

ACTION UPDATE

July 2015

INTERIORWIDE

TRIP PLANS SHOULD INCLUDE CHECK OF FIRE CLOSURES, BANS

Recent hot weather and wildfires have caused trail and road closures and fire bans across the Interior. These closures and bans are being lifted as conditions improve. Please check for any closures and bans before heading out on trail trips.

Since conditions can change rapidly, the best way to get accurate information is to call the office of the land manager of the area you want to visit. Good sources of information include:

- Alaska State Parks' Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AlaskaStateParks
- Alaska State Parks' Current Events page:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/asp/curevnts.htm>
- BLM's home page: <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en.html>

WATCH FOR BIRD NESTS WHEN WORKING ON TRAILS

Trail work sometimes requires downing trees or clearing shrubs. When doing so make sure not to violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which makes it illegal for anyone to "take" migratory birds, their eggs, feathers, or nests. "Take" includes destroying or damaging active bird nests or eggs. Different areas of the state have different sensitive periods generally occurring between April 15 and July 25. However, if you encounter an active nest *at any time* leave it in place and protected until young hatch and depart. "Active" is indicated by intact eggs, live chicks, or the presence of an adult on the nest.

For a PDF document with more information and recommended time periods for avoiding vegetation clearing see: <http://tinyurl.com/kwubruc>

ALASKA TRAILS HAS TOOL TRAILER READY FOR PROJECTS

As you start planning trail building and maintenance projects, remember that Alaska Trails has a mobile tool cache available in the Fairbanks area to loan to organized trail groups in the Interior. The trailers were upgraded recently and have many trail tools including mcleods, pulaskis, rakes, gloves, and much, much more. If you would like to borrow one of the caches, please contact Geoffrey Orth (gcorth@straydogs.us).

INTERIORWIDE LINKS

- National Trails Day in Denali National Park: <http://tinyurl.com/pubnjc6>
- Ester trail expert blazes path around Alaska: <http://tinyurl.com/omrguof>

- Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System, Late Spring newsletter: <http://tinyurl.com/npdnt85>
- Twelve adventurous competitors tackle 100-mile Alaskacross course: <http://tinyurl.com/pnezlyo>
- Chena Lake herbicide proposal draws no opposition: <http://tinyurl.com/nkkut7t>

STATEWIDE

RULING FORCES STATE TO CHANGE POLICY ON RTP GRANTS

Administrative and other indirect costs of trail projects can now be paid for by Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grants, a change from a State Parks policy set just a few months ago that would have disallowed reimbursement for those costs.

The reversal came about because of a recent policy change by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that affects funding for all nonprofit groups.

In short, this is good news for those applying for RTP grants because they don't have to find additional funding to pay for indirect costs of RTP-funded projects. The National Council of Nonprofits praised the new policy change in an article on its website.

"The new guidance means that nonprofits should be able to focus more on their missions and should be under less pressure to raise additional funds to essentially subsidize governments."

According to the article, the new policy "explicitly requires pass-through entities (typically states and local governments receiving federal funding) and all federal agencies to reimburse a nonprofit's indirect costs by applying the nonprofit's federally negotiated indirect cost rate, if one already exists. If a negotiated rate does not yet exist, then nonprofits are empowered either to request negotiating a rate or to elect the default rate of 10 percent of their modified total direct costs." (See the full article here: <http://tinyurl.com/pq77cpo>).

In an email explaining how the change affects RTP grants, Darcy Harris, state trails coordinator, used an example of a \$50,000 grant. Up to \$5,000 could be used for administrative and other indirect costs.

"This being said it is very important that grantees understand that all project management, project administration, administrative supplies, executive director management time, planning or designing time, and other indirect costs would come out of that \$5,000. Of course, a grantee does not have to ask for indirect costs, they can opt to put all the money into building their trail," Harris wrote.

State Parks had earlier decided to disallow indirect costs. For one, doing so would keep Alaska in line with "the policy of the majority of other states that administer the program," Harris wrote in an email explaining the reasoning. The policy change would have also focused "as much of the public money as possible for actual trail work to benefit the general public," Harris wrote.

Before that change, State Parks had allowed up to 7 percent of an RTP grant to be used for indirect costs. This was a state policy that was allowed by the federal government at the time.

The new order from the Office of Management and Budget, titled Super-Circular: 2 CFR 200, was issued in late December, but it took a while for Alaska officials to determine whether a state could reject the indirect cost allowance for RTP grants. (See the OMB order here: <http://tinyurl.com/nxawgds>.)

BIG STAFF CHANGES WITH THE ALASKA OFFICE OF THE RTCA

An important National Park Service trails program in Alaska is going through some big personnel changes.

Paul Clark was recently hired as the new regional program leader of the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program in Alaska. Clark replaces Lisa Holzapfel, who retired this past January (see story in March issue). Heather Rice, the other RTCA employee in Alaska, recently announced she is leaving Alaska to take another NPS job in Colorado after 16 years in Alaska. She has worked with RTCA since 2007.

NPS-RTCA is a nationwide program that provides free, on-location facilitation and planning expertise for locally-led outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation projects. Projects are selected each year through an application process. To find out more about the program see: <http://www.nps.gov/akso/community/rtca/index.cfm>

While no drastic changes are planned for the program, the personnel changes will affect how the program is run in Alaska. In an email, Clark described 2016 as a “transition and learning year.”

“I expect to take on less of a project workload in 2016 than the program has carried in previous years,” Clark wrote. “Along with learning about the RTCA program and the National Park Service in general, my priority will be to work with NPS leadership to hire behind Heather, and also look for other ways to leverage support and resources for the RTCA program in Alaska.”

Clark also pointed out that new people bring “different skills and experience.”

“This may guide the types of projects where we can be of most help,” Clark wrote. “Much of what RTCA provides will stay the same, however, such as providing guidance on strategic planning, organizing stakeholders, and project planning.”

Clark comes from the Chugach National Forest, where he was the forest recreation planner and trails program manager, an Anchorage-based position he held for five years. Prior to that he was a Presidential Management Fellow with the Chugach National Forest in Girdwood, primarily serving as the project coordinator for a partnership recreation project between the Alaska Railroad and the USDA Forest Service. He also currently serves on the Alaska Trails board of directors.

Before joining the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska, Clark spent two years (2005-2007) with the Peace Corps in Fiji working on community-based conservation projects, and five years as an Army and Army National Guard officer. He received a B.A. in history from Pacific Lutheran University in 1999 and a M.S. in resource conservation from the University

of Montana in 2008. In his free time, Clark enjoys trail running, cross country skiing, and trying to keep up with his wife and two-year-old son.

Clark will officially join the regional office in Anchorage in early July. He can be reached at [907-644-3586](tel:907-644-3586).

“Even during this transition period, I encourage people to contact me about project ideas and to learn more about the RTCA program,” Clark wrote.

Rice is leaving the Alaska RTCA after accepting a new position with the National Park Service in the Lower 48. She will be working as a compliance specialist in the NPS Intermountain Regional Office in Lakewood, Colorado.

“As excited as I am about the new job, I will be very sad to leave the RTCA program and the opportunity to work with so many wonderful people who have dedicated their time and energy and passion to making their communities better places to live,” Rice wrote in an email.

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS PROGRAM SURVIVES BUDGET CUTS

Funding for the state Snowmobile Trails Program, originally cut from the state budget, has been restored, according to State Trails Coordinator Darcy Harris. Nothing about the program has been changed including deadlines. That means the due date for the public notice, June 10, has already passed. The application due date is still July 1.

The Snowmobile Trail Program has two main parts. One is the Grooming Pool, which pays for grooming and marking of snowmachine trails in a variety of places in interior and southcentral Alaska, as well as the Juneau area. The other part of the program provides grants for trail easement acquisition, development and maintenance of trails and trail-related facilities for snowmobile use, and for safety and educational programs. Matching funds are required for all except the safety and educational programs.

While this is a snowmachine specific program, winter trail grooming benefits any winter users who use those trails. Trail easement acquisition, trail maintenance, and trail-related facilities can benefit other trail users, even in summer.

Funding for the Snowmobile Trails Program comes from registration fees paid by snowmobile owners. However, the program is not guaranteed each year and must be included in the state budget. If the program had been cut the money would have been dispersed into the state’s general fund.

The state Department of Natural Resources decides how to distribute the Snowmobile Trail Program funds, but it is guided by the Snowmobile Trails Advisory Council (SnowTRAC), which reviews funding requests and makes recommendations.

For more information on the program see:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/snowmotr.htm>

JUST ONE MONTH LEFT TO APPLY FOR NPS ASSISTANCE

Do you have an idea for an outdoor recreation or natural resource conservation project in your community? If so, the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program can help.

Applications for RTCA assistance for this next fiscal year (Oct 2015–Sept 2016), are due no later than August 1. All sorts of organizations may apply, including local, state, federal and tribal governments, nonprofits and unincorporated groups. (Federal applications must have at least one non-federal committed partner.)

RTCA offers assistance on locally-led outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation projects. The program offers expertise to move your project from conception to completion, but program employees count on your leadership, drive, commitment, and enthusiasm to carry out the project.

To learn more about RTCA and how it can help, go to the program's Alaska webpage at <http://go.nps.gov/alaska/rtca>.

People interested in applying should contact Heather Rice, Alaska RTCA Outdoor Recreation Planner, at [907-644-3587](tel:907-644-3587) before the August 1 application deadline to discuss your proposed project.

(From Heather Rice, RTCA)

STATE RECRUITING FOR OUTDOOR REC BOARD POSITION

People interested in serving on the Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) have until August 1 to apply.

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation seeks candidates to fill one open board position, which represents people experiencing disabilities. Applicants should have special knowledge, experience, or interest in outdoor recreation and accessibility needs for all trail users.

If you would like to be considered for appointment on the ORTAB, please submit a letter of interest, brief resume and completed questionnaire (available at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/misc/ortaboard.htm>) to the State Trails Program Coordinator, Darcy Harris (darcy.harris@alaska.gov; 907/269-8699; fax 907/269-8907).

Board members serve a term of three years and the board meets once per year or as needed. Additional information regarding ORTAB and the Recreational Trail Grant program can be found at www.alaskastatetrails.org.

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Amendment 16 to the 2012-2015 STIP is open for public comment until July 15: <http://tinyurl.com/q3ovjnw>
- Outdoor Explorer radio show: Denali Highway & Tangle Lakes: <http://tinyurl.com/nf2zucq>
- A new multisport race in Alaska, this year in Southcentral: <http://expeditionak.com>

Southcentral links

- Outdoor Explorer (radio show): History of Anchorage's Trails and Greenbelts: <http://tinyurl.com/nny76u4>
- The Kachemak Bay Water Trail has a new website: www.kachemakbaywatertrail.org

- Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing, preserving and protecting the resources of Kachemak Bay State Park: www.friendsofkachemakbay.org
- First edition of *BikeLife Anchorage* includes "Iconic Trails of Anchorage": <http://tinyurl.com/oxhqcu>

NATIONWIDE

SENATE INTRODUCES NEW SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL

U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee announced the new bill titled the "Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy Act." (DRIVE) The legislation would maintain "Transportation Alternatives" funding, which includes trails and bike/ped programs, at \$850 million a year, up from the current \$819 million. The Recreational Trails Program continues as a "set-aside" fund within the Transportation Alternatives. Trail advocates believe the transportation bill is a win as it keeps funding for state trails grants intact.

- Read the full text of the bill as introduced: <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/EPW-DRIVE-transportation-bill-text.pdf>
- Read an analysis by the League of American Bicyclists: www.bikeleague.org/content/analysis-drive-act
(From American Trails "[Supporting Trails](#)" page)

ASK YOUR REPRESENTATIVE TO JOIN THE TRAILS CAUCUS

It's official - the new Congress has a Trails Caucus. The mission of the caucus is to provide a forum for members of Congress to work together for the creation and conservation of our natural landscape and recreation activities through the preservation of trails. The co-chairs (for whom we are very grateful and who deserve our applause) are Reps. Blumenauer (D-OR), Fortenberry (R-NE), Nolan (D-MN), and Graves (R-GA).

What the American Hiking Society asks *you* to do is to email or call your representative in Congress, tell them that trails are important to you, and that you would like them to consider becoming a member of the Trails Caucus. It would be great if you could mention a particular trail you enjoy that is in his or her district.

Be sure to let them know that to join the Caucus, they can just contact Paul Balmer in Rep. Blumenauer's office at x(5-4811) or Alan Feyerherm in Rep. Fortenberry's office at x(5-4806).

(In Alaska we have just one district and one representative: Rep. Don Young. Contact him here: <http://donyoung.house.gov/contact/>)

(From American Hiking Society's newsletter *Paperless Trail*.)

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

ADVOCACY

- Groups urge Congress to continue funding of trails: <http://tinyurl.com/ogmupzn>

STUDIES AND REPORTS

- Community and Economic Benefits of Bicycling in Michigan: <http://tinyurl.com/pjqkglv>
- The road (and pedestrian/bike facilities) that rebuilt a neighborhood: <http://tinyurl.com/nz6ccnw>
- White Paper: Evaluating the Economic Benefits of Nonmotorized Transportation: <http://tinyurl.com/o7y6tde>
- Active cities 'boost bottom lines': www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-33065010

GRANTS

- Video: Bell Built \$100k winner announced: <http://tinyurl.com/nlof8nc>

RECENT TRAILS-RELATED NEWSLETTERS/MAGAZINES

- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (June): <http://tinyurl.com/oqldzl3>

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- Take a hike: 10 favorite South Carolina trails: www.thestate.com/news/local/article23090127.html
- Best state in America: Pennsylvania, for turning old rails into trails: <http://tinyurl.com/p7h7ge8>
- National Trails Day: 15 spectacular hikes around the USA: <http://tinyurl.com/nwy9cuq>
- Secretary Jewell, NPS head Jarvis Announce 10 New National Recreation Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/qax94a3>
- Federal Judge Slaps BLM for Trails Mismanagement in California: <http://tinyurl.com/ntzx7b6>
- Yosemite's 10 Best Hikes: <http://tinyurl.com/p59lpav>
- From fast and flowy to techy and tough, Oakridge, Oregon, has it all: <http://tinyurl.com/p8hx9gj>
- Smartphone App Now Shows Interactive Map of South Dakota Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/pdsqcwm>
- Coalition for Recreational Trails' 2015 Annual Achievement Awards: <http://tinyurl.com/qatsmvc>
- Chester County, PA, To Post Speed Limit Markers On Some Of Its Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/nduupzj>
- The Daily Bike: A Look at the Ban on Wilderness Mountain Biking: <http://tinyurl.com/o8mrxlo>

- Video (four high school students give back to trails for a senior project): <http://tinyurl.com/pgo4b3b>
- Hiking, Biking and Paddling Trails in the ADK (Adirondacks): <http://tinyurl.com/og2ocgw>
- Economy growing along Northeast US trails: <http://tinyurl.com/ow9wsv2>

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

- Hindustan trekking trails for every level of enthusiast: <http://tinyurl.com/nk2mkrc>
- Conservation Volunteers International Program trail work trip: Torres del Paine National Park, Patagonia, Chile: <http://tinyurl.com/os7pna9>
- Western Australia mountain bike trails on track for world best: <http://tinyurl.com/np22q6a>
- Mountain Biking Video: The Puerto Inca Trail in Peru: <http://tinyurl.com/okzn3rb>
- Boots on! Five of the best multi-day hiking trails across Australia: <http://tinyurl.com/ono8ffh>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL

- On Balance, It's a Thrill: Mountain Unicyclists Take Trails One Wheel at a Time: <http://tinyurl.com/nvknu4r>

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.