



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Department

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519
Tel 907-343-4355

URL www.muni.org/departments/parks



Memorandum

Date: April 13, 2017

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Joshua Durand, Parks Superintendent

From: Maeve Nevins Lavtar, Senior Park Planner

Project: Action Item: **PRC 17-16: Singletrack Advocates**
Hillside Trails and Improvements Proposal

Introduction

Singletrack Advocates (STA) proposes to fund, plan, design, construct and maintain a 6-8 mile extension of the existing Far North Bicentennial Park (FNBP) singletrack trails—soft-surface, narrow trails sustainably-built for mountain and fat biking, running, walking, hiking, snowshoeing, bird and wildlife viewing and skiing. They plan to begin to construct the project in phases starting as early as this July 2017 (permitting pending) and complete by the fall of 2018.

Background

STA formed in the fall of 2004. They utilized their first official partnership with Alaska Trails and the MOA Parks and Recreation Department in 2005 to bring representatives from the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) to teach them how to build sustainable trails. The one-mile Brown Bear trail in the Far North Bicentennial Park was completed that summer. Since then, an additional 24 miles of Singletrack trails have been funded, designed, constructed and maintained to date by STA in Anchorage, with 9 miles in the Hillside area and 16 miles in Kincaid Park. STA has raised over \$600,000 in private contributions, grants and thousands of hours of volunteer time to construct the first 24 miles of trails. The trails provide a community-wide recreation amenity. Community events such as the Tuesday Night Bonny Sosa Running Races and the Arctic Bike Club Mountain Bike Series now utilize the existing trails.

Purpose

STA has perceived a need in the community for more 4-season narrow multi-use trail alternatives to the wide-corridor Nordic ski trails. The existing STA trails have thus far withstood thousands of users from various recreational backgrounds. The Mighty Bikes youth mountain bike program has grown from 10 kids in 2000 to 300 (plus a waitlist) in 2016.

The STA trails offer a recreation product that serves a growing population of both mountain bikers and fat bikers. The percentage of winter-use fat bikers is rapidly growing. There is a demand to provide multi-use groomed winter trails that would support fat biking. Consequently, the Department has developed a maintenance agreement with STA that allows for trail grooming and maintenance of the trails (similar to the agreement the department has with NSAA).

With the growth has come a strong desire to reduce congestion along the high traffic existing trails to improve user safety. Community riders have also improved their skill levels and are now requesting more technical and challenging terrain. According to local real estate officials, sales have steadily increased near parks with singletrack trails. STA wishes to continue to develop Anchorage and Alaska as a world class mountain bike destination.

Planning and Public Involvement

The Hillside trail proposal has been shared with several agencies, clubs, the general public, and user groups that use FNBP. The proposal was presented to the FNBP Users Group and has received support from the Hillside Community Council, the Hillside Ski Area and the Nordic Ski Club (NSAA). STA presented the project initially to the Parks and Recreation Commission as an informational item at the January 12, 2017 meeting.

Project Details

Approximately 6-8 miles of singletrack trails are proposed as an extension to the existing 9 mile Far North Bicentennial Park singletrack trail network. The new trails would be developed within the FNBP standard Type I and Type II design definitions. There would be three (3) intermediate level “flow” trails, machine cut and hand finished with sustainable trail design practices similar to existing STA trails. These flow trails would total about 3.3 miles of total trail ranging from 0.8 miles to 1.5 miles in segment length.

An additional four (4) new advanced level “technical” trails would be constructed. These trails would utilize hand cut construction practices for minimal disturbance to

the park, an example would be the “Brown Bear” trail in FNBP. These technical trails would total 2.7 miles with segment lengths ranging from 0.3 miles to 1.3 miles.

The proposed multi-use trails will improve the overall flow and safety of trails within FMBP and the circulation patterns, especially in summer as congestion has resulted in safety concerns by all types of trail users. STA proposes to modify several of their existing Hillside trails to be one-way directional. A new trail map kiosk and wayfinding signs would also be added throughout the added trail system.

Improving safety and wildlife interactions: The Staff and STA have learned lessons since the first STA trails were constructed. STA has been working with MOA Parks & Recreation and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) to improve wildlife and trail user interaction on the existing and proposed singletrack trails. Wildlife interactions do occur in parks and STA has been taking a proactive approach to minimize issues with wildlife encounters on the singletrack trails. To minimize future wildlife interactions, STA will continue to focus on signage, public outreach, and community education, as recommended by ADF&G. Signage on the trails will educate the trail user community about wildlife concerns and will notify users of possible singletrack trail closures during moose calving season. Temporary trail closures during moose calving season will be done in partnership with ADF&G, MOA and STA. Social media and temporary signage will be used for public outreach to notify trail users of specific trail and wildlife concerns at FNBP. In conjunction with MOA and ADF&G, STA will also work to educate trail users on how to safely interact with wildlife. The proposed trails are to be designed to have improved sightlines with minimized blind corners to allow for better visibility of wildlife. By following the guidance of ADF&G and MOA, STA is taking a proactive approach to mitigate wildlife issues so that a safe and successful project can be created.

Type of users to benefit from this project: The principle users would be mountain bikers, fat bikers, hikers, runners, dog walkers, bird and wildlife viewers, classic skiers, and snowshoers. The project would be a particular benefit to all Anchorage residents and especially those who use the FNBP trail system in the Hillside area.

Funding Plan

Singletrack Advocates will secure all funding for this project, administer all grants and provide grant reporting. The current total proposed project budget for the Hillside project proposal is \$120,000 to \$160,000. STA was just awarded a 2017, \$10,000 Challenge Grant by the Anchorage Park Foundation.

Subject to project approval, STA is targeting construction of the project for July 2017 through the fall of 2018.

Implementation Plan

As a grass roots project, the implementation plan involves a mix of volunteer and professional support. STA, in cooperation with the Department of Parks & Recreation, will manage project planning, design and construction. Funding will be secured through grants and private donations. STA will hire a professional trail designer and builder and the project will be managed collaboratively by STA and the Department. Hand finishing will be provided by volunteer crews. STA and Parks & Recreation will include the new trails in the current Maintenance Agreement that outlines the long-term management and maintenance of this trail extension.

Staff Recommendation

The Area Wide Trails Plan identifies mountain biking as a popular form of trail use that provides good commuting possibilities and recreation, but neither the Trails Plan nor Park Plan identify a level of service standard that prescribes a specific amount of additional unpaved trails to accommodate this activity. The proposed addition of 6-8 more miles of singletrack trails will improve multiuse access to Far North Bicentennial Park from the Hillside trailheads and the surrounding neighborhoods to all of the trails in FNBP, an improvement consistent with objectives in both plans.

Support for a larger network of singletrack trails within the community has currently been demonstrated by STA outreach and through proposal support letters sent by community groups to STA. The demand for safety improvements due to congestion has been confirmed by Recreation Staff.

The Department believes that the plan to add the Hillside trails proposed by STA to be consistent with objectives identified in the Park Plan, the Far North Bicentennial Trail Improvement Plan and supports the public process undertaken to develop the proposal. The Department recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission pass the proposed resolution to support the STA Hillside Expansion and Improvement Proposal.



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PRC RES NO. 2017-08
Singletrack Advocates (STA) Hillside Trails and Improvements

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan* recommends maintenance of existing facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Department received a proposal from the Singletrack Advocates (STA) to expand the singletrack trails by approximately 6- 8 miles in Far North Bicentennial Park. The proposed trails would be part of the trail infrastructure covered under the Maintenance Agreement between STA and the Department; and

WHEREAS, the Singletrack Advocates have seen rapid growth in the mountain and fat bike communities since the first STA trail project nearly a decade ago; the increased popularity has resulted in heavy trail congestion and safety concerns with user conflicts on existing trails; and

WHEREAS, STA proposes to elevate user conflicts with the addition of new uphill and downhill trail options and by converting the existing trail network to recommended directional flow to improve safety of various multiuse groups; and

WHEREAS, the proposed plan includes the design and construction of missing links in the network of singletrack: soft surface, narrow trails sustainably built for mountain bikes and foot traffic in Far North Bicentennial Park; and

WHEREAS, STA has funded, planned, constructed and maintained over 9 miles of singletrack trails in Far North Bicentennial Park and 15 miles of singletrack in Kincaid Park; and

WHEREAS, a singletrack network in Far North Bicentennial Park is consistent with the Far North Bicentennial Park Trails Master Plan provided that the project continues to coordinate with the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage (NSAA). Singletrack trails

must be developed secondary to cross-country ski trails and not compromise the ability for the cross-country ski trail network to meet international standards; and

WHEREAS, NSAA, along with the Hillside Community Council, the Hilltop Ski Area, and other park and trail user groups, have provided written letters of support for this project;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Anchorage Parks & Recreation Commission supports the Singletrack Advocate's plan to design, construct and maintain the Hillside Trails and Improvements project that includes 6-8 new miles of singletrack and trail improvements in Far North Bicentennial Park.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 13th day of April 7, 2017.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

John Rodda, Director
Parks & Recreation Department



Hillside Community Council Resolution on Adding
Additional Multi-Use Trails To the existing Hilltop
Ski Area Trails System

Whereas:

The Hillside Community Council values and supports:

- the Municipality of Anchorage Community Council process of advising the Anchorage Assembly as defined in the city's charter;
- a safe and healthy northern city where our children will be proud to raise their own children;
- areas within our city boundaries that allow the citizens of Anchorage to enjoy and appreciate the wilderness surroundings;
- the responsible addition of healthy recreational opportunities

Now let it be resolved that the Hillside Community Council:

Voted unanimously to support the adding of additional multi-purpose trails to the existing Hilltop Ski area trails system.

Date 1/25/2017


Lance Powell, President, Hillside Community Council



A Facility of Youth Exploring Adventure, Inc. A Non-Profit Organization
Dedicated to Developing Recreational Facilities for Our Alaskan Youth

March 5, 2017

Lee Bolling
Singletrack Advocates
P.O. Box 221382
Anchorage, Alaska 99522

RE: Singletrack Trails Expansion Project within Youth Exploring Adventures Anchorage
Municipal Lease Area

Dear Lee,

Youth Exploring Adventures d/b/a Hilltop Ski Area ("YEA") would like to offer this letter of support to Singletrack Advocate's (STA) Hillside Singletrack Trails Expansion Project. YEA, as a non-profit organization, has served families for over thirty years within the greater Anchorage area at Hilltop Ski Area as an after school and weekend venue for children to be outside and exercise while learning to ski and snowboard. YEA believes STA shares its mission to bring fun and exciting outdoor activities to our Anchorage community and we look forward to working with STA to explore new growth opportunities within Hillside Park and YEA's municipal lease area.

YEA's municipal lease, in the greater Far North Bicentennial Park at Hillside Park, is an estimated 165 acres (Lease Area) which includes the current lesser footprint of the area known as the Hilltop Ski Area. YEA operates and maintains, year-round, the Lease Area including the ski area and the surrounding public access points and parking areas for all visitors and users of the Hillside Park at YEA's cost and expense. As such, YEA has a large stake in the operations and maintenance of both Hilltop Ski Area and the Hillside Park.

Following YEA's initial review of STA's proposed expansion project, the YEA Board of Directors was excited to work with STA on finalizing the proposed Single Track Expansion Project plan. STA's demonstrated record of working with other user groups within YEA's lease area, the greater Far North Bicentennial Park and Kincaid Park was recognized during our recent meeting with the STA. It is STA's strong commitment to working with other user groups that YEA relies upon as we work with STA to finalize the design of the proposed expansion project. Specifically, YEA understands any final Singletrack Trails Expansion Project within YEA's Lease Area will meet with YEA's board of director's final approval and the project will not adversely impact, in YEA's discretion, the Lease Area, the Hilltop Ski Area including any surrounding service areas, access points and parking lots, YEA's planned Chair Two Project and the proposed Disc Golf Course. Further, YEA looks forward to working with STA to ensure that any portion of its proposed expansion project, that enters upon YEA's lease area, will adhere to YEA's lease with the Municipality of Anchorage and YEA will work with STA to navigating any approval required under such lease.

YEA is pleased to offer this letter in support of the Singletrack Trails Expansion Project. Thank you, Lee, for the opportunity to review and discuss STA's Single Track Expansion Project and we look forward to working with you and your team over the coming months.

Regards,

Joseph Helzer
Youth Exploring Adventures
Board of Directors, President



January 11, 2017

Lee Bolling
Single Trail Advocates
PO Box 221382
Anchorage, AK 99522

RE: Hillside Singletrack Trails Expansion Project

Dear Lee,

The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage (NSAA) would like to offer this letter of support to Singletrack Advocate's Hillside Singletrack Trails Expansion Project. Singletrack Advocates (STA) has a proven track record of working with other user groups to resolve issues and has demonstrated its ability to accomplish projects. They did an outstanding job of constructing Anchorage's first network of single-track trails on the Hillside and at Kincaid Park. Part of that process involved STA working with the Operation Team of NSAA to ensure that the Nordic ski trails were not adversely impacted by the new single-track trails. We look forward to working with STA in the same way for the Hillside expansion project in the Far North Bicentennial Park.

The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage encourages community support for the proposed expansion of the Single Track project at Hillside. NSAA is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization dedicated to promoting cross country skiing as a recreational activity for people of all ages and abilities. NSAA and individuals associated with NSAA have been responsible for developing much of the network of ski trails in Anchorage's Parks. NSAA also maintains these trails for skiing. Our budget is based mainly on voluntary donations and proceeds from activities we sponsor, like citizen races.

We have a very large stake in the trail system in Hillside Park as we maintain the trails for skiing in winter. This network of trails is heavily used in the non-snow season by hikers, dog walkers, runners, and bikers. Summer maintenance of these trails has also been taken on by NSAA as our responsibility. Over the years, the increased intensity of summer use has a large impact on sustainability of the trails, especially considering that a smooth flat surface is needed for optimal grooming in the winter. NSAA offers this letter of support for STA to secure permission and funding to perform maintenance on existing narrow trails and to design and construct new sustainable linkages on the Hillside trails.

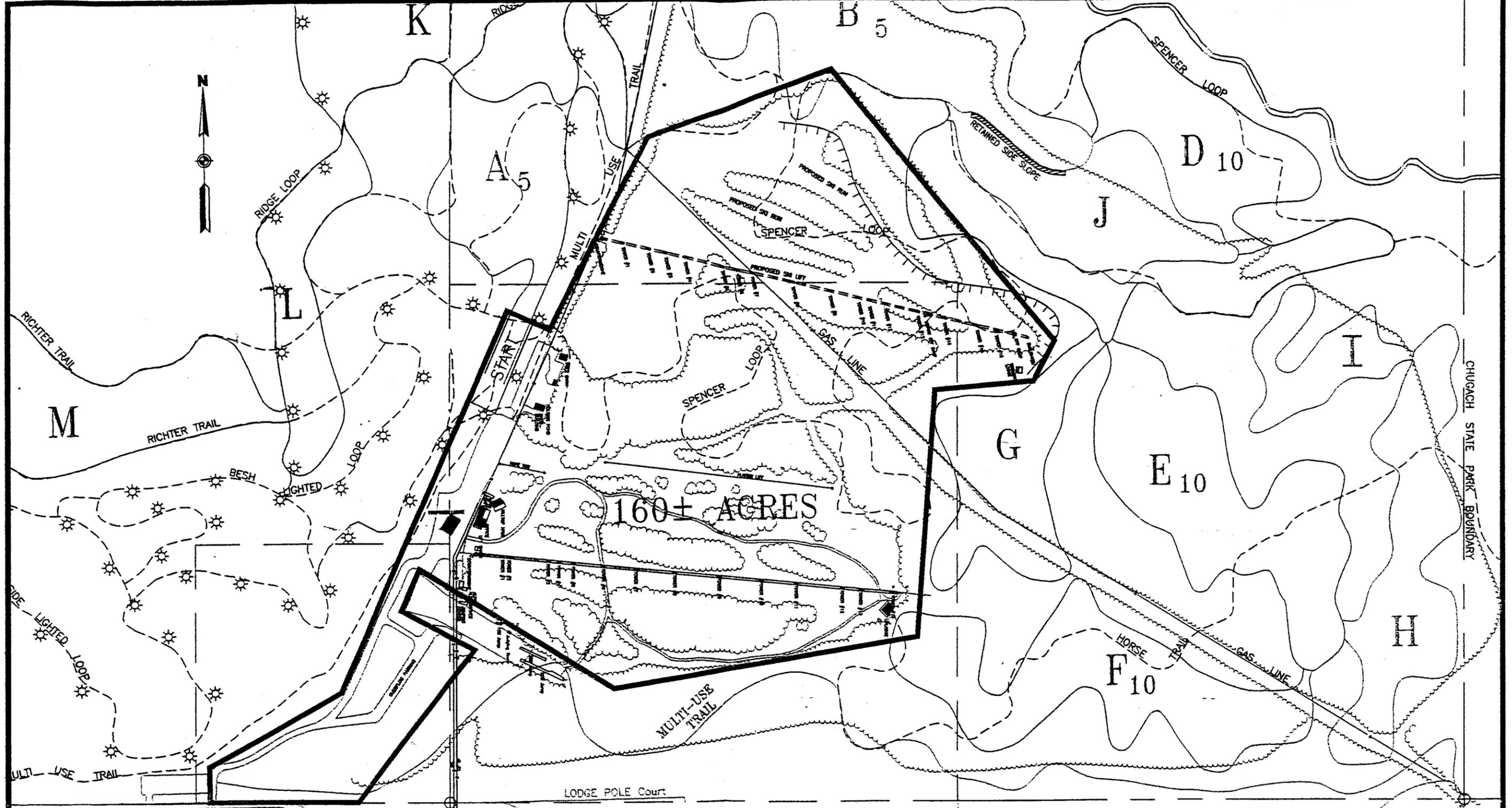
At a meeting with STA, Ben Powell, head of NSAA Operations, met with and gave approval to the conceptual layout presented by STA. The NSAA Board of Directors have also given approval to the proposed extension. Given the popularity of the existing single-track trails, the need for such trails is evident and the areas identified by the Single Track Advocates are suitable for the expansion of the network. We look forward to working together with STA to improve the trails within Hillside Park.

Sincerely,

Tamra Kornfield

Tamra Kornfield
Program Director
Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage

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AO 2000-43
 APPENDIX A.

USKH Architecture • Engineering Land Surveying • Planning	Project Mgr. TRK
	Drawn SMT
	Checked TRK
	Date: 1/21/00 W.O. #483000
Project:	
HILLTOP SKI AREA	
Sheet Contents:	Sheet No.:
FUTURE USE AREA ±160 ACRES	C2



STA Hillside Expansion

2017



History of STA Hillside

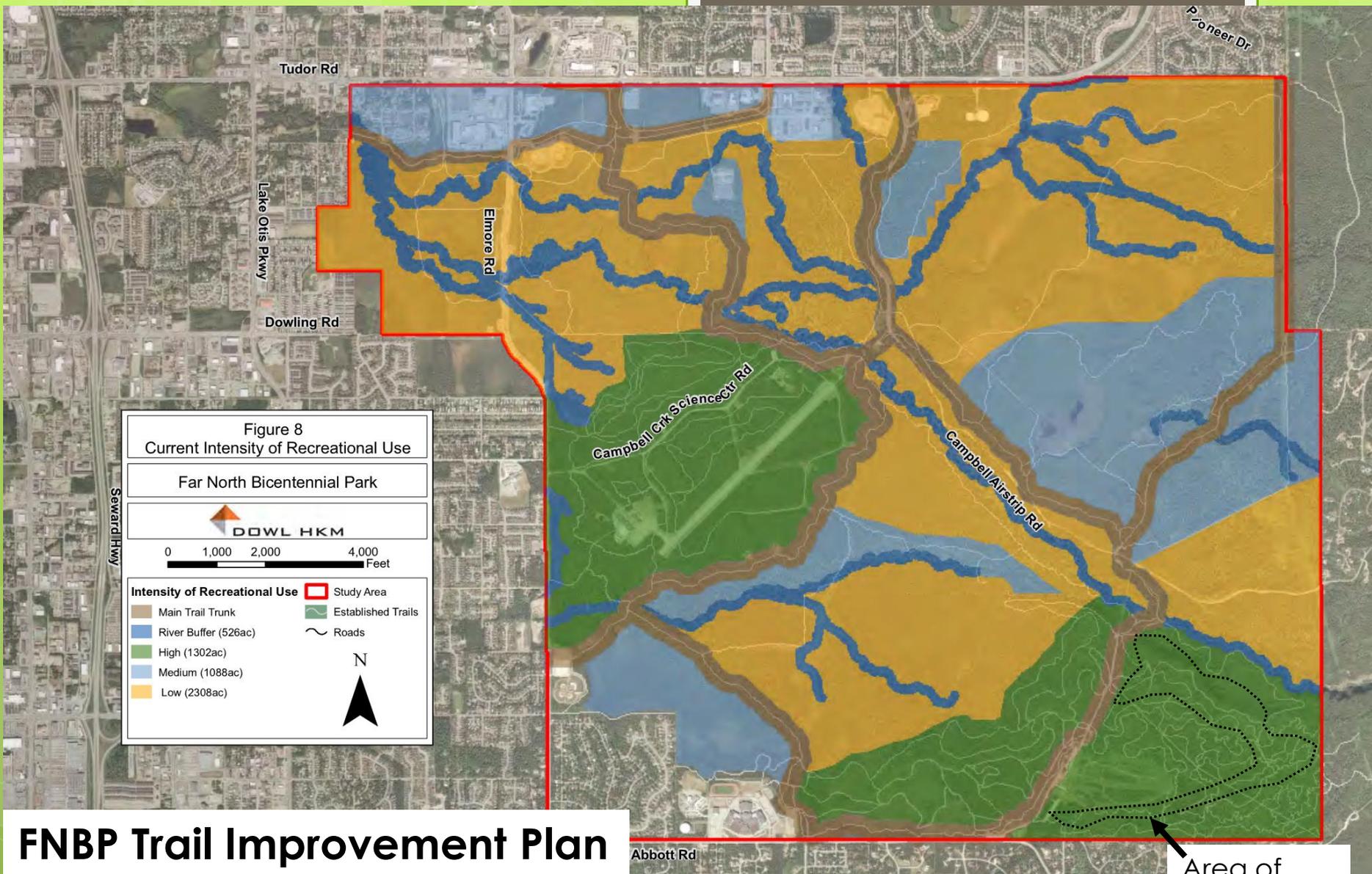
- Singletrack Advocates formed in 2004 to represent mountain bikers amongst the various user groups
- First STA project completed in 2005
 - Brown Bear trail – 0.67 mile of hand built trail
- STA Hillside development completed in 2008
 - 8 miles of machine cut, hand finished trails
- Kincaid Phase 1 Completed in 2011 & Phase 2 in 2013
 - 9 miles and 7 miles respectively – machine built
- Consistent presence in both FNBP & Kincaid Park with work parties, maintenance crews, and various upgrades and revisions
 - 8 Official work parties in 2016



More Trails?

- In the last 8 years the mountain bike community has seen rapid and sizable growth
 - Mighty Bikes has grown from 10 kids in 2000 to 300 in 2016
 - Consistent growth in the Arctic Bike Club race series year on year
 - Rapid growth in fat biking in the last 5 years
- As the community has grown and developed there has been a strong desire for more trails to:
 - Decongest the high traffic on existing trails to improve user safety
 - Provide more riding variety and options in the Anchorage area. Satisfy users desire for more technical and challenging trail options
 - Continue to develop Anchorage and Alaska as a world class mountain bike destination
- Currently engaging with other local users groups to seek input
 - Nordic Ski Association – Letter of Support
 - FNBP User Group - Presentation
 - Hillside Community Council – Letter of Support
 - Hilltop Ski Area – Letter of Support
- FNBP Trail Improvements Plan – Hilltop Area Designated as High Density Trail Use





FNBP Trail Improvement Plan

The 2009 trail plan "strives to strike a balance between the needs and desires for proposed trail improvements and the natural resources that make the park a special place. The proposed plan reflects input from a diverse group of trail users, the Steering Committee, other stakeholders, landowners, advisory groups, and regulatory agencies."

Area of Proposed Trails

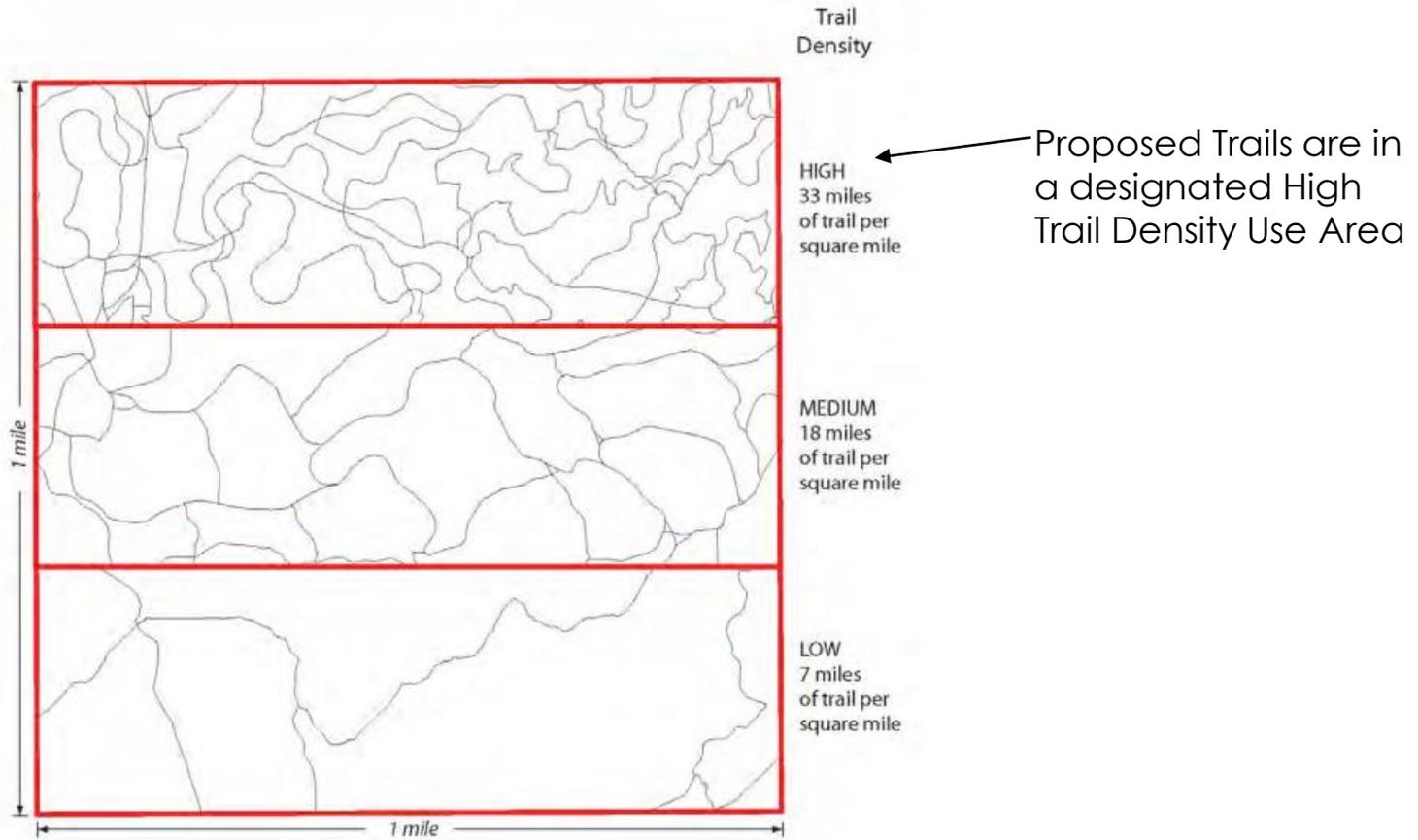


Figure 9: Diagram of Existing Recreational Use

2009 FNBP Trail Improvement Plan

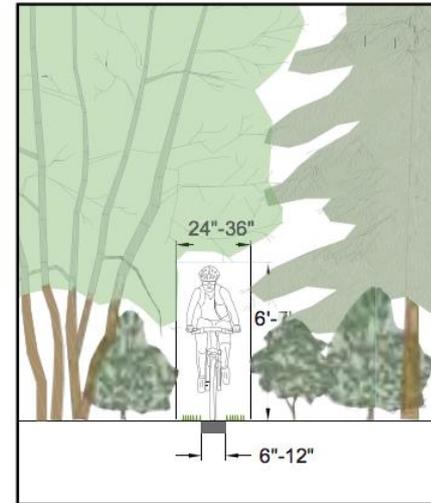
Design Philosophy

- Designed within existing activated spaces to maximize access points and minimize new intersections
 - Use existing multi trail intersections
 - Only one new crossing on Spencer's Loop
- Mix of building techniques to blend minimal disturbance, long term sustainability, & usability
 - Machine built flow trails with hand finishing creates a sustainable trail tread with good sight lines for safety & visibility
 - Hand finished technical trails allow for minimal disturbance of soil and vegetation while maximizing use of natural terrain
- Conversion of existing STA trail network to recommended directional flow to improve safety of various multiuse groups
 - New Signage for "One Way" directional trails
 - Modify & Improve existing maps and signage

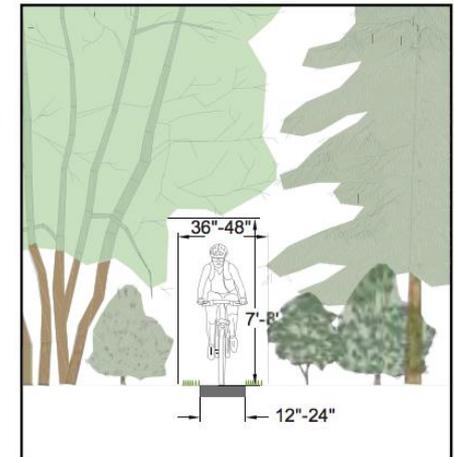


Proposed Trails

- Total of approximately 6 to 8 miles of trail proposed
 - 2.6 acres of disturbed land during construction
 - 1.9 acres of disturbed land after re-vegetation
 - 0.035% of the 4000 acre FNBP tract
- Proposed to be developed with Type I & Type II trails
- 3 Intermediate level “Flow” trails
 - Machine cut & hand finished with sustainable trail design similar to existing STA trails
 - 3.3 miles of total trail ranging from 0.8 miles to 1.5 miles
- 4 Advanced Level “Technical” trails
 - Hand cut with minimal disturbance design similar to Brown Bear trail
 - 2.7 miles of total trail with lengths ranging from 0.3 miles to 1.3 miles



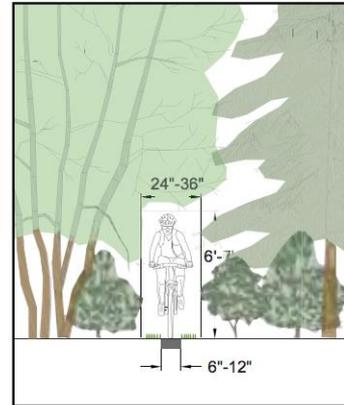
Trail Class 1



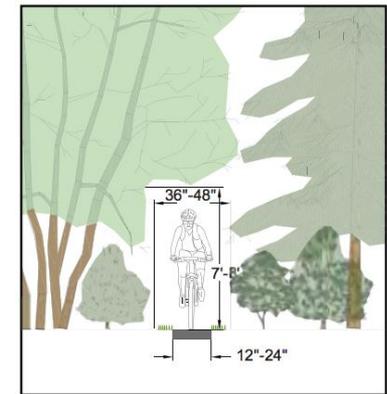
Trail Class 2

Proposed Trails

Designed Use		Trail Class 1	Trail Class 2
BICYCLE			
Design Tread Width	One Lane	6" – 12"	12" – 24"
	Two Lane	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Design Surface	Type	Native. Rough, unstable or soft tread.	Native, with limited grading. Unstable or soft sections likely.
	Obstacles	Rocks, logs and roots up to 6–12" common. Forced portages likely.	Embedded rock, protrusions to 6". Some portages may be needed.
Design Grade*	Target Range (>90% of Trail)	15% – 18%	< 12%
	Short Pitch Max (Up to 200' lengths)	30% 50% on downhill-only travel.	25% 35% on downhill-only travel.
	Max Pitch Density***	< 10% of trail	< 5% of trail
Design Cross-Slope	Target Range	5% – 10%	5% – 10%
	Maximum		
Design Clearing	Width	24" – 36" Some vegetation may encroach into clearing area.	36" – 48" Some light vegetation may encroach into clearing area.
	Height	6' – 7'	7' – 8'
Design Turns	Radius	3' - 4'	4' – 6'



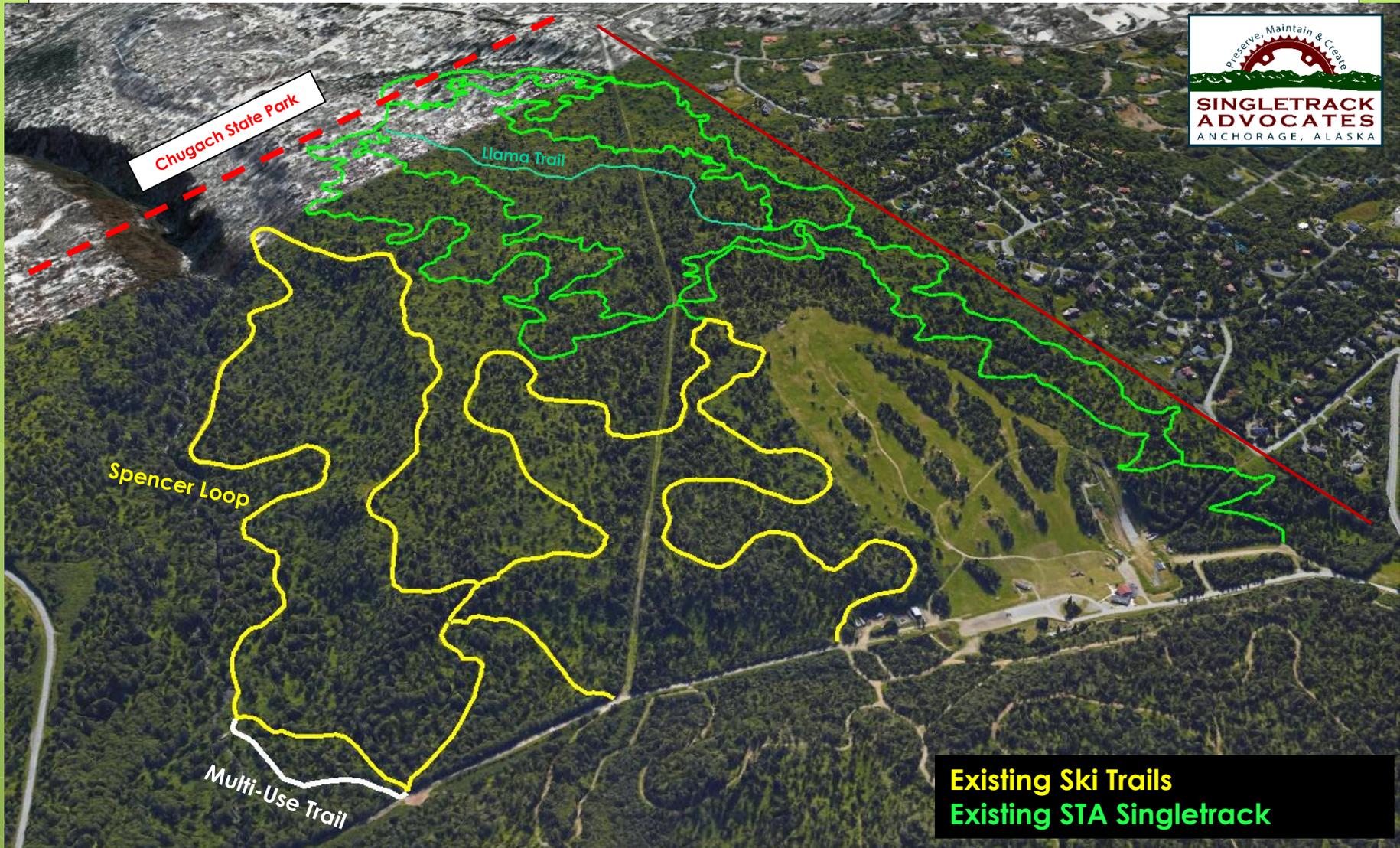
Trail Class 1



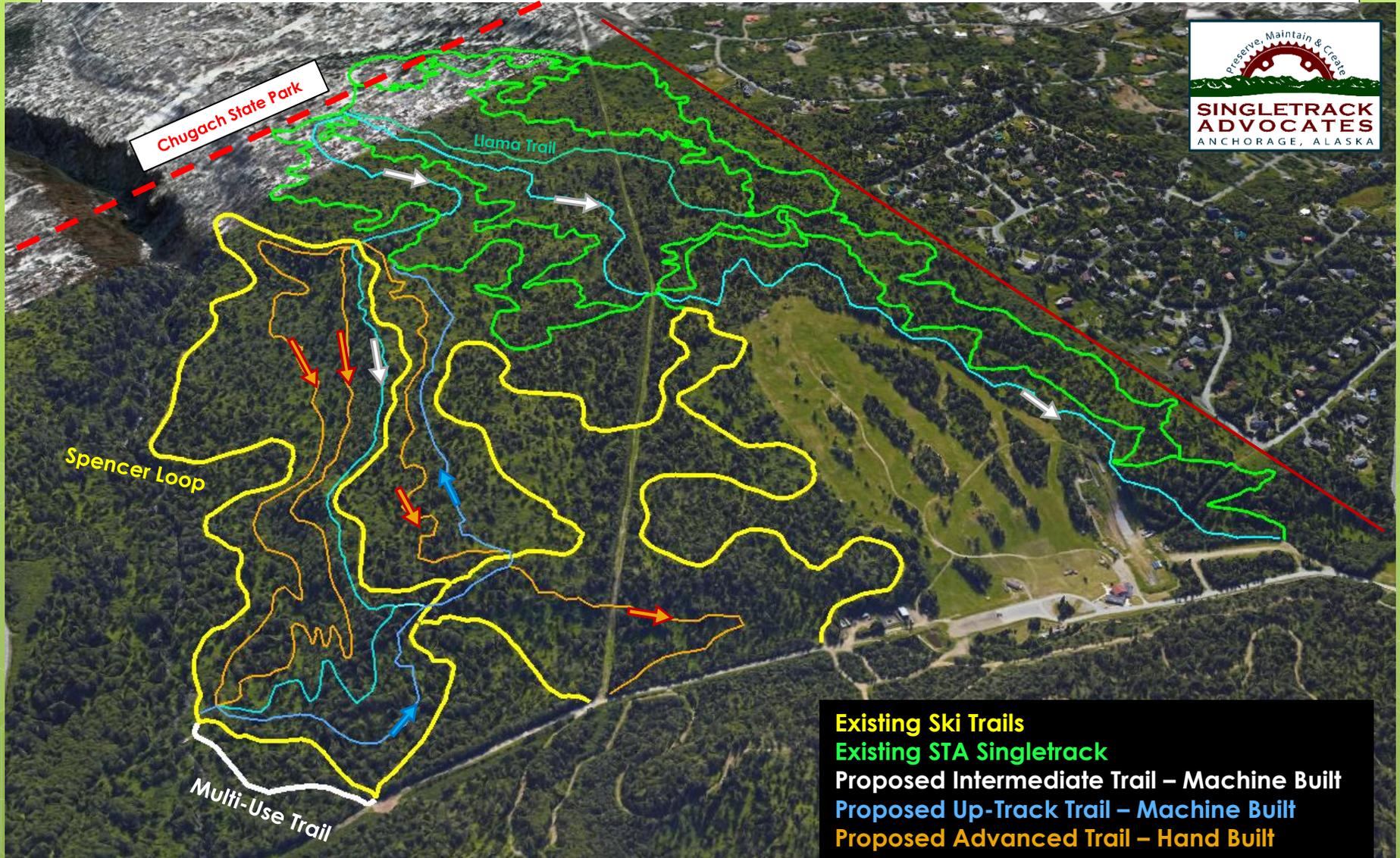
Trail Class 2

Conceptual Trails	Length (ft)	Length (mi)	Construction Width (ft)	Final Width (ft)	Construction Disturbed Acreage	Final Disturbed Acreage
Flow 1	5280	1	4	3	0.5	0.4
Climb Trail	4224	0.8	4	3	0.4	0.3
Flow 2	7920	1.5	4	3	0.7	0.5
Advanced 1	2640	0.5	3	2	0.2	0.1
Advanced 2	1584	0.3	3	2	0.1	0.1
Advanced 3	3168	0.6	3	2	0.2	0.1
Advanced 4	6864	1.3	3	2	0.5	0.3
Total	31,680	6			2.6	1.9

Existing Trails



Proposed Trails



Project Cost

- Project Cost is \$120,000 to \$160,000
- Timeline:
 - Spring 2017 – Select Trail Builder and begin layout
 - Summer 2017 – Begin Construction of trails
 - Fall 2017 – Complete Construction of trails, MUNI Inspection and Open trails



Funding

- Funding Sources
 - 15K STA Fundraiser (March 23rd, 2017)
 - 15K Mighty Bikes
 - 10K REI Grant (Applied)
 - 40K Anchorage Parks Foundation Grant (Applied)
 - 40K STA Trail Fund
 - Additional Fundraising



Signage Plan

- All intersections will be numbered like Kincaid (New and Existing Hillside Trails)
- \$5,000 material cost for signs, posts, and maps. Installed by STA Volunteers.
- Signage ordered early and installed during construction of the trail.
- Mapping completed as soon as trail is roughed in during construction and sent to MUNI and Emergency Response.
- “Qualifiers” added for Advanced Trails
- Location Maps added to start of new Intermediate and Advanced Trails





Thank You for Your Support

Proposed Trails

