, outdoor recreation activity trends, trends in forest-based recreation, and trends in non-motorized boating. See the full slate of reports at: <http://tinyurl.com/24y964g>

PUBLIC CAN COMMENT ON GREAT OUTDOORS INITIATIVE

The Obama Administration has announced a second round of Listening Sessions for the America's Great Outdoors Initiative and one will be in Anchorage in August. Time and place will be released later. Check at www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/.

Among other things, these listening sessions will be good opportunities for the National Trails Community to bring the National Trails System into the spotlight as a national priority for the Obama Administration. Also important is the Recreational Trails Program that provides funding for local trail projects.

In April, President Obama established the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to promote and support innovative community-level efforts to conserve outdoor spaces and to reconnect Americans to the outdoors.

The listening sessions will allow the public to contribute ideas and opinions on the direction of America's natural resources. Another major part of this initiative involves an online forum that allows citizens to author and comment on ideas regarding three major categories: reconnecting with the great outdoors, private lands conservation, and public lands conservation. The forum can be found at: <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/>.

FREE LANDS ADMISSION PART OF OUTDOORS INITIATIVE

As part of President Barack Obama's *Great Outdoors Initiative* all national parks, national wildlife refuges, and many areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management will offer free admission on August 14-15, September 25 (Public Lands Day), and November 11 (Veterans Day).

To find out more specific details check out these websites:

- National Park Service: www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm
- BLM: www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/Recreation/BLM_Fee_Free_Days.html
- National Wildlife Refuges: www.fws.gov/refuges/

To find out more about the initiative see: www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/

RECENT NATIONWIDE LINKS

MEETINGS, CONFERENCES, TRAINING, ETC.

- Many trail training, workshops, and conferences are held across the country each year. See the American Trails calendar for a comprehensive list: www.AmericanTrails.org/Calendar.html

TRAILS AND SUCH IN THE MEDIA:

- A U.S. District Judge recently lifted bans and seasonal restrictions on motorized travel on 40 trails and roads in the Montana's Lewis and Clark National Forest after the agency and motorized user groups negotiated a compromise in their legal battle over the plan: <http://tinyurl.com/27fyu32>

- A man and his son attempt to hike 50 trails in 50 states in 50 days: <http://tinyurl.com/38egsz5>
- Palm Desert, CA, recently amended its trail-use ordinance, legally prohibiting all but service dogs from most Palm Desert trails: <http://tinyurl.com/3yzebdw>
- According to a recent Wall Street Journal article, "Today's home buyers aren't just looking for good schools and low crime rates when they evaluate a neighborhood, many brokers say. They're paying much more attention to what they can walk to: <http://tinyurl.com/25tg9n8>
- Some iPad users are employing the tablet like a portable navigation device to map out routes while they are sailing, hiking and driving: <http://tinyurl.com/2aygo94>
- Mountain bikers and equestrians have trouble sharing trails at Michigan recreation area: <http://tinyurl.com/22wac7h>
- A 90-day trial program allows dogs be walked on leashes on trails in two county parks in Florida: <http://tinyurl.com/2blzbg3>

OTHER LINKS:

- Find out how “walkable” your neighborhood is with the “Walk Score” website: www.walkscore.com/
- Outdoor Nation is a growing community of young people who have joined together to champion the outdoors: www.outdoornation.org/
- Tread Lightly!, Inc. updated its Online Awareness Course on outdoor ethics and how to minimize impacts in the outdoors. See www.treadlightly.org/ and click on “101 Online Course” in the right-hand menu.
- Those who want to live on water and land trails for extended periods ought to consider the bizarre “Snail Shell System”: <http://tinyurl.com/3xlt9h3>
- The July newsletter of the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council has a story on the Agassiz Recreational Trail, a 52-mile natural surface multiuse trail in northwestern Minnesota that won the 2010 Coalition of Recreational Trails Construction and Design Award: <http://tinyurl.com/247f84a>

Interior Trails Quarterly is a free email newsletter that comes out four times a year: March, June, September, and December. ITQ Action Updates come out once a month in between regular editions of the ITQ. Both are 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. Note: submissions may also be used in the statewide Alaska Trails newsletter.

DISCLAIMER: Interior Trails Quarterly and ITQ Action Updates are not a product of any organization. However, I am the vice president of the Interior Trails Preservation Coalition, a member of several Interior trail user groups, and a member of Alaska Trails and editor of its newsletter.