

ACTION UPDATE

August 2014

INTERIORWIDE

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>

FAIRBANKS/ESTER AREA

WORK NEAR EQUINOX TRAIL BRINGS PRAISE, CONCERNS

Trail advocates are praising a state proposal to fill three abandoned mining shafts near a section of the Equinox Marathon Trail, but the advocates are also concerned about disturbance caused by the work.

The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has requested bids for its proposal to fill the mining shafts, which are off St. Patrick Road and near a recent reroute of the marathon trail. If all goes as planned, the work would happen between August 25 and September 15. The Equinox Marathon will be held on Saturday, September 20.

Members of the Interior Trails Preservation Coalition (ITPC), including President Stan Justice, have been monitoring the proposal. Justice has been working with DNR personnel to make sure the work to fill the shafts does not damage the trail or the trail experience. In that area, the trail is a tight, windy singletrack trail used mainly by hikers, runners, and mountain bikers.

All involved agree that the shafts pose a safety hazard and should be filled. Of the three shafts, one is 85 feet deep, while the other two are about 14 feet deep. Their openings range in size from 9-feet-by-9-feet to 3-feet-by-4-feet.

DNR personnel have made efforts to protect the trail in the proposal. According to the documents, “Contractor activity may not prevent access or any type of recreational activity. At no time is any heavy equipment allowed on the trail. All travel to the shafts must

adjacent (sic) to the trail. Any rutting or disturbance caused accessing the shafts must be repaired, seeded, and fertilized upon completion of backfill efforts.”

Unknown is how bidders will propose filling the shafts. One way would be to put in a temporary road so that a dump truck could drive in and dump gravel directly into the shafts. The proposal calls for “all travel” to be “adjacent to the trail,” which suggests that the temporary road would have to be next to the trail. Since the shafts are on either side of the trail and the proposal says that equipment must not cross the trail, that may mean that temporary roads would be on either side of the trail. Such work would cause a huge change in the nature of the trail as it leaves St. Patrick Road.

Justice has raised these concerns with DNR personnel and is suggesting possible solutions that would minimize disturbance. He has been assured by agency personnel they will do everything they can “to keep disturbance to a minimum,” and they have promised to have someone on site to keep an eye on the contractor. The ITPC will continue to monitor the situation and work with DNR.

(By Eric Troyer, newsletter editor and member of the ITPC)

BORO MAYOR WON'T TALK TRAILS TO CYCLE CLUB PRESIDENT

Joel Buth, president of Fairbanks Cycle Club and owner of Goldstream Sports, recently sent the following email on July 28 to cycle club members regarding his attempts to talk to Fairbanks Borough Mayor Luke Hopkins. It pertains to motorized multi-use trails in the Ester area.

Message from the FCC President.

I have sent Mayor Luke Hopkins two emails regarding the gated trail access in Ester in early July. I have not received a response.

I called Mayor Luke Hopkins office last Thursday and was told he was out of town and would be in the next day and that he would call me back. I called Mayor Luke Hopkins office on Friday around 2 pm and was told he was in meeting and has some free time around 4 pm to call back. He did not.

As the President of the FCC and local business owner on Ester Dome I would like to find out what the borough will be doing to get the gates opened that are blocking legal public access to trails on the back side of Ester Dome. Club members and many other people have been using this borough easement for years.

Luke Hopkins is blowing off the club and I am not pleased. I am aware that this may be a no win situation for him but that is the job of a public official.

Please contact the Mayor and ask him to respond. His contact info is below.

Mayor

Luke Hopkins

[\(907\) 459-1300](tel:(907)459-1300)

[\(907\) 459-1102](tel:(907)459-1102) FAX

Term expires 10/2015

Mayor@co.fairbanks.ak.us

For more information on the situation, contact Joel Buth (455-6520; pres@fairbanksycleclub.org) or Geoffrey Orth (gcorth@straydogs.us), who has filed suit to protect public access to the trails.

DALTON HIGHWAY

FEDERAL AGENCY TO BUILD TRAILS IN COLDFOOT AREA

The federal Bureau of Land Management plans to build two short trails in Coldfoot. One will be a walking route between the Slate Creek Inn hotel/truck stop and the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center. It will be compliant with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.

“The visitors who come to Coldfoot on organized tours don't have their own vehicles, and they, along with the more pedestrian-inclined independent visitors, currently have to walk along the shoulders of access roads and the Dalton Highway if they want to stroll over to the visitor center,” according to Craig McCaa of the BLM. “This trail will make that a safer and more attractive endeavor.”

The agency is also building an outdoor mining exhibit in Coldfoot.

“It will have a very short (couple hundred yards) access/interpretive trail,” McCaa wrote in an email. “The overall project will take several years to complete.”

STATEWIDE

ALASKA TRAILS WELCOMES FIVE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

In July, the Alaska Trails board voted in 5 new board members – including members from Girdwood, Kodiak, Kenai, Moose Pass and Anchorage. The new board members:

- **Cristin Roehl** is the vice-president of Snomads, Inc., a Homer Alaska based snowmachine club. She is a lifelong Alaskan and active outdoors person.
- **Andy Schroeder** is a founder and executive director of Island Trails Network in Kodiak, a job he has held since 2006.
- **Kristine Bunnell** is a senior planner with Municipality of Anchorage and has trail management experience in California, Texas, and Nevada.
- **Tim George** is a trails specialist with the US Forest Service in Moose Pass. He has extensive trail building experience over the last 15 years in Maine, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, California and now Alaska.
- **Brian Burnett** is the Mountain Service manager at the Alyeska Ski Resort in Girdwood. His many volunteer posts include Girdwood's Nordic Ski Club, Trail Committee, Land Use Committee and the Alyeska Ski Club.

(From Alaska Trails)

STATE SEEKS REPRESENTATIVE FOR NORTHWEST TRAILS

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation is seeking candidates to fill an open board position representing northwestern Alaska on the Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB).

Applicants should have special knowledge, experience and interest in outdoor recreation and grant-funded programs. The primary role of the ORTAB is to assist in evaluating grant proposals for the Recreational Trail Grant and Land and Water Conservation Fund programs. ORTAB members may also be asked for advice on other related subjects, which may include the review of proposals for State Park land acquisitions.

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 at darcy.harris@alaska.gov, or by fax at 907-269-8907. The deadline to apply is Sept. 1, 2014.

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.

RAILROAD PROPOSAL INCLUDES PATHWAY CROSSINGS

August 14 is the deadline for comments on a proposal for statewide railroad crossings durable markings. Current at-grade markings are deficient either due to changes in roadway or pathway configuration, pavement resurfacing, or have worn over time. The purpose of this project is to increase safety, improve visibilities, and bring public at-grade crossings up to standards with the state Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The proposed work would include: Install, upgrade, and replace pavement markings for at-grade railroad crossings with public roadways and pathways, including either surface or inlaid applications using methyl methacrylate (MMA) paint and Mill roadway and pathway for inlaid applications. Construction for the proposed project is anticipated to begin in fall 2014. For more information, contact Carla Smith, Project Manager, at 269-0544 or email Carla.smith@alaska.gov or Kim Campo-Allen, Environmental Impact Analyst, at 269-0533 or email kim.cmapo-allen@alaska.gov. Submit comments to Brian Elliott, Regional Environmental Manager, at (907)269-0539 or email brian.elliott@alaska.gov.

(From Whats' Up? by Peg Tileston)

USE YOUR PERMANENT FUND TO HELP ALASKA TRAILS

Thanks to all those who have donated to Alaska Trails through Pick Click Give. There's still time to donate through your PFD – Donations can be added until August 31.

Don't miss this opportunity to help Alaska Trails build and maintain the trails you enjoy all across Alaska. Your support is critical to our work and we sincerely appreciate your support. Add a donation at: <http://www.pfd.alaska.gov/> (Look for the green button on the lower right)

(From Alaska Trails)

STATEWIDE LINKS

- Fast forward with fast hiking technique: <http://tinyurl.com/nrucg7n>
- Top 10 Alaska hikes: <http://tinyurl.com/kdulfkj>
- Recent Outdoor Explorer radio shows:
 - Minimizing Your Impact: <http://tinyurl.com/kcpkmjs>
 - Chilkoot Trail: <http://tinyurl.com/lgcst4s>
 - Wildflowers: <http://tinyurl.com/lxb4ka8>
- On the Trails: Ralston Island: <http://tinyurl.com/ldfszay>
- Australian Geographic: Hiking the Chilkoot Trail: <http://tinyurl.com/ng2f2gw>
- Parking a hassle as bridge to popular Reed Lakes trailhead closed: <http://tinyurl.com/kpdmok>
- Volunteers work, learn on Trails Day in Homer: <http://tinyurl.com/lopewbj>
- New Singletrack trail takes shape at Soldotna's Tsalteshi Trails: <http://tinyurl.com/pwhqar9>
- Summer solstice at Rabbit Lake near Anchorage: <http://tinyurl.com/m47emev>
- Grayling await anglers willing to hike to Alaska mountain lakes: <http://tinyurl.com/nu2etc4>
- Parks Jobs Prepare Anchorage Kids for Fun, Futures: <http://tinyurl.com/m5mt73z>
- Trails, Salmon Viewing Top Free Anchorage Events: <http://tinyurl.com/pzcd4ek>
- Most scenic hikes in Southcentral Alaska? Try this trio: <http://tinyurl.com/ntkbrza>
- McCarthy's Magic: <http://tinyurl.com/pjh4xsd>

STATEWIDE TRAILS AND PUBLIC LANDS RELATED NEWSLETTERS

- Alaska Lands Update (July): <http://tinyurl.com/lgwtsgq>
- The June edition of Eagle Watch (Alaska State Parks) is done but has not been posted to the Alaska State Parks webpage (<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/>). Check for it later under the "Newsroom" dropdown menu.

NATIONWIDE

ADVOCACY EFFORTS PROTECT FEDERAL TRAILS PROGRAM

The post below is from the International Mountain Biking Association to its members and so refers just to mountain bikers. However, the effort to protect the Recreational Trails Program included many different trail user groups.

Thank you to all who submitted comments to Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA) asking him to protect national trails funding. Hundreds of mountain bikers acted on behalf of IMBA's request that the Senator refrain from introducing an amendment to the federal

transportation bill that would eliminate the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP houses the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which funds trail projects across the U.S. that benefit recreational users, including mountain bikers.

Your letters to the Senator helped shape his decision: he has opted not to introduce the amendment to the Senate Finance Committee. TAP will continue to be funded from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), therefore providing dollars to the RTP. Thank you again for taking action on this issue!

RTP funds are consistently under fire and IMBA works hard as members of a greater coalition endeavoring to keep those funds on the table for recreational user groups, especially because the mountain bike community is particularly adept at utilizing them for trail projects.

IMBA's government affairs team will continue to keep you updated on the status of the RTP as further developments arise and require local support.

The Rails-To-Trails Conservancy also had a story about the advocacy efforts:

<http://tinyurl.com/npelbyb>

TRAILS AWARDS NOMINATIONS DUE IN SEPTEMBER

American Trails is again collecting nominations for its National and International Trails Awards Program. Deadline for nominations is September 15.

The program recognizes contributions of volunteers, professionals, and other leaders who are working for the betterment of trails both nationally and internationally. Awards are given in up to 19 different categories.

Winners will be announced at the 22nd American Trails International Trails Symposium (ITS) Awards Banquet in Portland, Oregon on May 19, 2015. To learn more about the awards and symposium see: <http://tinyurl.com/lfraczx>

NATIONWIDE/WORLDWIDE LINKS

RECENT TRAILS-RELATED E-NEWSLETTERS

- Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter – (July): <http://tinyurl.com/ph287xn>
- Rails-To-Trails Conservancy (July): <http://tinyurl.com/mws85ud>
- American Trails (July): <http://tinyurl.com/kx7bcbd>

STUDIES:

- Lack of exercise, not diet, linked to rise in obesity, Stanford research shows: <http://tinyurl.com/nzc4gct>
- Comparing hiking, mountain biking and horse riding impacts on vegetation and soils in Australia and the United States of America (article for purchase): <http://tinyurl.com/q8rqz6r>
- Study: People Living Near Biking and Walking Paths Get More Exercise: <http://tinyurl.com/om7dp4b>

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

OTHER NATIONAL LINKS:

- 20,000th Recreational Trails Program Project: <http://tinyurl.com/qyf8phm>
- The Trail Modeling and Assessment Platform is a three-year initiative to create the next generation of urban trail planning tools: <http://tinyurl.com/o9xdjf2>
- Looking for solution to trapping near popular Montana ski trails: <http://tinyurl.com/o3cb2yt>
- Top Trails To Hit This Weekend: <http://tinyurl.com/nj8owr5>
- Biking trails in Philadelphia offer new paths for businesses: <http://tinyurl.com/om3auhx>
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Takes National Trail Development to the Next Level with T-MAP: <http://tinyurl.com/qyl7h9p>
- Trailville.com is a trail wiki for the United States and Canada, though only trails in three states are covered so far. Still, it's an interesting idea: www.trailville.com/wiki/Main_Page
- International Mountain Bike Association trail difficulty ratings: <http://tinyurl.com/m88jgkd>

OTHER INTERNATIONAL LINKS:

- Wildlife trails in South Africa are worth it: <http://tinyurl.com/mppvugt>
- Canadian feds pony up \$10 million for recreational trails: <http://tinyurl.com/nfby85j>
- Top 5 Winter Hiking Trails in South Africa: <http://tinyurl.com/ovtyc36>
- Hiking the breathtaking cliffside trails of Italy's Cinque Terre: <http://tinyurl.com/nogqok5>

SLIGHTLY OFF-TRAIL:

- 'The trails are safe': Oakland pig captured, returned to owner: <http://tinyurl.com/n8mjo46>
- On the trail of the monuments men: Border crews cut 20-foot swath on Alaska-Yukon line: <http://tinyurl.com/p6uy5u9>

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 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.