

## APPENDIX 4 — GIRDWOOD VALLEY TRAILS

The following information is based on the Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan, Volume 3 of 4: "Turnagain Arm," adopted as ordinance AO 85-188, December 1985 and the Girdwood Board of Supervisors', Girdwood Trails Committee which expanded and updated much of the information provided in the earlier plan. Their efforts were valuable in understanding the potential use and location of trails in the Girdwood area. Municipal staff from the Department of Community Planning and Development reviewed and edited the text and maps provided by the Girdwood Trails Committee. All of these trails were identified in relation to the recommended land use plan contained in the Girdwood Area Plan that was adopted by the Assembly in February 1, 1995. Virtually all of the trails listed below are located in "Open Space" or "Recreation Reserve." Those few trails that are not located in "Open Space," for example, the northeast end of the Beaver Pond Trail that is in a recommended residential area, could be accommodated in the future in the site planning or platting processes prior to development.

### I. IDITAROD TRAIL

The Iditarod Trail traversed along Turnagain Arm, through the Girdwood Valley, and crossed into the Eagle River drainage at Crow Pass. While the Iditarod Trail was cleared and maintained by the Territorial government around 1910, there are few distinct remnants of the trail in Girdwood known today. Those trails in Girdwood that head to the northeast follow a route similar to that of the Iditarod Trail. These include the Beaver Pond and Wagon trails, Glacier Creek trails, and those trails that run parallel to Alyeska Highway. The most clearly visible segments of the Crow Pass branch lie along Crow Pass Road and in the vicinity of Monarch Mine, near Crow Pass.

The identification of the Iditarod Trail corridor through Girdwood is part of a joint planning effort being carried out by the U. S. National Park Service, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the Municipality of Anchorage, including the Girdwood Board of Supervisors. The corridor study will identify and evaluate trail route alternatives, preferred uses and design. Potential trailhead locations will also be included.

Although there is a degree of uncertainty over the route the Iditarod Trail took in the lower valley, strong evidence was discovered this past year of its upper valley location. The upper valley route generally ran parallel to and up slope of the existing Crow Creek Road.

In the lower valley, the route that has received the most attention to date by the Girdwood Trails Committee is within the Glacier Creek greenbelt corridor through the center of the valley. The trail would leave the Alaska Railroad line and head north on the east side of the Glacier Creek, and cross over to the west side in the lower portion of the Squirrel Cage area. The trail would then proceed up the west bank of the creek past the proposed golf course and expanded townsite area, cross underneath Alyeska Highway, and continue upstream past the school. Near the narrowing of the Glacier Creek floodplain, before its confinement within a steep-walled gorge, the trail would turn away from the creek and head westward to Crow Creek Road where it would align with the recently discovered segment of the Iditarod Trail.

The trail buffer should be a minimum width of 200 feet on either side of the trail, except for those portions of the trail that traverse a developed area, in which case there should be a variable width buffer.

Irrespective of the route ultimately identified, the intent is to develop a trail system that will be readily accessible to residents and visitors that commemorates this early historical travel route from Seward to Interior Alaska. This is a proposed trail.

## II. ALYESKA HIGHWAY TRAIL

### A. LOCATION

The Alyeska Highway trail is lighted, paved and non-motorized and progresses along the west and north side of Alyeska Highway from the Girdwood Station Mall on the Seward Highway to Arlberg Avenue and then along the west side of Arlberg to the Moose Meadows Greenbelt Trail.

### B. VALUE

This paved trail provides a major non-motorized artery for community residents as well as tourists to travel the entire length of the developed portion of the Girdwood Valley, and eliminates the serious safety problems of pedestrians and bicyclists traveling on the highway.

### C. SCOPE

A paved trail was constructed along the west side of the Alyeska Highway during the summers of 1982 and 1983. Another paved section, including an underpass, extended the trail south from Monarch Mine Road to the Girdwood Station Mall on the Seward Highway. It was completed in 1990. The trail is approximately three-and-one-tenth miles long and is eight feet wide, with a two-foot easement on either side. Another lighted, paved section was constructed in 1992 and extends the trail from its intersection with Arlberg Road to the start of the Moose Meadows Greenbelt Trail.

The Seward Highway is scheduled to be relocated approximately between milepost 91 and 95 to parallel the railroad tracks. The old section of the Seward Highway will be utilized as a trail across Bird Hill. A paved trail will be extended from the underpass adjacent to the Girdwood Station Mall to the intersection of the Seward Highway, then turn west, and progress adjacent to the Seward Highway. It will end at Tidewater Creek #2, where it will connect with the new trail across Bird Hill. With the extension of a bike trail from Alyeska Highway to the Bird Hill trail, trail access will be provided from Girdwood to Bird Point. Bird Point is a very scenic promontory along Turnagain Arm, where the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation plans to develop major new public improvements.

### D. LEGAL STATUS

This is an existing and dedicated trail.

## III. MOOSE MEADOWS GREENBELT TRAIL

### A. LOCATION

The Moose Meadows Greenbelt Trail is a lighted, paved non-motorized trail that begins at Moose Meadows. Moose Meadows is the terminus of the Alyeska Highway Trail. The trail progresses along the upper (eastern) woodland edges of Moose Meadows on the west side of Arlberg Avenue to the Alyeska Prince Hotel.

### B. VALUE

The wooded edge of the Moose Meadows serves as a scenic border giving the meadow its definition. Preservation of the edge is necessary to maintain the character of Moose Meadows. The trail through the greenbelt provides bicycling, walking and cross-country skiing opportunities. This trail gives trail users a panoramic view of the north and west sides of Girdwood Valley. This trail also connects with the Winner Creek Trail, and provides access to numerous trails in Moose Meadows in winter. This upland, wooded trail is also useful in summer when the meadows are boggy.

**C. SCOPE**

Arlberg Road is anticipated to be extended in the future to additional resort base areas north of the existing Alyeska Resort property, and eventually to cross Glacier Creek and connect to Crow Creek Road. An access road may also be extended to the base of the Glacier/Winner Creek Mountain massif for to provide for new alpine ski area development. At such time these access facilities are being sited and designed, extending Moose Meadows from Greenbelt Trail should also be included. This trail shall have a variable width buffer with adequate physical separation from the roadway and adjoining development. The roadway should not detract from the trail experience and should be obscured from trail user view by vegetation, terrain, or other natural features. The actual trail design and location should be determined at that time.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

This trail is an existing, dedicated trail.

**IV. WINNER CREEK TRAIL SYSTEM****A. LOCATION**

This non-motorized trail system extends from Alyeska Resort to Winner Creek and beyond, or Upper Winner Creek Valley.

There are currently two trailheads. The old trailhead is located near the Challenge Alaska Sports and Recreation Center. The trail runs north through Alyeska property before crossing onto Municipal property. It then crosses underneath the resort tramway east of the Alyeska Prince Hotel and continues in a northeastward direction to Winner Creek.

The new trailhead is located at the main parking lot at the Alyeska Prince Hotel. A trail route currently traverses the hotel grounds and tramway station before connecting up with the Winner Creek Trail. This trail provides access on a year-round basis to the Winner Creek area. Upon arriving at the rim above Winner Creek, the trail branches in two directions. One branch goes east upstream, while the other heads west downstream. The east branch runs along the east side of Winner Creek and connects over a pass to Twenty-Mile Valley as part of an alternative segment (the Kelly Trail) of the Iditarod Trail. The west branch of the trail provides easy access to a spectacular narrow gorge.

**B. VALUE**

The Winner Creek trail passes through a moss-carpeted hemlock and spruce coastal rain forest, wetlands, avalanche paths and connecting ski trails with occasional views of Mount Alyeska, Max's Mountain, Goat Mountain, and other nearby peaks. Small animals, songbirds, blueberries, mushrooms and wildflowers are present and often plentiful. Signs of moose and black bear can also be seen in the area. Numerous bridges and boardwalks cross over small streams and boggy areas.

**C. SCOPE**

The Winner Creek Trail is the most widely recognized and used hiking trail in Girdwood Valley. It is expected to receive much more use in the future. A number of issues associated with the trail system will need to be addressed. They include:

- Retention and partial relocation of the trail segment between the new and old resort base areas;
- Development of a new trail branch linking the hotel parking lot trailhead to the trail without having to traverse the new hotel grounds;
- Development of a management plan to improve and protect the trail from rutting and erosion caused by heavy usage;
- The need for visual and sound screening along the trail from potential expansion of new lift-supported alpine skiing on the north side of Mount Alyeska; and
- Development of a new trail branch linking the hotel parking lot trailhead to the trail without having to traverse the new hotel grounds;
- Development of a management plan to improve and protect the trail from rutting and erosion caused by heavy usage;

- The need for visual and sound screening along the trail from potential expansion of new lift-supported alpine skiing on the north side of Mount Alyeska; and
- Trail improvements along the east branch of the trail system into the upper valley of Winner Creek, and over into the Twenty-Mile River drainage.

Various parties that have a direct interest and/or land jurisdiction in the affected areas should resolve these issues. Such parties include the Municipality of Anchorage, the Girdwood Board of Supervisors, Alyeska Resort, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the U. S. Forest Service.

The trail system should be maintained for walking, hiking, skiing and skijoring. The section of the trail system located north of the new hotel property should retain an extensive trail buffer to protect wildlife habitat and maintain the aesthetic value of the wilderness experience. The trail buffer should have a minimum width of 200 feet on either side of the trail.

#### **D. LEGAL STATUS**

This is an existing, but not dedicated trail. The trail is designated on U.S. Forest Service lands.

### **V. STUMPY'S WINTER TRAIL**

#### **A. LOCATION**

This two and one-quarter mile winter trail can be accessed at either the parking lot at the north end of the airport or from the southwest edge of Moose Meadows. The easiest and most commonly used access is to cross the Moose Meadows Creek footbridge at the parking lot at the north end of the airport and immediately cross the wellhouse road to the trail heading northeast. The trail intersects Stumpy's Summer Trail in the sixth meadow, and one mile before the Winner Creek Gorge Bridge. It enters the forest one-quarter of a mile from the bridge and follows the top of the ridge above Glacier Creek the rest of the way.

#### **B. VALUE**

Both Stumpy's Trails were named after Sewell Faulkner, a long-time Girdwood resident, who constructed them to access the northern reaches of Glacier Creek and the Winner Creek area. This trail, the open meadows and the coastal rain forest it traverses, are considered to be the jewel of Girdwood. The trail is too wet and ill defined for use any other time than winter. It is an excellent natural cross-country ski trail, and is commonly used for skijoring and dog mushing. It meanders through eight open meadows that provide spectacular scenic views of the mountains and glaciers surrounding Girdwood Valley. Narrow bands of spruce/hemlock rain forest separate each meadow. The trail is narrow and there is no access for motorized use. When this route is linked with the Winner Creek Trail for a trip to the Winner Creek Gorge and back, it provides a five-mile round trip toward the head of the valley. Since most of the trail is located on open meadowlands, it provides excellent skiing in early winter before snow depth in the forest will allow decent skiing on other trails. The same follows in the spring when the forest is bare and icy and the meadows continue to provide excellent skiing. The trail gradually gains in elevation from the trailhead to the Winner Creek Gorge and the return trip provides several long, low-grade downhill runs.

#### **C. SCOPE**

The series of meadows and forest the trail traverses is classified Open Space and Recreation Reserve in the Girdwood Area Plan. This area is reserved for multi-purpose recreational use, focusing primarily on trail related uses. However, with increasing usage will come the need to develop a formalized management plan for the area. The primary function of the management plan will be to allow for multiple recreational uses while avoiding user conflicts, as well as to program and implement trail improvements. Such improvements will become necessary to prevent environmental degradation likely to result from increasing use, unless appropriate measures are taken. The trailhead will eventually need to be relocated away from the north end of the airport over to the main parking area near the new resort hotel. The resulting trail re-alignment can be readily done along the water line easement that extends water from AWWU's wells to the resort hotel.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

This trail is existing, but not dedicated.

**VI. STUMPY'S SUMMER TRAIL****A. LOCATION**

Stumpy's Summer Trail was at one time an old animal trail. This trail is two and one-half miles in length and runs along the east side of Glacier Creek to the Winner Creek Gorge. The trail begins at the parking lot adjacent to the gate at the end of the access road at the north end of the airport. Cross Moose Meadow Creek on the footbridge and follow the road (the trail is the road at this point) one-third of a mile to the wellhouse. The actual trail begins behind the wellhouse. The first one-half mile is a narrow trail that follows Glacier Creek upstream through alders and willows. At a large bend in the creek, the trail leaves the creek, turns east, and climbs approximately 100 feet above the creek, entering a hemlock and spruce coastal rain forest. The trail winds through the forest for one-half mile before entering the first of five wet meadows separated by narrow bands of hemlock rain forest. In the third meadow the trail intersects with Stumpy's Winter Trail. From the intersection of those two trails it is one mile to the Winner Creek Gorge Bridge across Winner Creek.

**B. VALUE**

This trail is primarily a summer hiking trail and provides the driest route on the valley floor to the Four Corners area. The terminus of this trail also intersects with the terminus of the northwest section of Winner Creek Trail at the Four Corners/Winner Creek Gorge Bridge and provides a five-mile round trip up the valley. The trees are primarily hemlocks with a few scattered spruces. Moose and bear sign are common. In summer, the meadows are beautiful with many of wildflowers and panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and glaciers. In the fall, blueberries are plentiful.

**C. SCOPE**

This trail is located in the Recreation Reserve in the Girdwood Area Plan.

As noted previously, the Recreation Reserve area is preserved for multiple outdoor recreation activities. The lower portion of the trail is also protected by the Glacier Creek greenbelt easement that is 200 feet wide on each side of the creek.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

This trail is existing, but not dedicated.

**VII. GLACIER CREEK TRAIL SYSTEM****A. LOCATION**

The Glacier Creek Trail progresses for two-and-one-quarter miles along the west bank of Glacier Creek within a greenbelt corridor from the railroad at the Old Girdwood Townsite to the Girdwood Elementary School site and continues upstream until it reaches the Four Corners area. From here, the trail would cross the creek between the confluences of Crow and Winner Creeks, and continue up to the head of the valley.

**B. VALUE**

This trail follows a direct north/south route along Glacier Creek through riparian woodland habitat consisting of cottonwood, alder, willow and scattered black spruce. Glacier Creek has significant scenic, recreational and environmental value. All five species of anadromous salmon native to Alaska spawn in Glacier Creek or its tributaries and may be viewed at certain times from June through September. It is not uncommon to see moose, beaver, river otter, water birds and other wildlife along this trail. This trail connects the Old Girdwood Townsite with the New Girdwood Townsite and the Girdwood Elementary School.

Past the Girdwood Elementary School, the Glacier Creek Trail connects to the Tiny Creek and associated trail system and, to the Northend Connector Trail that crosses Glacier Creek and connects to the Iditarod Trail and Stumpy's Summer Trail. At its south end, it connects to the Valley South-end Connector Trail.

### **C. SCOPE**

The Glacier Creek Greenbelt Trail will make up the central spine of the off-road trail system in Girdwood Valley. The nature and design of the trail will vary as it traverses the length of the valley. The lower section of the trail starts out in a large open space-designated area where nature and habitat are the primary focus. Existing 200-foot greenbelt easements add additional protection to the trail and buffer area.

In the middle section, the trail will enter an area that encompasses a proposed golf course, and farther upstream, the community's commercial and civic/institutional core. Although natural features are to be preserved, the trail system is intended to be more integrated with the surrounding land use. The actual trail design and integration with surrounding new development will occur through master planning and design of the development areas. Residents and visitors alike anticipate this portion of the trail system to receive an extensive amount of use. Trail design standards will be developed accordingly.

The upper sections of the trail will once again become more nature and habitat oriented. The trail setting will change along with the stream course as the wide relatively flat floodplain narrows into a steep-walled gorge. The trail standards should be designed for less extensive improvements, reflecting the natural setting. The trail and buffer are planned to be located within the existing 200-foot wide greenbelt easement that is located on each side of the stream.

Certain key facilities will be needed for this trail. The most critical will be bridges. One is planned at the lower end near the Alaska Railroad. Another would be located in the middle section that may also serve as a cart path for the planned golf course. A third bridge would be at the north end of the community development area; and finally, a bridge crossing Glacier Creek in the Four Corners area would provide hikers with a safe crossing of the stream to provide a connection to the Winner Creek area trail systems.

### **D. LEGAL STATUS**

This trail is existing, but not dedicated.

## **VIII. TINY CREEK AND ASSOCIATED TRAILS**

### **A. LOCATION**

This trail system is located between Crow Creek Road and Glacier Creek just north of the Girdwood Elementary School site. The trail system will be linked with the California Creek Greenbelt Trail, the school site, Crow Creek Road Trail, Glacier Creek Greenbelt Trail, and eventually with the Northend Trail Connector across Glacier Creek, thus creating a looped system. The trail system will generally follow the small creek system in the area, as well as interconnect with five nearby open wetland meadows.

### **B. VALUE**

The trail system will provide several linkages with other trails and provide pedestrian access to the school site from the north end of the community development area. The trail system will also provide a pleasant outdoors-recreational experience. Although the area it traverses is proposed for future residential development, the trail and related buffer area will be located in open space-designated areas. These areas offer a diversity of settings and outdoor experiences that include small streams; mixed spruce/hemlock forests, and open wetland meadows that provide broad vistas of the surrounding mountains. The trail and open space system will be a very attractive and beneficial complement to future residential development in the area.

**C. SCOPE**

Although the trail system is located in areas reserved as open space, a recommended buffer of 100 feet should be preserved between the trail and any residential development.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

This is a proposed trail.

**IX. BEAVER POND TRAIL****A. LOCATION**

This trail runs two-and three-quarter miles south to north along the base of the mountains on the west side of Girdwood Valley from its intersection with the Valley South-End Connector Trail and the Alaska Railroad tracts at the southwest end of the Girdwood Valley, to the California Creek trailhead at Crow Creek Road.

**B. VALUE**

The lower one-half mile is primarily a winter trail because it traverses through marsh and wetlands. It provides access along the base of the mountain massif from the beaver pond to the interior of the valley, utilizing several connector trails that connect to the Alyeska Highway Trail. These connector trails are approximately one-half mile in length at the northern end, and one-quarter mile in length at the southern end of the trail. The trail is fairly dry as it leaves the trailhead in a cottonwood forest and passes through black spruce stands to wetter open areas around the beaver ponds. There are excellent opportunities for berry pickers to harvest blueberries, raspberries and salmon berries in the fall. Moose are very common along the trail. Goshawks are frequently heard, if not seen, in the black spruce stands. There are native stocks of Dolly Varden in the beaver pond, and bald eagles, peregrine falcons, beavers and ducks can be found along the trail three seasons of the year.

**C. SCOPE**

This trail is important to residents on the west side of Girdwood Valley for transportation, as well as providing recreational and wildlife viewing opportunities for other Girdwood residents. The Beaver Pond Trail is an excellent cross-country ski trail in winter and is part of a trail loop that is connected to other trails to make a circle around the Girdwood Valley. As the area west of Alyeska Highway develops, this trail will greatly increase in use. Consequently, this trail should be provided with a two hundred-foot buffer to preserve wildlife habitat, and to protect it from future encroachment from development. The buffer may be less in certain areas, to a minimum of one hundred feet, as long as adjoining development is obscured from trail users by vegetation, terrain or other natural features.

A trail link is also recommended between the south end of the Beaver Pond Trail and the State Division of Parks parking area, which is being planned near the crossing of the Alaska Railroad by the Seward Highway. (A current section of highway will be converted into a parking area when the new realigned portion of highway is completed.)

The new trail link would run in a southwesterly direction for a distance of approximately one-half mile from the beaver pond to the highway. The trail would be sited along the base of the mountain massif just above a tidal slough. With this added connection, the Beaver Pond Trail would gain an additional trailhead at the south end of the trail system.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

This trail is existing, but not dedicated.

## X. CALIFORNIA CREEK TRAIL

### A. LOCATION

This trail extends the length of California Creek from its confluence with Glacier Creek at the Alaska Railroad tracks at the south end of Girdwood Valley to Chugach State Park's California Creek Trailhead on Crow Creek Road. The trail continues upstream into Chugiak State Park. It travels two miles on the west side of California Creek to the Forest Fair Park and the Alyeska Highway. The trail then crosses the highway and continues on for another seven-tenths of a mile to Crow Creek Road. From there, it crosses Crow Creek Road and splits into two separate trails going upstream on California Creek. Between Alyeska Highway and Crow Creek road, it provides access to the Girdwood Elementary School and the New Girdwood Townsite.

### B. VALUE

This trail provides access to many recreation areas such as Chugach State Park, the Forest Fair Community Park, and stream corridor and reserves along California Creek, while providing space for biking, jogging, cross-country skiing and hiking. The trails above Crow Creek Road traverse through old growth coastal rain forest to alder thickets and eventually open alpine tundra. It is possible to access Penguin Creek across a narrow steep pass. These trails access excellent mushroom and berry picking areas in the fall. The northern section of this trail is unique in that it accesses remote wild lands that are very close to an urban setting. The southern portion of the trail, below the Alyeska Highway, is more delicate and limited primarily to winter use since it traverses wet marshes. Summer use of the southern end of California Creek trail would be limited due to these natural wet conditions. Therefore, it is recommended that a summer and/or future winter trail be located on the West Side of the "Squirrel Cage" area.

### C. SCOPE

Greenbelt easements currently exist at the northern and southern ends of the trail system that vary in width from 125-350 feet on each side of the stream. These easements provide an appropriate trail buffer. The portion of California Creek Trail that crosses through the platted Townsite core area does not have the same greenbelt easements.

The Girdwood townsite core area is located along the middle section of both California and Glacier Creeks. Current and proposed uses along this stretch are commercial, residential, public/institutional and commercial recreation. Trail use will be much heavier and more diverse. Consequently, trail and greenbelt design should be integrated with the surrounding area development.

Alyeska Highway and Crow Creek Road bisect the California Creek Trail. In order to provide safe and unimpeded pedestrian movement across Alyeska Highway, an underpass will be needed. Although Crow Creek Road is currently a narrow unimproved gravel roadway where it crosses California Creek, the current bridge will eventually be replaced and the road upgraded. Consideration for a safe pedestrian trail crossing should be included in the design of the improved bridge and roadway.

### D. LEGAL STATUS

This trail is existing, but not dedicated.



## XI. CALIFORNIA CREEK TO IDITAROD TRAIL CONNECTION

### A. LOCATION

This trail starts on the northeast side of California Creek approximately 2,000 feet upstream from Crow Creek Road. The trail generally runs parallel to the road above the proposed residential area on the west side of Crow Creek Road for approximately one mile. The trail then turns east towards the road and connects with the old Iditarod Trail. The trail would provide a connection from the Beaver Pond Trail and California Creek Greenbelt Trail to the Iditarod Trail.

### B. VALUE

This trail would basically be a continuation of the Beaver Pond Trail along the base of the mountain massif on the west side of the valley from the California Creek Greenbelt to the old Iditarod Trail. Primary trail use would be hiking and nature walks, similar in character to the Beaver Pond Trail.

### C. SCOPE

This trail will be important to future nearby residents on the west side of Crow Creek Road, as well as to others who traverse this portion of the west side of the valley for its wildlife and scenic viewing. Vegetation should only be cleared to serve the needs of the trail uses while preserving the existing characteristics of the natural surroundings.

The trail should be provided with a two hundred-foot buffer to preserve the wildlife habitat, and to protect it from future encroachment from development. The buffer may be less in certain areas, to a minimum of one hundred feet, as long as adjoining development is obscured from trail users by vegetation, terrain or other natural features.

### D. LEGAL STATUS

This is a proposed trail.

## XII. NORTH END CONNECTOR TRAIL

### A. LOCATION

This trail connector crosses Glacier Creek on the north side of the Girdwood Community from the Glacier Creek Trail to the beginning of Stumpy's Summer Trail at the north end of the airport.

### B. VALUE

The greenbelt trail provides the only connecting loop with trails on the east and west side of Girdwood Valley at the north end of the community. The greenbelt would provide open space and recreation opportunities as well as a connector loop as development occurs. Roadways and driveways across the trail should be minimized to avoid disturbance of and conflicts with trail users.

### C. SCOPE

No vegetation should be removed except for trail clearing. One pedestrian bridge crossing over Glacier Creek would unify the network of trails on the community's northern end. This greenbelt should have a variable width buffer with adequate physical separation from the roadway and adjoining development. The roadway should not detract from the trail experience and should be obscured from trail users by vegetation, terrain or other natural features.

### D. LEGAL STATUS

This trail is a proposed trail.

### XIII. CROW CREEK ROAD TRAIL

#### A. LOCATION

This trail would follow Crow Creek Road for four and one-half miles from California Creek to the Crow Pass Trailhead. The trail could be located directly adjacent to the gravel road as part of shoulder (bike lane) or road improvements. Another alternative would be to have the trail physically separated from the roadway within the adjoining Crow Creek Road Greenbelt. The separation would enhance the rustic experience sought by many trail users.

#### B. VALUE

The Crow Creek Road area has exceptional scenic and recreation value. The existing greenbelt easement will serve to preserve the character along Crow Creek Road while providing a visual buffer from future residential development. Crow Creek Road provides an opportunity for motorists, bikers, and joggers to drive through sections of a hemlock/spruce coastal rain forest and view birds and wildlife unique to that habitat. The area is also popular with blueberry and mushroom pickers in the fall, and fiddlehead fern collectors in the spring. The road provides the only access to the Crow Creek Mine, listed as a National Historic Site. It is also the only vehicle route to the Crow Pass trailhead.

#### C. SCOPE

Within the 100-foot wide greenbelt on either side of the road right of way, no vegetation should be removed except for trail clearing and access drives to private property.

Future upgrading of Crow Creek Road will provide safe, pleasant, and, preferably, separate pedestrian access, as well as room for vehicle usage.

The current alignment should be used in road design to minimize the amount of vegetation that would have to be cleared. Driveway and roadway widths should be minimized where they cross the greenbelt.

#### D. LEGAL STATUS

This is a proposed trail.

### XIV. CROW CREEK GREENBELT TRAIL

#### A. LOCATION

The Crow Creek Greenbelt Trail descends toward Glacier Creek from Crow Creek Road along the southwest side of Crow Creek. The trail currently begins just inside the entrance to Crow Creek Mine.

#### B. VALUE

The trail provides a pleasant forested walk down to Glacier Creek. Along the way, the low thunder of Crow Creek taking a 100-foot plunge over a rock ledge can be heard. A short side trip from the trail will take a hiker to the precipice of the waterfall.

From the Crow Creek Falls, the trail descends into the Four Corners area. This is where the confluence of Crow, Glacier and Winner Creeks all come together in narrow, steeply walled gorges. As the Crow Creek Greenbelt Trail nears Glacier Creek, the Glacier Creek Greenbelt Trail will connect to it. Near this point, the view of Winner Creek tumbling into Glacier Creek can be seen. A careful observer will also find old evidence of turn-of-the-century gold mining activity in this area.

#### C. SCOPE

Most of this trail is located within designated Park area and protected from encroachment. However, there are still active federal mining claims over a portion of the area, to include the Crow Creek Falls. The area covered by the claims is outside the jurisdiction of the State or Municipality.

The claims are owned by the Crow Creek Mine, the currently active historical mine just upstream of the greenbelt trail. The owners of the mining claims intend to use the claims in the same manner as they have been mining upstream, with small dredging and sluicing operations. The general public is allowed access into the claims area for hiking and viewing, as long as there is no interference with mining operations.

#### **D. LEGAL STATUS**

This is an existing, but not dedicated trail.

### **XV. VIRGIN CREEK TRAIL**

#### **A. LOCATION**

The Virgin Creek Trail extends one and one-half miles from the southeastern end of Alyeska Basin Subdivision on the east side of Girdwood Valley to the Alaska Railroad line at the southern end of the valley. The trail begins at the end of Virgin Creek Drive in the Alyeska Basin Subdivision. From there, it extends east up Virgin Creek. The trail to the southwest begins on the north ridge above the Creek drainage and meanders one-half mile along the ridge-top above the creek through dense coastal rain forest to a site with a clearing where a cabin used to be located. One hundred yards past the site, the trail intersects with the Glacier Creek Greenbelt. It then turns south through a low wet area for one mile and intersects with the proposed Valley South-End Greenbelt Connector Trail.

#### **B. VALUE**

The Virgin Creek Trail may once have been part of the Iditarod Trail. It passes through dense stands of very large hemlock and spruce that make up the coastal rain forest. The understory is open and primarily vegetated with blueberry bushes on the ridge top, alder, and devil's club in the low areas. This is not a good winter trail because the dense forest canopy limits snow cover on the ground. However, this is a relatively dry trail other times of the year, which make it excellent for hiking, bird watching and wildlife viewing. Moose are frequently sighted along this trail. It is not uncommon to see small mammals, porcupines, owls and songbirds as well as bear signs. In addition to access to the Virgin Creek Stream Corridor, this trail provides access to the Wagon Trail, Alyeska Basin Trail System and Glacier Creek Trail.

#### **C. SCOPE**

Segments of this trail may be part of the original Iditarod Trail, with at least one known historical site. It is also an excellent trail to view wildlife, and to view and experience the large trees of a climax coastal rain forest. This trail may have to be coordinated with development of a golf course and other uses as noted in the Girdwood Area Plan. The entire trail, except for that portion to be integrated into the golf course, will be protected by a 200-foot easement. The portion integrated into the golf course will have an easement of at least 100 feet in width.

#### **D. LEGAL STATUS**

This is an existing, but not dedicated trail.

### **XVI. WAGON TRAIL**

#### **A. LOCATION**

This trail extends north three miles from the southeastern corner of Girdwood Valley along the eastern edge of the valley, next to the base of the mountains. The trail begins one mile southeast of the Old Girdwood Townsite in evergreen trees adjacent to the gravel pit next to the railroad tracks (one half mile off the Seward Highway at milepost 89). The trail cuts through dense hemlock/spruce coastal rain forest for 2.5 miles until reaching Virgin Creek at the end of Virgin Creek Drive in the Alyeska Basin Subdivision.

**B. VALUE**

This area was used by the railroad to log for railroad ties. An old railroad construction camp located on the first hill above the tracks. A stove and miscellaneous relics are still scattered around. The trail is wet in spring, summer, and fall. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are good after heavy snowfalls. This trail has historical value because of its possible connection with the Iditarod Trail and its part in construction of the original Alaska Railroad. It also has value in that it accesses a variety of different valuable wildlife habitats. The location of the trail provides a good opportunity to view a variety of wildlife to including moose, black bear, coyote, beaver, porcupines, eagles and other birds. It follows the historical wagon trail along the eastern mountain face, passing through natural scenic areas to the resort. It also connects with the Virgin Creek Trail, and the Valley South-End Greenbelt Connector Trail on the north side of the railroad tracks, adjacent to the gravel pit.

**C. SCOPE**

At present, the south end of the trail dead-ends at the railroad line west of the State gravel material site. Eventually, a trailhead will be established near the Seward Highway, and the Wagon Trail will need to be extended to it provide proper access to the southern end of the trail. This trail has a 200-foot easement, which, with future road development, may be reduced to 100 feet in necessary areas. An access to the north end of the Wagon Trail that does not conflict with private property needs to be provided.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

This is an existing, but not dedicated trail.

**XVII. VALLEY SOUTH END CONNECTOR TRAIL****A. LOCATION**

This trail connector runs parallel along the north side of the Alaska Railroad line from the end of the Beaver Pond Trail to the Alyeska Highway Trail. It connects with the Alyeska Highway Trail on the west side of the highway, crosses underneath and runs to the east end of Alyeska Highway Trail. At this point, it turns north and runs parallel to Alyeska Highway, crosses the railroad line, then turns east and runs parallel along north side of railroad track to the south end of the Wagon Trail Trailhead adjacent to the gravel pit. This trail connector is winter access only because the section from the south end of Glacier Creek Trail to the Wagon Trail Trailhead is boggy.

**B. VALUE**

The greenbelt trail provides the only connecting loop with trails on the east and west side of Alyeska Highway at the south end of the valley. This connector greenbelt would provide open space and recreation opportunities as development occurs. Roadway and driveway crossings should be minimized to avoid disturbance of, and conflicts with, the trail.

**C. SCOPE**

The number and width of access drives should be kept to a minimum. One pedestrian bridge, running parallel and north of the railroad bridge over Glacier Creek, would unify the network of trails. This greenbelt should be a minimum of 100 feet in width and adjoining development should be obscured from trail users by vegetation, terrain, or other natural features.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

This is a proposed trail.

**XVIII. ALYESKA BASIN SUBDIVISION PARK AND DRAINAGE RESERVES**

**A. LOCATION**

These are a series of intermittent trails located on existing park and drainage reserves throughout the Alyeska Basin Subdivision. They are accessed from the local street system. One of the reserves located west of Alta Drive also provides a corridor for a winter trail that crosses a series of wetland meadows in a southwesterly direction toward Glacier Creek, where it links up with the Virgin Creek Trail.

**B. VALUE**

These trails provide an off-road alternative to pedestrian travel throughout the subdivision.

**C. SCOPE**

These areas provide drainage for the subdivision. At some time in the future when alternative drainage is installed, they may provide an extended trail function.

**D. LEGAL STATUS**

These are existing, dedicated trails.

**XIX. FUTURE RESIDENTIAL TRAILS**

**A. LOCATION**

As residential areas develop, trails should be planned to provide a continuous network connecting all major trails, local neighborhood parks, reserves and stream corridors. Such elements should be shown on the development plans for site plan review and platted prior to development.

**B. VALUE**

These neighborhood trails are essential for providing safe pedestrian access throughout the valley, while maintaining the lifestyle established by the Girdwood community.

**C. SCOPE**

These trails should be designed to avoid crossing arterial roadways, yet provide easy accessibility to all members of the neighborhood. Ideally, the trails would parallel roads with enough separation to allow for year-round use. In some cases it might be better to put a trail through easements of adjoining back yards. In areas of extensive use, these trails should be paved to an eight-foot width with a two-foot clearance on either side. Where trails remain unpaved, six feet would be the minimum allowable width.

