

ACTION UPDATE

January 2014

INTERIORWIDE

RTP ADMINISTRATION FUNDED, BUT MORE WORK NEEDED

Gov. Sean Parnell has included administration funding of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in his budget, but the budget still needs to be approved by the legislature. Trail advocates need to tell their legislators to keep that item in the budget. Also please thank Gov. Parnell.

The RTP is the biggest trail funding source for Alaska, providing about \$1.5 million toward trails each year. Administration of the program costs about \$200,000 a year. This goes toward paying for a grant administrator, a program coordinator, an accounting technician, and a part-time GIS specialist. If the state does not pay for administering the RTP, the money will go back to the federal government. This federal program, which is paid for by gas tax from off-road vehicles, has been instrumental in funding trail projects throughout the state.

When writing or talking to your legislators don't forget to mention all the benefits of trails and the RTP, such as increased tourism, healthier citizens, protection of green spaces, access to natural resources, and a 25 percent funding match requirement that leverages even more money for trails. The return on the Alaska's investment is huge.

The budget item can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/n336s9c>

The capital budget also has other items of importance to trail advocates, including the Snowmobile Trail Development and Grants (paid for through snowmobile registration fees) and deferred maintenance for the various state park regions, which will include some trail work. See all the capital budget details here: <http://tinyurl.com/nxcbkku>

Get contact information for your legislators here: <http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/index.php>

To thank the governor you can send a letter, (P.O. Box 110001 Juneau, AK 99811-0001), give his office a call (907/465-3500), or send him an email (<http://tinyurl.com/22umy43>).

COMMENT SOUGHT ON DENALI TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking public comment on an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating improvements to the Horseshoe Lake Trail. The NPS is considering extending the trail around the lake and out to the Nenana River in order to protect park resources and enhance the visitor experience by providing a safe, sustainable trail.

The 1.5 mile-long Horseshoe Lake Trail is used by over 200 visitors per day in the peak season. It was constructed in 1940, the park's first established trail, and in 2013 was determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Horseshoe Lake is an oxbow lake, an abandoned channel of the Nenana River, and provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. The lake and surrounding area gives visitors opportunities to see moose, beaver, and many bird species. Anglers also hike in for the small fish in the lake. The trailhead is located at the railroad crossing (Mile 1) on the Denali Park Road.

Comments on the EA may be submitted through January 22, 2014, preferably via the

website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/horseshoelake>

For more information see: <http://tinyurl.com/kr5vdd7>

(From NPS press release)

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- Storms wreak havoc on some Interior Alaska backcountry trails: <http://tinyurl.com/kqd7657>
- State seeks appeal of decision on Chicken trails: <http://tinyurl.com/mjkk915>
- Former Fairbanks resident gives \$25,000 to Alaska Dog Musers Association: <http://tinyurl.com/myzos6h>
- Schandelmeier: A lonesome trail on the Yukon Quest: <http://tinyurl.com/lbo6ovv>
- A Flickr photo website that includes a lot of Interior trails: www.flickr.com/photos/13469122@N05/
- Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System newsletter (Fall 2013): <http://tinyurl.com/kf9I388>

STATEWIDE

ANILCA TRAINING OFFERED BY INSTITUTE OF NORTH

The Institute of the North is hosting its two-day ANILCA training March 5-6, 2014 at the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage, Alaska. This training will provide a thorough review of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) and provide an opportunity to examine and discuss current and controversial ANILCA-related issues with several subject matter experts.

The training curriculum features a comprehensive review of the ANILCA statute in an easy-to-use format that includes a storehouse of resource materials that relate to this Act. These materials include the Act, ANILCA amendments, other relevant public land laws, CFR regulations that affect the Conservation System Units in Alaska, as well as pertinent documents, background information, and video materials of Sen. Ted Stevens and others involved in ANILCA at, and since, its enactment.

Register online for the course at: www.institutenorth.org/calendar/events/nilca-training

For questions or more information, contact Karlin Itchoak at: [907/786-6331](tel:9077866331) or kitchoak@institutenorth.org.

(From Karlin Itchoak)

SAGA LOOKING FOR PEOPLE TO FILL LEADER POSITIONS

Saga's Alaska Service Corps is recruiting leader positions for the 2014 season. These are half-term Americorps slots with 900-hour service commitments and required service time of April 7 to August 27, 2014. Living stipends range from \$1200 to \$1300 a month depending on the position and an Education Award of \$2,755 upon successful completion of service. To learn more or apply please go to <http://tinyurl.com/kf4zpnb>

USE “PICK. CLICK. GIVE.” TO DONATE TO ALASKA TRAILS

Alaska Trails is included in the Permanent Fund Dividend’s “Pick. Click. Give” charitable contributions program. It’s a secure and easy way to make a donation.

When you file for your PFD online, you will be given an opportunity to donate using money from your PFD. If you do, please remember Alaska Trails.

If you use “Pick. Click. Give” you will be able to check a box that authorizes the state to send your name, contact information and the amount you give when it sends contributions to an organization. We want to acknowledge and recognize your generous support, and this is the only way we will know it’s you making the gift. Since we will not see who contributes until this fall, you can also email Alaska Trails President Geoffrey Orth (geoffrey.orth@alaska-trails.org) and we will keep you informed of our projects in your community.

For more information on “Pick. Click. Give” see: www.pickclickgive.org.

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN EXTENDED

If you are a federal employee, please note that the 2013 Combined Federal Campaign has been extended through January 15. The campaign is a great way to give to Alaska Trails (CFC Code: 88395). More info on the campaign and how to give at: <http://www.alaskacfc.org>

ALASKA TRAILS EXEC TRUMPETS THE BENEFITS OF TRAILS

Steve Cleary, executive director of Alaska Trails, has written a couple of great articles recently:

- This article appeared in the Alaska Dispatch and focused on how trails are an important component of keeping people, especially kids, active: <http://tinyurl.com/n6k94uo>
- This Compass piece, which appeared in the Anchorage Daily News, highlights many ways trails benefit Alaskans: <http://tinyurl.com/m48g9px>

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Alaska trails can counter obesity and a sedentary lifestyle: <http://tinyurl.com/n6k94uo>
- Alaska Explorer discusses winter biking, one of the biggest trends to hit winter trails: <http://tinyurl.com/mqxy9py>
- A piece that highlights the trails and outdoor aspect of trapping: <http://tinyurl.com/kahy33u>
- Real Alaskans don’t let a little cold weather nip their adventures: <http://tinyurl.com/orx7d2b>
- Outdoor Explorer discusses avalanche safety: <http://tinyurl.com/mameqqs>
- Iditarod National Historic Trail featured in new movie: <http://tinyurl.com/lhrspyt>
- Thanks to LED technology, we can love December again: <http://tinyurl.com/lwym54v>
- Kincaid Park snowmaking system will operate at low capacity: <http://tinyurl.com/kptjvxo>
- Class makes Iditarod Trail tripod replica: <http://tinyurl.com/malwbos>
- Willow’s the spot for the next great trail marathon: <http://tinyurl.com/lz9etbe>
- Downed trees cluttering Peninsula trails: <http://tinyurl.com/m6snld3>
- State parks get local support in Seward area: <http://tinyurl.com/kth489t>
- New snowshoe path ready at Soldotna’s Tsalteshi Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/m9c6d6g>
- Applications being accepted for Chilkoot Trail Artist program until February 1: <http://tinyurl.com/ma5o6rm>

STATEWIDE TRAILS AND PUBLIC LANDS RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- Alaska Lands Update (December 2013): <http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/cacfa/>
- Alaska State Parks' Eagle Watch (December 2013; 3.7MB): <http://tinyurl.com/qxdcshg>
- BLM Frontiers (Fall 2013; stories on horses and ski flying): <http://tinyurl.com/lzql154>

NATIONWIDE

CONGRESS LETS CONSERVATION TAX INCENTIVE EXPIRE

An enhanced conservation tax incentive that has helped protect more than 12 million acres of forests, urban parks and farmland lapsed recently because Congress did not pass an extension.

“The expiration is incredibly frustrating because of the tremendous bipartisan support the program enjoys on Capitol Hill,” said Rand Wentworth, president of the Land Trust Alliance.

Since its initial passage in 2006, the enhanced conservation tax incentive has helped moderate-income landowners from every state donate the development rights of land they wish to preserve for future generations.

But the enhanced deduction has expired three times since its initial passage, and each time, land donations have immediately dropped. The Land Trust Alliance estimates that donations could fall 300,000 acres a year unless Congress reinstates incentives early next year.

“The on-again, off-again nature of this incentive makes it very difficult for landowners to make a decision about donating a conservation easement,” said Wentworth. “That’s why we’re asking lawmakers to end the guesswork, make the provision permanent and help save farmlands, wetlands and woodlands in the U.S.”

And there has been growing support in both chambers of Congress to do just that. Leaders of the Senate Finance Committee, Sens. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), introduced legislation, S.526, in March to permanently enact the enhanced conservation tax incentive. Its companion bill in the House, H.R. 2807, introduced by Congressmen Jim Gerlach (R-Penn.) and Mike Thompson (D-Calif.), currently boasts 162 co-sponsors.

Additionally, more than 65 national groups, ranging from the National Rifle Association and American Farm Bureau Federation to the Environmental Defense Fund and National Audubon Society, have urged passage of this bill.

“Uncertainty will undoubtedly harm conservation efforts in 2014, but the land trust community will press hard to pass legislation as early as possible next year,” Wentworth concluded. “It is clear that Congress remains committed to conservation and we are confident that lawmakers will get the job done.”

The Land Trust Alliance is the national association representing nearly 1,700 land trusts, which have more than 100,000 volunteers and 5 million members nationwide. These land trusts have helped to protect 47 million acres, which is an area twice the size of all national parks in the contiguous United States put together.

For more information on the Enhanced Easement Incentive see:
<http://tinyurl.com/k4aqcok>.

(From Land Trust Alliance)

NATIONWIDE 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

RECENT TRAILS-RELATED E-NEWSLETTERS

- American Trails (December 2013): <http://tinyurl.com/ksqu4x8>
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (Winter magazine): <http://tinyurl.com/lchw8xq>
- National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (December 2013): <http://mad.ly/65f854?pact=19314990208&fe=1>

OTHER LINKS:

- New Adirondacks snowmobile trails stir conflict: <http://tinyurl.com/oma2bxf>
- Volunteer vacations: <http://www.americanhiking.org/volunteer-vacations/>
- Building a bike culture in a city that gets 88 inches of snow a year: <http://tinyurl.com/mfxtt9c>
- 78-year-old tackles trails in Glacier Park: <http://tinyurl.com/oewpkt4>
- Everybody Walk: A 30-minute documentary on the need for more walking: <http://everybodywalk.org/documentary.html>
- Loving a trail to death: The downside of being a popular trail: <http://tinyurl.com/n5tz9kc>
- Over 100 new trail miles could be added to the Philadelphia's existing network: <http://tinyurl.com/mtynvmk>
- Who created the trails in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park?: <http://tinyurl.com/ld3aef8>

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 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.