

2025 Statewide Trails Conference Sessions

Wednesday April 23rd – Mike Shields DIRT WATER PEOPLE AND TRAILS
Separate sign up for this all day training - information at [this link](#).

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Thursday April 24th

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM Keynote: A \$30 Million General Obligation Bond for Trails in Maine

Al Swett – Director of Operations, Maine Snowmobile Association
Pete Didishiem – Natural Resources Council of Maine

In November of 2024, Maine passed a \$30 million general obligation bond to repair and expand all types of trails statewide. The successful passage of the bond solidifies Maine’s position as a national leader in outdoor recreation to support local economic growth and expand access for all users. Starting in January 2025, the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands will initiate a new competitive grant program to provide \$7.5 million per year over four years to towns, organizations, and clubs. The funding will support design, maintenance, and construction of trails of all types, including non-motorized, motorized, and multi-use trails.

The campaign to pass the bond brought together a diverse array of outdoor recreation interests. More than 520 Maine towns, organizations, businesses, and clubs endorsed the bond, including the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, L.L. Bean, Maine Municipal Association, Maine Snowmobile Association, ATV Maine, Bicycle Coalition of Maine, New England Mountain Bike Association, Maine Tourism Association, and Maine Outdoor Brands.

9:45 AM – 10:45 AM: Building a Training, Brick by Brick

Alan McClain – Outdoor Recreation Trail Specialist, Mat-Su Borough

Training plans for a Trail Crew:

This session will delve into developing an effective training plan for seasonal Trail Crews. Challenges, considerations, tips, and different learning styles will all be addressed. Audience participation and input is encouraged.

11 AM – 12:00 PM: Connecting with Business for Trail Events, Sponsorship and More

Lee Hart – Founder, Alaska Outdoor Alliance
Natura Richardson – Executive Director, Island Trails Network

Learn about ways that trail groups can better connect with local businesses for sponsorship. Hear the basics of setting up donation programs including the steps to take to encourage businesses to help support local trails in other ways as well. The 1st annual [Kodiak Mountain Series](#) will serve as an example of an event that is incorporating business and community collaboration.

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch Provided

1:00 PM – 1:45 PM: Sitka’s Multi-Jurisdictional Trail Maintenance Partnerships

Jess Deviche – Partnership and Volunteer Coordinator, Tongass National Forest

Meghan Chamberlain – Recreation Planner, Sitka Ranger District

Ben Hughey – Executive Director, Sitka Trail Works

Sitka Trail Works and the Forest Service have long partnered to plan, build, and maintain a robust trail system around the island community of Sitka. This last year, the partnership reached new heights through one particularly challenging project. Four agencies, dozens of staff, extensive legal agreements, partnership funding, and explosives flown in by seaplanes were all required to address the community’s top maintenance request, on a jointly managed State Parks trail. Learn how we worked together and had a blast doing it.

2:00 PM – 3:15 PM: Outcomes from the Alaska SCORP 2023 - 2027

Ricky Gease – Director, DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Gary Greenberg – Founder, Alaska Map Company, LLC

With the Alaska SCORP 2023-2027 in place, learn about next steps including:

- **Alaska Office of Outdoor Recreation**
- **Alaska Partners in Outdoor Recreation**
- **Alaska GIS Hub for Outdoor Recreation**
- **Ground Truthing Alaska’s Trails**

DPOR Director Ricky Gease will discuss how the division’s new Community Engagement section is working to foster growth of a statewide advisory group and GIS Hub for Outdoor Recreation. GIS professional Gary Greenberg will discuss the path forward and options available to ground truthing the GPS data for the 13,500+ miles of trails in Alaska. The presenters will also report on the recent SCORP survey.

3:30 – 4:30 PM: Round table of groups presentations from around Alaska

- **AK Huts**
- **Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation (Invited)**
- **Trail Mix - Youth Employment in Parks**

Friday, April 25th

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM: Successful Trail Layout: How to Get There from Here

Jon Underwood – President, Happy Trails Inc.

You have a great idea for a new trail. You want to convey that concept to land managers, trail user groups, citizen advisory boards, politicians, and grant funding sources, but you don't think your back-of-the-napkin sketch will get you there. How should you proceed? What can you do on your own and where do you need professional help? This session will go through the steps to articulate, illustrate, and develop your vision into a construction-ready trail line.

10:45 AM – 11:15 AM: Alaska Long Trail: National Scenic Trail feasibility study

Zach Million – BLM Alaska Program Lead

The Alaska Long Trail is being considered for the National Scenic Trail designation. The Bureau of Land Management has been working on the feasibility study for the designation since 2023, with the final study planned for the end of 2025. The presentation will give an update on the process and discuss frequently asked questions about the nuts and bolts of the potential designation.

11:30 AM – 12:15 PM: What is a National Scenic Trail?

John Cannella – National Program Manager, National Trails System & National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, Washington Support Office - U.S. National Park Service

The National Trails System Act established the framework for national scenic and historic trails in 1968. What does a national scenic trail (NST) designation mean in the year 2025? This presentation will cover the implications of the NST designation for a variety of land managers, including federal and non-federal lands along the route. What are cooperative agreements, what does a trail administrator do, and what is the extent of "federal reach" with the NST designation?

12:15 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch Provided

1:00-2pm – Exciting Economic Impacts of Trails

Lee Hart – Founder, Alaska Outdoor Alliance

Haley Johnston – Deputy Director, Alaska Trails

You and your organization are an important part of Alaska's \$3.1 Billion outdoor recreation economy. In this session, we'll share the most current data, what it means and how to use the numbers to convince others to invest in your projects. We'll also discuss the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan data that demonstrates how and where users engage with the outdoor recreation economy and where investment is needed to meet the large and growing demand for outdoor recreation experiences by visitors and residents alike. Finally, we'll look at examples from across the country of where investment in outdoor recreation has correlated with economic and population growth as a blueprint for how Alaska might improve its economic future.

2:15 PM – 2:45 PM: Anchorage to MatSu Strategic MTB Trail Plan

Will Taygan – Executive Director, Chugach Mountain Bike Riders

This regional mountain bike trail plan will engage community volunteers, land managers, and the general public from Anchorage and the Mat-Su to inventory existing mountain bike-optimized trails, assess mountain bike trails in current plans, and identify needs for future trail development. Working on a common plan will strengthen ties between existing regional trail nonprofits, in an effort to create lasting partnerships within the mountain bike community.

3:00PM – 3:30PM: TBD

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM: TBD

CHAPTER 3

Trail Principles



The Girdwood Valley Trails Management Plan uses established principles to plan, design, construct, and manage trails. Careful planning helps create a varied and integrated trail system for a broad spectrum of users. Wise management reduces long-term costs through the use of these principles for trail construction and maintenance. When followed, these principles help secure these trails for future generations.

Trail User's Experience

Multiple user groups recreate in the Girdwood Valley: hikers, bikers, skiers, snowshoers, moms with strollers, and tourists with little outdoor experience to name a few. All of these people have different reasons for using Girdwood's trail system. How people interact with a particular trail is called the Trail User's Experience.

Many elements contribute to a Trail User's Experience (TUE) while traveling on a trail. Human values are important to recognize, understand and consider when designing and managing trails for TUE. While some people may feel threatened by potential bear attacks on a trail that is not widely brushed, others may think a trail has lost its primitive quality if a downed tree is cleared from the path. A group of mountain bikers wanting a high-speed technical downhill is looking for a much different TUE than a cross-country hiker enjoying the silence broken only by a chickadee.

The key to creating a positive TUE for diverse user groups is variety. The Girdwood trail system strives to provide multiple trail options, featuring differing surfaces, settings, grades, etc. Trails that are enjoyable, safe, and appropriately challenging for the intended user group create a positive TUE.

While it is hard to define all the values that the various users will bring to the trailhead, the following chart highlights the core values of most trail users.

Trail User Objectives	Description
Nature	Trail provides a connection to nature. This can be anything from being among a few trees in the middle of the city to remote backcountry. Nature is an important factor for many trail users.
Escape	Trail takes users away from the daily grind, and helps reduce stress.
Solitude	Trail provides solitude, isolation, and independence. It allows users the space to get away from the urban environment and other people.
Challenge	Trail provides a venue for users to improve physical abilities, test endurance and gain a sense of accomplishment.
Risk	Trail provides a sense of adventure. The possible exposure to danger creates a thrill for many trail users. It can be a positive or negative part of the trail experience, depending on user expectations and risk tolerance.
Safety	Trail allows users to feel secure, physically and mentally, in an outdoor setting.
Fun	Trail provides users with amusing or enjoyable experiences.
Exercise	Trail provides a venue for health and fitness. For some users this is a primary goal, for others a bonus, for some an obstacle.
Socializing	Trail provides a shared experience and a time/space for conversations. It enables users to enjoy the closeness of friends and family or allows users to meet new people with similar interests.

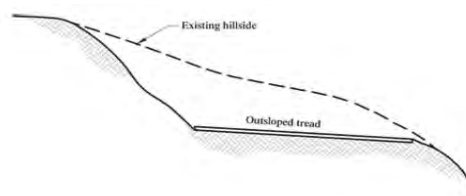
Adapted from "Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experience" BLM/International Mountain Bicycling Association, 2017

Sustainable Trails Principles

Adapted from the Alaska Trail Stewards Handbook, 2023.

A sustainable trail is defined as a trail that conforms to the terrain, without ruining the aesthetics or ecological integrity of the environment that it traverses. A sustainable trail is capable of handling its intended use without serious resource degradation and requires minimal maintenance.

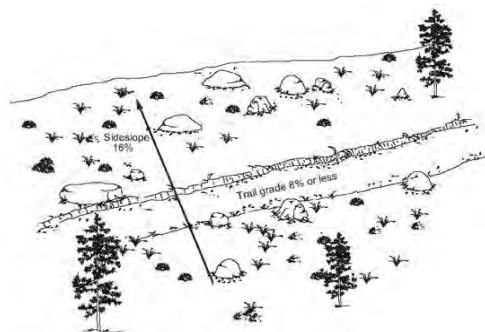
Full bench construction: When a trail traverses a side-hill, full bench construction provides the most compact tread surface possible, encourages sheet flow, does not trap water on the trail, and eliminates the potential for tread slump failure.



USFS Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook

Contour curvilinear alignment: By building trails that follow the curvilinear alignment of topographical contour lines, rather than going perpendicular to them, “fall-line” trails and over-steep grades are prevented. Trail maintenance is reduced as the trail promotes even sheet flow of water off the trail, thereby reducing erosion and ruts.

Controlled grade: Through careful planning, design and trail layout, controlled grade – at an average of 8-10%, can help limit erosion of the tread surface. The percent grade of the trail should also not exceed half of the grade of the side-slope (otherwise known as the half-rule). The drawing illustrates the half-rule: the side slope is 16% while the trail grade is 8%.



USFS Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook

Integrated water control: Use alignment, not structures, to shed water off the tread surface and maximize sheet flow; water control designed into the alignment reduces dependence on water bars or drains, which can fail. Examples include “grade reversals” and out-sloped tread:

- **Grade Reversals:** The grade of the trail is reversed for 10 to 15 feet, then “rolled” back over. Grade reversals should be placed frequently—about every 20 to 50 feet—depending on the grade of the trail. The local topography can provide natural grade reversals, while dips and curves in the trail to go around trees and boulders also create integrated grade reversals.
- **Out-slope:** As the trail contours across a hillside, the downhill or outer edge of the tread should be lower than the inside or bank-side edge. Out-sloping lets water sheet across the trail naturally. The tread should be out-sloped at least five percent (5%).

Durable tread surface: Ensure long-term durability of tread surface by utilizing on-site native material or importation of material (i.e. gravel) to rectify poor drainage or tread surface, especially on flat ground and when full bench is not possible.

Sustainable Trail Design

Adapted from Chugach State Park Management Plan, 2016

Achieving a sustainable trail begins with establishing an integrated design process. This relies on a multidisciplinary team (trail advocates, designers, major stakeholders, and land managers) working collaboratively from the pre-design phase through construction.

Revegetation: Local and native plant materials must be used for any revegetation of disturbed areas. Any intrusion of non-native plants will not be allowed and must be fully mitigated. Revegetation will be used to provide screening and help stabilize slopes. Construction techniques to preserve vegetation and trail routing should be employed to minimize visual intrusion.

Clearing: Clearing widths and heights should conform to the trail class and design parameter specifications assigned to a particular trail or trail segment. Additional clearing may be prescribed to remove falling hazard trees adjacent to developed areas or to improve views.

Natural Considerations: Where significant wildlife or other natural features exist, special trail routing, construction methods, and trail management should be considered. Trails should have a natural flow and rhythm that avoid long, straight alignments. Where hazards are present, special trail construction techniques or alignment should be used to mitigate the hazard. Hazardous areas such as steep slopes, avalanche zones and rockslide areas should be either avoided or be closed seasonally.

Historic and Cultural Resource Considerations: Like natural resources, cultural resources must be considered when planning and constructing trails. Cultural resource identification should occur early in any trail project and possible impacts assessed. As needed and in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), special trail routing and construction techniques should be used to reduce adverse impacts to cultural resources.

Environmentally Sensitive Sites: Special alignment or construction methods may be necessary to reduce impacts and minimize disturbance in environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, highly visible hillsides, significant vegetation areas, threatened and endangered species habitat, highly erodible soils, unstable slopes, and ridgelines. Techniques such as site-specific trail routing, erosion control measures, site-specific adjustment of construction standards, and site-specific construction practices should be implemented to minimize environmental, visual or construction impacts.

Construction methods that should reduce impacts include installing retaining walls to reduce cut-and-fill slopes on a visually prominent hillside, hand construction of a trail, or stabilizing a hazard that is located within or adjacent to the trail corridor. Special care should be taken in areas close to rivers, streams, or wetlands.

Trails that cross or are located adjacent to wetlands should be designed for minimal impact. Boardwalks or other techniques may be necessary to impose minimal construction impacts. Wildlife needs should also be considered when setting trails near wetlands. For example, locate trails well up and away from potential beaver ponds. Connectivity between drainage ditches and streams should be minimized to reduce sediment delivery potential.



April 2025 Report Girdwood Trails Committee

Thank you! So much work has been done to reclaim the trails from windstorms over the winter. Regardless of snow events, spring is here and we are entering breakup. Please practice Leave No Trace on the trails. Do your part to avoid creating mudholes and postholes.

See separate page for information on blowdowns. Send Margaret updates.

Updates and other business:

Girdwood Valley Trails Management Plan. Current version is posted on the GTC page. Barb Crews has initiated review of this document with the goal of updating it to match the Girdwood Trails Master Plan.

Girdwood Trails Master Plan. Adopted version is posted on the GTC page.

Girdwood Comprehensive Plan. Assembly accepted the plan and some amendments March 18. Final version will be formally approved in early April. More information available on Imagine!Girdwood website: imaginegirdwood.org



Repairs/Future Improvements: The trail bridge from Townsquare to Crow Creek Road has been leveled. Restricted donation received for work on this project. Plan is to rebuild the bridge in 2025 with private funding.

Suspension Bridge: Design continues with our contractors towards a complete design set. Goal is to bid the project for construction in 2025. We will need to discuss a Capital fundraising plan with GTC for the Suspension bridge and Hand tram interpretive center. We'll be looking for volunteers to help organize a plan and pull off fundraising events over the fall/winter/spring to help raise additional funds for this project.

Financial report: \$80,402 held in Girdwood Inc Account 2.25.25 Girdwood Inc is separating restricted and non-restricted funds.

Grants Status report:

State of Alaska, Capital Budget: Thank you to Alaska Trails for including the suspension bridge to replace the Hand Tram in their requests for funding of the State of Alaska. State has awarded \$1.2M for this project as part of Alaska Long Trail Funding. Construction goal is 2024/2025.

Rasmuson Tier II Grant: GVSA has been awarded funding for this project.

Recreational Trails Program Grant (RTP): GVSA submitted RTP grant application for work on Middle INHT Oct 31 2023. Delays with the funder pushed the grant project to 2025, staff is scheduling Alaska Trails Crew to do the work. No grant application submitted for 2025 cycle. Next opportunity will be 2026.

Dugan Family donation for trails signs on Middle Iditarod Trail and bench at the 5K parking are nearing completion. Remaining is the trail sign that will be produced and placed.

Dugan Family donation for reconstruction of 2 bridges on the Middle Iditarod Trail. We've started collecting materials to work on this project.

Trail Map Project: Summer map project complete, ordering for placement at the 5K. Winter map project is under way. Committee will likely meet in April to see contractor's progress.

Trails Commercial Use Permits: 2025 permits are being issued by Girdwood Parks and Recreation. Any business operating commercially on Girdwood public land and trails should have a permit issued locally. Contact for requesting permits is girdwoodpermits@anchorageak.gov 907-343-8373. Report operators without permits to Kyle Kelley: kyle.kelley@anchorageak.gov 907-343-8374.

More information available at: www.muni.org/gbos.

5K Nordic Loop:	Cleared
Winner Creek Trail:	?
Winner Creek Extension Trail:	?
Beaver Pond Trail:	Cleared and trail restoration started in areas that need it.
Danich Trail:	Cleared to meadows from south end
Virgin Creek Falls Trail:	?
Lower Virgin Creek Falls Trail:	Cleared from ridge to Danich
Stumpy's Summer Trail:	1 down before trail splits to Glacier Creek/Meadows
Lower INHT:	Cleared BUT...1 down in California Creek adjacent to the bridge
Middle INHT:	Clear to water road
	? water road to crow creek rd.
	? crow creek rd to USFS Boundary
Athabaskan Trail:	Some clearing needed behind the school
Tiny Creek Trail school to CCR ?	
California Creek:	A few single trees on the way up the ridge. Close to intersection with Abe's the trail is obscured by blowdown ? past intersection to knoll
Abe's Trail:	1 tree down blocking trail close to Cali Creek trail intersection 2 multi-tree blowdowns close together blocking trail at high point crossing to intersection with Cali Creek 2 smaller single blowdowns closer to junction with Beaver Pond