

INTERIOR TRAILS QUARTERLY

ACTION UPDATE

February 2012

INTERIORWIDE

HOUSE BILL, LIKE SENATE, WOULD HURT TRAIL FUNDING

The House of Representatives released a preview of its version of the federal transportation funding bill on February 2. Like the Senate bill under discussion, the House version would no longer require states to spend highway funds on non-highway projects and programs such as bicycle/pedestrian facilities and the Recreational Trail Program (RTP). RTP is a critical trail funding program for Alaska, both for government agencies and private non-profit groups. Trail supporters are urged to contact their Members of Congress to support these essential programs. Read more at:

www.americantrails.org/reauth.html

URGENT: The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will discuss the transportation funding bill ("The American Energy & Infrastructure Jobs Act") on Thursday, Feb. 2, and may vote on it. Congressman Don Young is on that committee. American Trails is urging people to contact their representatives on that committee:

<http://tinyurl.com/7mlzcn5>

INTERIORWIDE LINKS:

- Weekend ranger hikes planned at Denali National Park: <http://tinyurl.com/7w2lgs2>
- Snowmachine trail grooming reports from across interior and southcentral Alaska are available at these two sites:
 - www.anchoragesnowmobileclub.com/trail_reports.htm
 - <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/asp/curevnts.htm>
- Super-sized tires of 'fat bikes' may look strange, but they go well on snowy trails: <http://tinyurl.com/6sudljn>

CHENA HOT SPRINGS ROAD

CHENA HOT SPRINGS PLAN REPORT TO BE DISCUSSED

The Fairbanks Borough Land Management Advisory Commission will meet in February to discuss a report on a land management plan of borough land near Chena Hot Springs Resort.

The 277-page Chena Hot Springs Block Master Plan was presented to the commission on January 25. The commission will meet on February 22 to act on a

resolution of support. The Land Management Department will review the report and decide on which alternative or combination of alternatives to go forward with. That course of action will have to be approved by Borough Mayor Luke Hopkins and the Borough Assembly.

Regardless of which strategy the borough adopts, the administration has said it will do its best to protect the existing trails, and secure access through the Chena Hot Springs Resort property to nearby borough and state land. The master planning process was started when the owners of the resort asked to buy borough land in order to expand their operations.

Interested people have several options available for viewing the Master Plan:

- Download it (65MB) from a link on the Chena Hot Springs Block Master Plan website: <http://tinyurl.com/88hrmk6>
- Request it from the borough to be put onto a CD for \$15, if you would also like the data information put onto a CD there is an additional \$50 charge.
- Request it from the borough to be printed in its entirety for an estimated cost of \$75.

People interested in commenting on the report should go to the Chena Hot Springs Block Master Planning Project website (link above) or mail comments to the Land Management Department; 809 Pioneer Road; Fairbanks, Alaska 99707-1072. All comments need to reach the land management office by 5 pm on Feb 10.

STATEWIDE

ALASKA TRAILS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LEAVES

Alaska Trails Executive Director Erin McLarnon has resigned to become the communications director of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

"I just wanted to thank everyone for an enjoyable 17 months at Alaska Trails and wish you all the very best in your upcoming and future sustainable trail projects," McLarnon said. "I met so many wonderful and dedicated folks that I will never forget and I hope our paths cross again.

"In the coming months the single most important thing you can do is to keep calling and writing your Alaskan Senators in support of Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funding and keep in touch with the State of Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation to see what assistance you can provide as they ask the Legislature for trails funding across the state. Your support is needed more now than ever as the future of RTP funding grows more desperate."

PUBLICATION BY ALASKAN TRAILS EXPERT AVAILABLE

A new publication on trails by an Alaskan expert has been released by the federal government.

"A Comprehensive Framework for Off-Highway Vehicle Trail Management" was written by Kevin Meyer, the Regional Trails Specialist for the National Park Service-Alaska Region. The publication is due to the efforts of the United States Department of

Agriculture, the Forest Service and the United States Department of Interior, National Park Service.

Based on more than 10 years of study, applied research on trails, and interaction with trail experts in Alaska and across the lower 48, Meyer has developed a process to increase the sustainability of new and existing trails. In the course of his work, Meyer has become a nationally recognized expert on sustainable trail design and its application. Although the publication focuses on off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails, it has wide applicability to other types of trails including foot, bike, or multi-use trails worldwide.

Meyer describes sustainability concepts, trail fundamentals, and a 10-element management framework that provides for a systematic, scientific approach to trail management. Twelve appendixes provide extensive additional detail ranging from best management practices to examples of trail work. The 319-page publication is vividly illustrated with color figures that explain major trail sustainability concepts.

Published as a cooperative effort by the National Park Service and the Forest Service's Missoula Technology and Development Center, the publication is a follow-up to Meyer's earlier publication "Managing Degraded OHV Trails in Wet, Unstable, and Sensitive Environments." Electronic versions of both publications are available at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/eng/pubs> along with numerous trail-related publications from the Forest Service. Limited free hard copies of the new publication are available. To request a copy, contact kevin_meyer@nps.gov.

(Submitted by Lisa Holzapfel)

RTCA RELEASES REPORT ON ALASKA PROJECTS

The National Park Service is helping out with eight projects across the state, including trail projects, through its Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program.

RTCA recently issued a report that highlights several of those projects: the Goldstream Valley Lions Club Pump Park near Fairbanks, the Kachemak Bay Water Trail near Homer, the Palmer Bike Park, the Skagway Pullen Creek StreamWalk, and the Sitka National Historic Park River View and Forest Walk Trails.

Download the PDF report (800 KB) at

<http://www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/rtca/whatwedo/projects/AK.pdf>.

ALASKA TRAILS NOT A PART OF ‘PICK. CLICK. GIVE.’

Alaska Trails will not be part of the “Pick. Click. Give.” program list this year, so don’t look for the group on the list.

The program requires an expensive, complicated audit for organizations that exceed \$250,000 in revenue, which includes restricted “pass-through” projects and activities. More than 80 percent of Alaska Trails’ revenue goes toward services and “pass-through” activities. The group won’t exceed that threshold this year, so it should again be eligible in 2013. People can still make easy online donations. Just click on the “Donate” link on the Alaska Trails home page: www.alaska-trails.org/

The group received nearly \$5,000 from the 2011 “Pick. Click. Give.”

KEEP TRAILS IN THE MINDS OF OUR LEGISLATORS

The Alaska Legislature has started its session. Don't forget to keep trails issues in the minds of our legislators. They have many other things vying for their attention. If they don't hear from trail advocates they may think that trails are not that important to Alaskans. Contact information for senators and representatives can be found at:

<http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/>

STATEWIDE LINKS:

- The Alaska Moose Federation makes trails for moose to move them away from roads and railroad tracks: <http://tinyurl.com/7sbe0xx>
- The Kodiak Island Borough Assembly recently included the Kodiak Road System Trails Master Plan into the borough's Comprehensive Plan: <http://tinyurl.com/73awf89>

NATIONWIDE

SURVEY TO HELP FORM INTERNATIONAL TRAIL SYMPOSIUM

Arizona will be hosting the next American Trails International Trails Symposium in April 2013. American Trails would like to hear from people like you about how to shape the program content and training opportunities that best fit your specific needs. Please take a few minutes to complete a short survey by February 3. The group will translate your responses into a dynamic symposium.

Survey: www.surveymonkey.com/s/S9NH8M9

AMERICAN TRAILS WINTER MAGAZINE AVAILABLE ONLINE

The winter 2011 edition of American Trails magazine is now available for viewing online. This edition has a variety of interesting and important trail information including stories on:

- Studies that show various trail activities aid physiological and psychological health
- A model community that uses play to get kids in nature and active on trails
- A Wisconsin community that has found benefits in using porous asphalt.
- The Second World Trail Conference held earlier in Korea

See the magazine at: www.americantrails.org/trailtracks/

The group's January e-newsletter is also available online. It includes important stories about federal trail and transportation funding, the 2013 International Trails Symposium, and more. Read it at: <http://tinyurl.com/88rz924>

FEDS SEEK COMMENT ON TRANSPORTATION POLICY PAPER

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently issued a *Federal Register* notice requesting comments on a new draft *Section 4(f) Policy Paper* that will provide guidance on the procedures the FHWA will follow when approving the use of land from publicly owned public parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and public or

private historic sites for federal highway projects. A copy of the proposed *Section 4(f) Policy Paper* is available for download, public inspection, and comment at: <http://tinyurl.com/6jlce7>

Why is this important for Transportation Enhancements?

Section 17 of the draft Section 4(f) Policy Paper covers Transportation Enhancement (TE) projects. Many other sections will be of interest to TE managers, including sections on public parks, historic sites, archaeological resources, historic bridges, trails and shared use paths, museums, scenic byways, etc. TE managers should be aware of possible Section 4(f) implications when selecting TE projects. The Section 4(f) Policy Paper also is useful when considering projects that have multiple benefits for transportation, recreation, historic preservation, environmental protection, etc.

Why is this important for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP)?

Although the RTP is exempt from Section 4(f) under 23 U.S.C. 206(h)(2), the RTP is *not* exempt from other environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Many other sections will be of interest to RTP administrators and trail advocates, including sections on public parks, historic sites, archaeological resources, historic bridges, trails and shared use paths, scenic byways, etc. RTP administrators should be aware of possible Section 4(f) implications when selecting RTP projects. The Section 4(f) Policy Paper also is useful when considering projects that have multiple benefits for transportation, recreation, historic preservation, environmental protection, etc.

(From FHWA email)

NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE LINKS

MEETINGS, CONFERENCES, TRAINING, ETC.

- For a listing of upcoming trail workshops, conferences, and other meetings, see the American Trails calendar at: www.americantrails.org/Calendar.html

GRANTS:

- Yamaha and Polaris Grants Fund Hundreds Of OHV Trail Success Stories: <http://tinyurl.com/82g6bcl>

OTHER LINKS:

- Expansion of "Trail Towns" Program Great News for Rural Communities: <http://tinyurl.com/78ac4p2>
- Bill would allow Florida to sell naming rights to state-owned facilities, including trails: <http://tinyurl.com/7qyxjuy>
- Obama administration issues major rewrite of national forest rules: <http://tinyurl.com/6s8vd6g>

Interior Trails Quarterly is a free email newsletter than 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 be 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 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.