

Far North Bicentennial Park: Trail Improvement Plan
W.O. D59813

Horseback Ride with Park Concessionaire

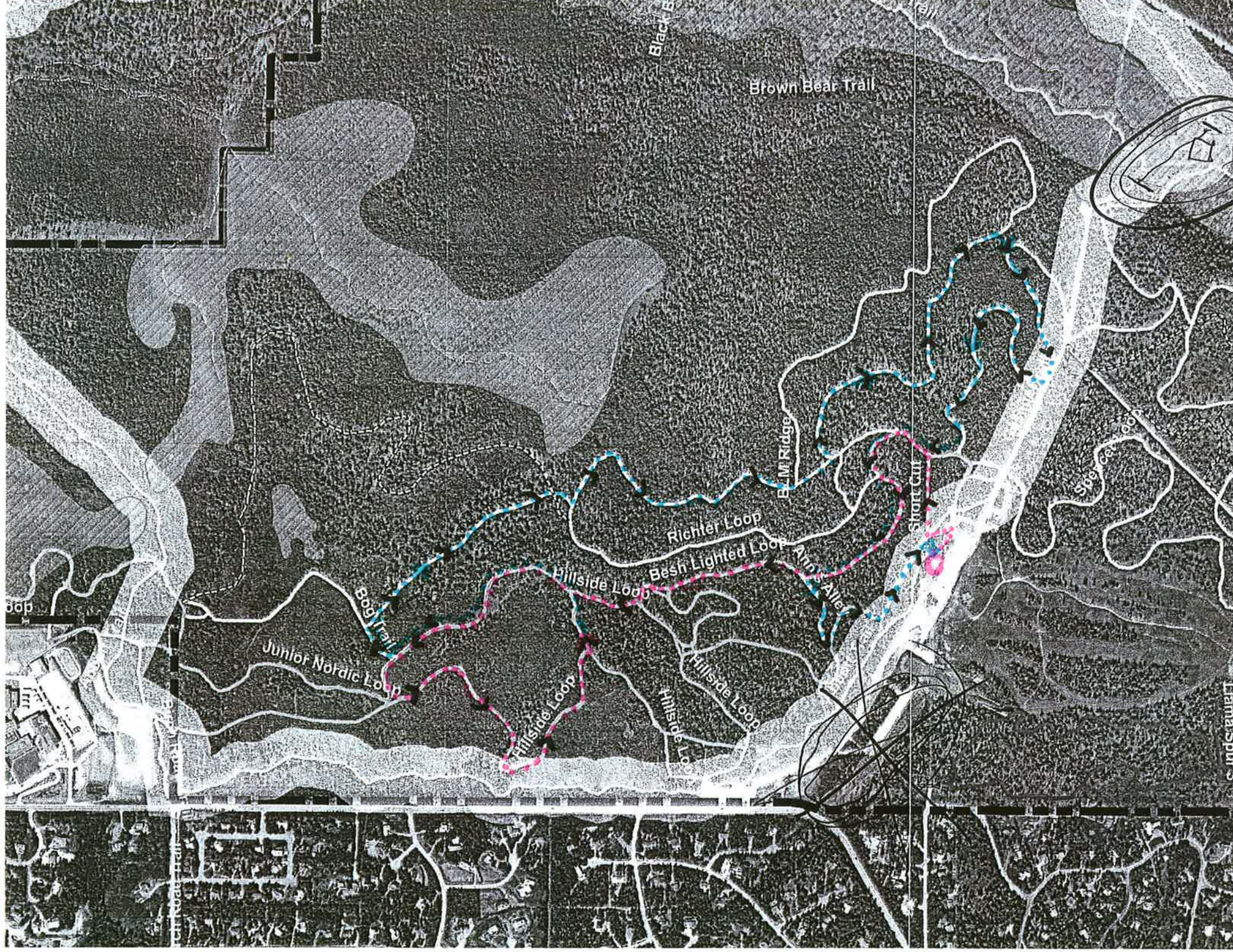
October 3, 2008

1:00pm - 3:00pm

Riders: Monique Anderson (Parks & Rec); Holly Spoth-Torres (Parks & Rec); Blain Anderson; Kevin Doniere (DOWL)

- The Park Concessionaire for Horseback Riding (Horse Trekking Alaska) took us out on a trail ride starting from the Hilltop Ski Area parking lot – (the little building to the west of the parking lot: caretaker’s house).
- Peggy was our guide and led us from the caretaker’s house to the Besh Lighted Loop to the Short Cut back onto Besh Lighted Loop; link over to Hillside Lighted Loop; around the Hillside Lighted Loop passed the Junior Nordic Loop to the Coaches Cutoff; back onto the Hillside Lighted Loop Trail; turned onto the Bog Trail and then onto the Richter Link; onto Richter Loop; turned left to get onto the BLM Ridge trail; then went on a social trail connection from BLM Ridge to the Double Bubble – (going the opposite way of ski traffic flow); onto Double Bubble toward the S. Gasline Trail continuing on Double Bubble (Spencer Loop); and then back onto Besh Lighted Loop; through Ann’s Alley (shortcut); back onto Besh Lighted Loop and then back to the start at the caretaker’s house (see attached map).
- She noted that her favorite trail was the BLM Ridge Trail. These trails are narrower in character with some nice distant views.
- Peggy said her ideal trail was 5’ – 6’ wide cleared trail (trail tread could be narrower) with open forest, distant views for her and her riders to enjoy, open site distance for wildlife safety, a tie post, and a place to water her horses. She has been avoiding the creek because of the bear/human conflicts that have happened along the creek corridor this summer. For less experienced groups, wider trails are better in the event that the group needs to be turned around.
- She noted that there wasn’t any trail surface that the horses didn’t like. She noted that if the trail does get really ‘rooty’ or ‘boggy’ then she turns around and goes a different way. There has to be a lot of roots for her to turn her horses around. She also found out that the Bog Trail was just too ‘boggy’ and soft for her horses to go through.
- When Peggy has seen a bear (black or brown), she usually gets off her horse and turns the group around to avoid any conflicts with the bear. She noted that one black bear followed her group for a mile as they walked their horses back to the caretaker’s house.
- Some off-leash dogs are okay, however off-leash dogs are not permitted in this area of FNBP. She also noted that off-leash dogs can scare the horses when they are off in the woods without the horses knowing they are there.
- Peggy thought there should be some more education for trail users on using the trails and how to act when they see a horse. She noted that if people with dogs could just control their dogs while they passed, it would make it easier for everyone.
- Peggy noted that over 800 people were taken out on guided horseback rides this summer (June – October).

- She also noted that they go out on the trails at least once a month and sometimes as much as every other week to clean up horse manure. She also mentioned that they had been cleaning up a lot of bear scat this summer.
- There is a conflict between horse riders and fast mountain bike users. She thought that there needed to be some more education on biker etiquette while using the multi-use trails.
- They (Horse Trekking Alaska) noted it would be helpful to have a water source at the caretaker's house.
- Peggy mentioned that it would be great to have a designated trail for horses only. Two loop trails of 4-5 miles each that could be utilized to do a 1 hour ride or a 2 hour ride if going on both loops.
- Also she said that conflicts are few before 4 PM. After 4 PM, as well as on the weekends, the trail user conflicts increase.
- As for trail surfaces, Peggy noted that bridges were fine as long as they were wide and solid. If they wiggled or moved underfoot, the horses shied away from them.
- Any new object on the trail causes horses considerable worry. They get to know trails, and with anything new or different on the trails, such as flagging, new signs, etc. this can cause the horses to run. (We should definitely take note of this for trail work). Horses will see warning signs if given good sight distances; any surprises are bad.
- As for width, the reason she likes the 5-6 foot trail width is that it is narrow enough to keep horses from easily passing each other, but still allows turning around if a bear or something else is encountered.
- Peggy said she'd love a 'horse only' trail. This might be provided by alternating use days or by closure to bikes during certain hours of the day to help trail rides.
- Blain said that he wouldn't consider a 'horse only' trail specifically, since recent research shows that shared use actually helps maintain horse trails by compacting the loosened tread. Mountain bike users do this nicely.
- Peggy noted that she would like to see an area with a picnic table for their half day rides where they have their 'wrangler' lunch.
- The maximum group size is between 10-11 horses for guided rides.
- They do trail rides in FNBP starting on Memorial Day (May 28) and ending October 31st depending on the weather conditions. They usually start rides at 10am and then go through to 7pm (last ride goes out at 5pm).
- They avoided using Black Bear Trail because of the high bear activity this summer in the park and specifically in this area.



Brown Bear Trail

Black B...

BLM Ridge

Richter Loop

Besh Lighted Loop

Hillside Loop

Junior Nordic Loop

Bog Trail

Hillside Loop

Hillside Loop

Hillside Lo

Short Cut

Sagehen Loop

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1471 road trail

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