

# **INTERIOR TRAILS QUARTERLY**

**Dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of trails in interior Alaska**

**March 2018**

## **FAIRBANKS AREA**

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### **SURVEY RATES FAIRBANKS TRAILS OFFICE HIGH FOR REDUCTION**

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is facing some tough budget cuts and has been canvassing the public on what to cut. Trail advocates who want to minimize cuts to the borough's Trails Office and Parks and Recreation Department need to speak up because both were targeted highly as programs to reduce in one survey.

The borough recently conducted two surveys. One was a telephone survey conducted by a polling group that used scientific sampling methods. The other was a combination of an online survey and social media comments. It was not conducted using scientific methods. It's up to the administration how to view the importance of the comments from the different methods, but one thing is always true: Speaking up holds more weight than staying silent.

In the telephone survey respondents were asked "Which services would you prefer to reduce?" (page 13 of survey results) First on the list were "Air Quality Programs" (28.3%) and "Administration" (16.4%). However, the next two items were "Parks" (15.7%) and "Trails Management" (11.3%).

Interestingly, the telephone survey respondents did not strongly endorse reducing programs as an option for dealing with the budget problems (page 9 of results). "Wait it out" (27.9%), "Increase taxes" (27.4%) rated higher compared to "Reduce programs" (24.3%) and "A mix of tax increases and program reductions" (20.1%).

The borough also collected information through social media and its website. Through that method "Parks and Recreation" and "Trails" were placed much farther down the cut list. (See Question #3 on the report.) However, the choices were left to the respondents and so were not necessarily program-based. For example, some rated suggestions by participants included "Reduce," "Borough," and "Cut."

Also, with this method of data collection "Reduce programs" rated much higher (37.4%) than with the telephone survey. (See Question #4 on the report.) Other categories in Question #4 of the social media/website survey rated as follows: "A mix of tax increases and program reductions" (27%), "Increase taxes" (17.3%), and "Wait it out" (12%).

- See full results of the telephone survey at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8b6oam6>
- See full results of the social media and website survey at: <http://tinyurl.com/y8f8aymn>
- Fairbanks Daily News-Miner story on the telephone survey: <http://tinyurl.com/y9kvtyys>
- Fairbanks Daily News-Miner editorial on the survey: <http://tinyurl.com/ydhv34d6>

#### ***THE TIME TO SPEAK UP IS NOW***

Whatever your feelings on how the borough should deal with the budget situation, you need to speak up if you want your voice heard. Mayor Karl Kassel's administration is putting together its

budget right now. Here's how to contact the mayor's office:

- Email: <http://tinyurl.com/ybvd4kpv>
- Phone: (907) 459-1300
- Paper mail: 907 Terminal St. Fairbanks AK 99701

## CONSIDER TAKING A SAW ALONG DURING YOUR TRAIL OUTINGS

The number of trees dropping onto and leaning into trails has been impressive this year. An early wetter-than-normal snowfall probably had a lot to do with it. What's particularly impressive this year is that trees and branches keep dropping and drooping to block trails. I've been up here since 1989 and I haven't seen anything quite like this except for 1992 September snowfall. It makes getting out on the trails more difficult.

So, I encourage everyone to bring a saw along on their trail journeys. You don't have to spend hours and hours cutting out trees and branches (though, if you do, a big thank you!). Rather, I'm encouraging everyone to commit to cutting at least one or two overhanging trees or branches whenever possible. If everyone did a couple each time they went out, we could make huge progress.

There are a lot of compact saws out there. If you have one and you're not taking it out regularly, please put it next to your outdoor gear to remind you. If you don't have one, consider getting one at a local outdoor gear or hardware store. (My personal favorite are the Stihl compact handsaws.) A good handsaw can cut through trees 4-5 inches in diameter. We may need them more this year than normal, but they can always be used. I've got a folding one that I can carry in a pack. I've also got one that I strap onto the fork of my fatbike so it's always there.

Oh, and watch out for the trees that are down. On a recent night ride with some friends, I ran into a tree while biking downhill. Smacked it pretty good. Didn't even see it coming, though we were doing an out-and-back so I had passed it earlier in the evening. I was wearing a helmet at the time, and I didn't suffer any long-term ill affects, but I was still mostly out of commission for a week. So, please take care and consider cutting out a tree or two on your next outing. My noggin will thank you.



## REGARDING TREES ON TRAILS ALONG POWERLINES

GVEA has a new online form that can be used to let them know about possible hazard trees so they might have a chance to address them before they cause a power outage. You can attach photos. So look around your neighborhood and along any trails you run near power lines and let them know if trees are touching or likely to fall on power lines. As we've learned the past few days, what was fine while it was cold sometimes isn't when it warms up!

- GVEA's online form: <http://www.gvea.com/dangertree>  
(From Tom McGrane)

## FAIRBANKS TRAILS CHALLENGE OFFERS REASONS TO GET OUTSIDE

Want to get outside more this winter? Take the Fairbanks Winter Trails Challenge and use the handy trail guide for instructions, tips, parking directions and trail maps! Grab a buddy or go it alone, but don't miss out on the fun!

- Fairbanks Winter Trails Challenge Guide: <http://tinyurl.com/yckcg2st>
- Fairbanks Winter Trails Challenge List 2017/18 (runs through April 15): <http://tinyurl.com/yc2yuobn>

*(From Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Facebook page)*

## INTERIOR AND FAIRBANKS AREA LINKS

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- NSCF tours make skiing an adventure: <http://tinyurl.com/ychhkth7>
- UAF's Jason Garron: All ski trails, no skiing: <http://tinyurl.com/yawd79lr>
- Skyline Ridge Park Trail Users Group (new Facebook group): <http://tinyurl.com/yahm6qlh>
- Low temperature doesn't stop snowmachiners' ride to Nenana: <http://tinyurl.com/y7638klm>
- Snow travelers enjoy lots of powder on climb up Rosebud Summit: <http://tinyurl.com/y932t7bq>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- 'Uphill skiing' may be growing, but Moose Mountain has had enough of trespassers: <http://tinyurl.com/ybn64qgy>
- Denali Park Road Opens to Mountain Vista Rest Area: <http://tinyurl.com/ybhkyob3>
- Anchorage Rep. introduces bill to create Tangle Lakes game refuge: <http://tinyurl.com/ycm955u4>

## INTERIORWIDE/STATEWIDE

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### GRAD STUDENT SEEKS INPUT ON OUTDOOR RECREATION SURVEY

Christian Mogensen, a graduate student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, is still conducting a survey regarding people's experience with outdoor recreation. Some people have already participated, but Mogensen needs more.

The survey is part of Mogensen's effort to collect data for his graduate project. His project centers around getting people more involved with outdoor recreation, and the benefits associated with outdoor recreation activities. Mogensen is also the outdoor adventures assistant coordinator at DRAW, UAF's Department of Recreation, Adventure and Wellness. If you have any questions, you can contact Mogensen at: [cgmogensen@alaska.edu](mailto:cgmogensen@alaska.edu)

The survey takes about 10 minutes, and is open to everyone over 18 years old. Find the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6QFG7Z3>

### 3 THINGS TO SUPPORT A STATE OUTDOOR RECREATION AGENDA

The Valdez Adventure Alliance is coordinating a “Juneau Fly-In for Outdoor Recreation” scheduled for March 7-8. Even people not participating in the fly-in, can help the effort. See suggestions below. For more information on the fly-in and the effort to start an Office of Outdoor Recreation contact Lee Hart ([info@valdezadventure.com](mailto:info@valdezadventure.com)).

1. If you haven't already, read & sign the petition to Gov. Walker: <http://tinyurl.com/yd525l63>
2. Call or email your legislator to urge adoption of HCR 25: <http://tinyurl.com/y9aljxo4>
3. Encourage at least one of your friends or colleagues in Juneau to join the fly-in group on March 7 at the House Natural Resources Hearing at 1 p.m. on March 7 then join them after work for the rally at Foggy Mountain Shop from 5:30 - 7 p.m., or at least ask them to sign the letter to the governor.

*(From Valdez Adventure Alliance email)*

### STATE PARKS POSITIONS INCLUDE TRAIL DUTIES

Alaska State Parks is looking for seasonal employees and volunteers. Positions include trail crew and backcountry ranger assistant. Applicants must be at least 18 years old.

- For more information on the volunteer program see: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/vip/index.htm>
- For more information on Alaska State Parks seasonal jobs see: <http://tinyurl.com/7mog8q3>

### SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2018 STATEWIDE TRAILS CONFERENCE

Please mark your calendars now for the Alaska Trails annual Statewide Trails Conference, which will be held April 26-28 in Anchorage.

The group is looking forward to a robust and exciting conference. Alaska Trails would also like your input on topics and speakers that you would like to see at the conference. Please e-mail Alaska Trails at [office@alaska-trails.org](mailto:office@alaska-trails.org) to share your ideas for the 2018 conference.

See more at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/358363531293740/>

### RIVER FORECAST SITE KEEPS TRACK OF SNOW DEPTH



The National Weather Service’s River Forecast Center has a website that tracks snow depths at many locations across the state. In the spring, summer, and fall, the site also tracks several things regarding rivers, including how breakup is going and what river conditions are like. See the snow depth page for the website at:

[http://www.weather.gov/aprfc/Snow\\_Depth](http://www.weather.gov/aprfc/Snow_Depth)

## COMMENT OPEN FOR DRAFT TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The public comment period for the 2018-2021 draft of the Alaska Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) closes March 16 at 5pm.

STIP is the state's four-year program for transportation system preservation and development. It includes interstate, state and some local highways, bridges, ferries and public transportation, but does not include airports or non-ferry-related ports and harbors. It covers all system improvements for which partial or full federal funding is approved and that are expected to take place during the four-year duration of the STIP.

Several trail and trailhead projects from across the state are included in the draft STIP. Some are associated with road projects while others are separate from such projects. To easily find trail projects in the STIP, search for the words "trail" and "path."

To comment on the draft 2018-2021 STIP, view an interactive map for 2016-2019 STIP projects, and more see: <http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/cip/stip/index.shtml>

### STATEWIDE LINKS

- Eagle Watch (state parks newsletter): <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/eaglewatch/eaglewatcharchive>
- A simple step toward a sustainable economy: Alaska long trails: <http://tinyurl.com/yb2lagbg>

### SOUTHCENTRAL LINKS

- Proposed Land Use Permit and Public Access Easement for the Haessler-Norris Trail System, near Willow (comments due by March 5): <http://notice.alaska.gov/188679>
- Winter Trails Day celebrates greater Mat-Su parks access: <http://tinyurl.com/y9crbyz9>
- These 5 Southcentral Alaska road projects could change the way you get around (#5 includes bike lanes and pathways): <http://tinyurl.com/yclxqm7v>
- 9th Annual Kodiak Outdoor Film Festival (submissions due March 31): [www.islandtrails.org/film.html](http://www.islandtrails.org/film.html)

### NORTHERN LINK

- Lynden Oilfield Services winter off-road travel on the proposed community winter access trail to Utiqiagvik: <http://notice.alaska.gov/188763>

### SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- State asks to build more public use cabins to meet demand: <http://tinyurl.com/yd8fw7by>
- Alaska files brief in support of hunter suing Park Service: <http://tinyurl.com/ydcf7xw8>
- Thank Senator Mia Costello for introducing Safe Routes to School legislation: <http://tinyurl.com/yacy6mnd>

## NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE

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### SUSTAINABLE TRAILS CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN MARCH

Some of the world's foremost trail experts will gather in West Virginia this spring to present hands-on instruction in trail construction, design, maintenance, development and management. The annual conference of the Professional Trail Builder's Association features multi-day workshops, classes, equipment, and construction demonstrations to provide attendees with practical tools to bring great trails to life. The core conference is March 26-28, 2018, with multi-day workshops before and after. More information may be obtained at <http://www.trailbuilders.org/training/sustainable-trails-conference-stonewall-2018>.

*(From Jon Underwood)*

### NATIONWIDE / INTERNATIONAL LINKS

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#### 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/Calendar.html](http://www.americantrails.org/Calendar.html)

#### TRAIL GUIDES

- 3 Breathtaking Trails to Explore Across America: <http://tinyurl.com/yb734rcn>
- New York City's Top 5 Dayhikes: <https://www.backpacker.com/trips/nyc-top-5-dayhik>
- The most thrilling — and dangerous — trails in America: <http://tinyurl.com/yckps2am>
- Oregon state history hikes: 14 trails to celebrate Oregon's birthday: <http://tinyurl.com/y7y5ytpj>
- 57 Dog-Friendly Trails in California's foothills and the Sierra Nevada: <http://tinyurl.com/yd3xscvw>

#### TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- For the latest American Trails news publications: <http://www.americantrails.org/trailtracks/index.html>
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy e-News (February 2018): <http://tinyurl.com/y9ob9vle>

#### FUNDING

- Federal Highway Administration funding chart (has trails-related categories): <http://tinyurl.com/zqz2m8p>

#### ADVOCACY/VOLUNTEER

- Yosemite National Park volunteer trail crew trip with Conservation VIP: <http://tinyurl.com/yd5699fu>
- Coalition for Recreational Trails Annual Achievement Awards (nominations due April 6): <http://www.americantrails.org/awards/CRTawards.html>

*STUDIES/REPORTS*

- The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative (book): <http://tinyurl.com/y82es5wu>
- The Economic Impact of the Huron River: <http://tinyurl.com/ycsv83a>
- Best Practices for The Development of Snowmobile Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/yaug49yh>

*OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:*

- National Trails Day is on June 2; register your event here: <http://tinyurl.com/y7hmxntl>
- America's Ski Trails Are Vanishing. This Olympian Has Taken Up the Cause: <http://tinyurl.com/yc6wu5w2>
- Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Welcomes Government Recognition of Industry as GDP Contributor: <http://www.funoutdoors.com/node/view/3918>
- Design Concept For Iowa's Oldest OHV Park Well Received By Stakeholders (scroll down): <http://tinyurl.com/yde9pf83>
- 2017 National Recreation Trails Photo Contest Winners: <http://tinyurl.com/y8wvfv8q>
- Trail Jobs and RFPs for Trail Work: <http://americantrails.org/NewsAction/trailJobs.html>
- A hiking trail connecting NYC to Canada is in the works: <http://tinyurl.com/y9wwymbc>

*INTERNATIONAL LINKS:*

- Sinai Trail: Bedouin bet on Egypt's first long-distance hike: <http://tinyurl.com/y8g5qydz>
- The 7 Best Hiking Trails Just Outside Budapest: <http://tinyurl.com/y8cuqdvv>
- 7 stunning UK hiking trails you will fall in love with: <http://tinyurl.com/ybgjewrw>

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](mailto: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 products of any organization. However, I am a board member 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.