

GIRDWOOD TRAILS PLAN

Public Review Draft – Recommendations for Changes/Edits

The Girdwood Trails Plan Public Review Draft was available for public review from June 18 – July 26, 2021. Over the course of the comment period, approximately 2000 written comments were received from over 120 people. The comments were organized into the following categories:

1. Comments from the comment cards
2. Project specific comments from the comment cards
3. Comments received by email during the comment period (not provided in the comment card format)

The comments were then reviewed. Following are recommended changes to the plan by project staff to address public comments.

NEW TRAIL PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

T1: Separated Grade Crossing: Railroad Bridge at Alyeska Highway

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Slight narrative change to urge the DOT to include this improvement as part of the Alyeska Highway/Seward Highway intersection project, but overall, no substantive change to intent.

APPROVED

T2: Wagon Trail – Lower Joe Danich Connection

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this project from the plan.

Comments exhibited concerns about the environmental and financial feasibility of developing this connection through the wetlands of the lower valley. Two forks of the trail in the draft are redundant.

APPROVED

T3: Lower Valley Trail Loop Connection

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove the upper portion of the trail from Ruane to residential area and develop the connection from Ruane, south to the Lower Iditarod.

Comments indicated that the upper portion of this trail was too impactful on the environment, the neighborhood, and redundant (already served by the Iditarod route). This change would also require the removal of B2. However, the lower loop would be a welcome addition for residents of the lower valley.

APPROVED

T4: Ruane Road Trail Connection to Lower Iditarod

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

T5: Beaver Pond to Alyeska Highway

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

There were comments indicating this connection adjacent to residential property was not desired. Additionally, there were comments indicating a concern for safety if a trail user crossed the Alyeska

Highway to connect to T3. T3 is recommended to be removed from the plan (see above). No substantive change is recommended because if housing is developed on Tract 18A and a roadway constructed on the Juniper Drive easement, it is prudent to ensure that pedestrian/trail connectivity is considered if future development proceeds. T5 should only be considered a priority for development if Tract 18A is developed.
(Change the name of the project)

APPROVED

T6: Barren Avenue to Alyeska Highway

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

T7: Crow Creek Road to Beaver Bond Trail

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – DISCUSS IN CONCERT WITH MB1

Comments do not indicate consensus for MB1. Language should be added to the project description to indicate that this trail should only be constructed when/if MB1 is developed. T7 will provide better safety and reduce conflict by separating uses and providing a 'down-route' for bikes using MB1 if constructed.

ADD BACK INTO PLAN

T8: Toe Slope Trail – California Creek to Iditarod Trail

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adding a bridge over California Creek. Recommend adding as a new bridge project.

APPROVED

T9: Crow Creek Neighborhood Trails

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Although comments do not indicate consensus, it is recommended to leave these trails in the plan. This trail network is already included in an adopted plan, the Crow Creek Neighborhood Land Use Plan. Additionally, residential development is currently being considered for this area (Holtan Hills) – it will be important to require the development of trails within the neighborhood as well as connectivity out of the neighborhood to the Upper Iditarod and other important community connections.

APPROVED

T10: Cross Valley Trail

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Relocate this proposed trail and edit to Class 3 (Bicycle Design Parameter).

The proposed location of this trail should be adjusted to better align with and connect to B5. In addition, the trail classification should be adjusted to Class 3 to better match the trails to which T10 is intended to connect including the Upper Iditarod (Class 3). This alignment also better aligns with the future Holtan Hills development.

APPROVED

T11: Arlberg Connection to Winner Creek Trail

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

T12: Glacier Canyon Rim Trail

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

T13: Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this trail and ADD the Forest Loop concept back into the plan.

Public comments indicated that the area was crowded with trails and the route as indicated in the draft would be too damaging to wetlands. There was not consensus or support for T13. See NS2 for more recommendations.

APPROVED

T14: Snowcat Trail Improvements

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adding language so support the relocation or reconstruction of this trail out of the wetlands wherever possible.

APPROVED

BRIDGE PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

B1: Glacier Creek Trail Bridge – Lower Valley

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Overall, this project was recognized as a good crossing to connect lower valley trails. Recommend adding language to indicate that it would be beneficial to coordinate with the Alaska Railroad so that if/when the trestle is ever rebuilt over Glacier Creek maybe the future crossing can include a safe pedestrian connection – a future collocated bridge could also be part of the proposed southern extension of the Seward Highway Trail. Also recommend adding language that if this level of coordination is not successful, the most feasible location for a bridge in the lower valley should be identified.

APPROVED

B2: California Creek Bridge

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this project from the plan. See project T3.

APPROVED

B3: Virgin Creek Bridge

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

B4: Improve Connectivity at Glacier Creek Bridge at Alyeska Highway

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

B5: Glacier Creek Trail Bridge – Middle Valley - North of Airport Land

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Add language to strengthen the concept that this bridge should connect directly to T10.

APPROVED

B6: Glacier Creek Trail Bridge – Upper Valley Hand Tram

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TRAILHEAD PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

TH 1: Girdwood Depot Trailhead Upgrades

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH2: Glacier Ranger District Trailhead

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH4: Virgin Creek Falls Access Study

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH5: Karolius Trailhead

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH6: Girdwood Town Center Trailhead Improvements- with restroom

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH8: Beaver Pond Trailhead

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH9: Girdwood PreK-8 School Parking-Parking Agreement

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH10: Alyeska Resort Parking Agreement

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH11: Arlberg Parking Expansion

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH12: Middle Iditarod

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH13: Winner Creek Gorge Trailhead

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

TH 3: Lower Valley Trailhead

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this trailhead from the plan.

Comments indicated there was not public support for this trailhead.

APPROVED

TH7: Moose Meadows Trailhead Improvements

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Ensure that this trailhead is labeled correctly as Moose Meadows Trailhead.

APPROVED

Girdwood Cemetery

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – ADD a trailhead at the Girdwood Cemetery and a discussion about how the proposed cemetery trails and cemetery phasing plan align with the trail network.

APPROVED

NATURAL SPACE PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Natural Spaces Description on Page 35

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove Natural Spaces paragraph and replace with the following:

Areas for Primitive Trails: One way in which this plan improves the balance and diversity of Girdwood’s trail system is by identifying areas where primitive trails are desired. Areas that prioritize primitive trails serve a variety of purposes, including both conservation and recreation, where non-mechanized recreation activities like trail walking, running, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, orienteering, foraging, wildlife viewing, education, solitude, and meditation are the primary uses.

Natural Space Network – Throughout the document

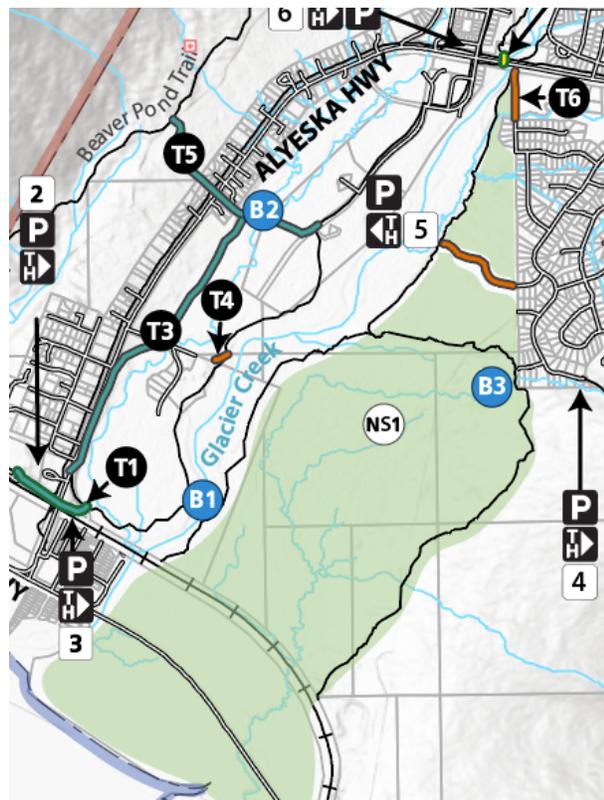
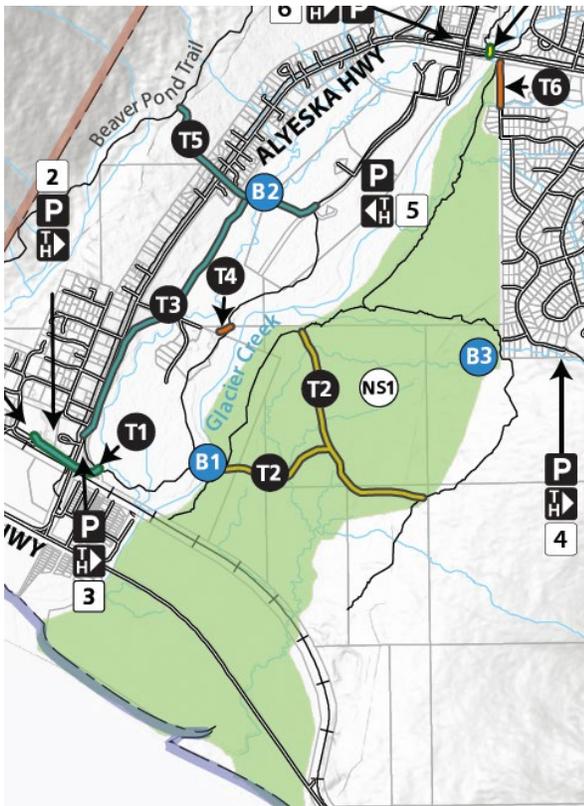
CHANGE RECOMMENDED – REMOVE all references to Natural Space Network and adjust language to be consistent with the recommended language above.

APPROVED

NS1: Virgin Creek Natural Space

CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adjusting the boundary of NS1. The eastern boundary should extend and include the Wagon Trail. The western boundary should be adjusted to remove the Joe Danich Trail from NS1. ADD a trail project to the plan that brings the Joe Danich up to a Class 3 trail constructed to the bicycle design parameter and relocate out of wetlands to uplands. ADD trail project to the plan to construct neighborhood connector trail (Class 3, bicycle design parameters, constructed in uplands) from the Turin and/or Carlina



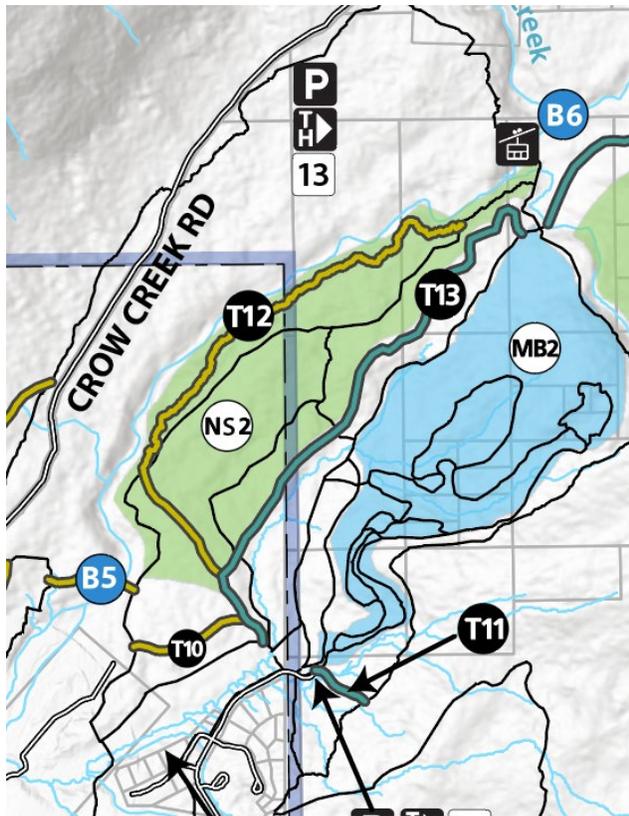
Drive cul-de-sacs to connect to the Joe Danich trail. NS1, with the adjusted boundary, remains non-mechanized with trails that are no greater than Class 2. Comments indicate that residents want a multi-use alternative trail to connect from the lower valley to the upper valley without using the road system. A Class 3 designation provides a sustainable connection to neighborhoods. The eastern boundary shift better aligns with a primitive experience for the Wagon Trail.

REJECTED

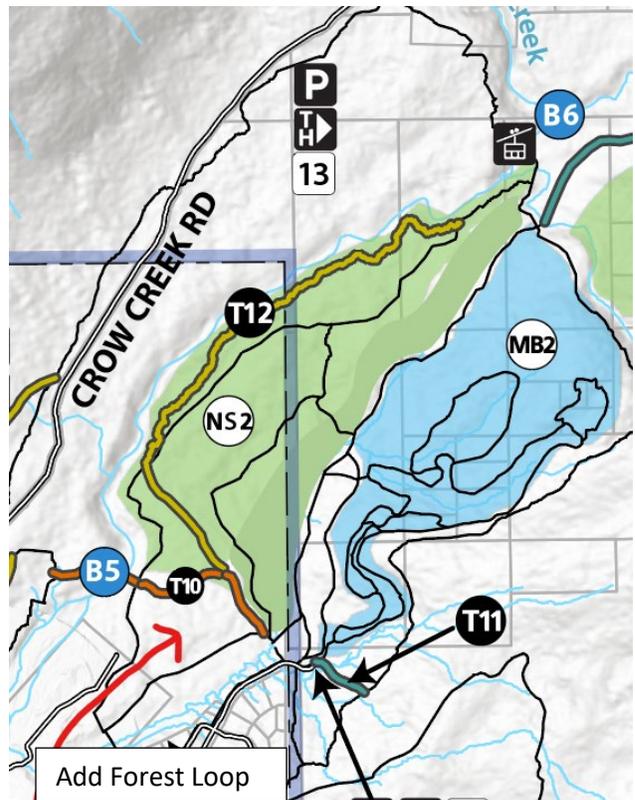
NS2: Stumpy’s Natural Space

CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adjusting the boundary of NS2. Expand the boundary to the east to extend up to but not including the Snowcat Trail and the groomed section of Stumpy’s winter trail. (T13-Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail recommended to be removed from the draft plan and add Forest Loop back).



Public Review Draft



Recommended Change

NS3: Winner Creek Natural Space

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

APPROVED

MOUNTAIN BIKE AREA PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mountain Bike Areas Description on Page 35

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove Mountain Biking Areas Title and replace with the following:

Areas for Mountain Biking Trail Development: The areas identified for mountain biking trail development don't limit the development of other recreational activities in the area.

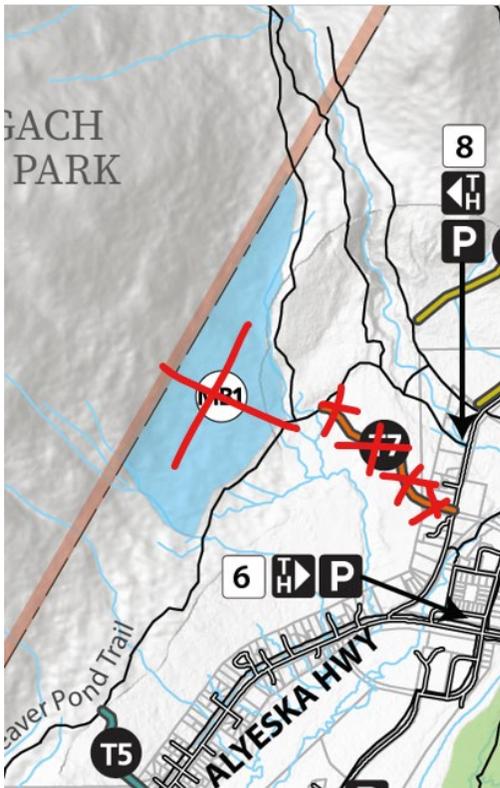
Mountain Bike Areas – Throughout the document

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – REMOVE all references to Mountain Bike Areas and adjust language to be consistent with the recommended language above.

MB1: Beaver Pond MB Area

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove MB1 from the plan:

There is not consensus about this project. Needs more discussion – if included in the plan MB1 shall be developed in consultation with the Girdwood Trails Committee only after MB2 is complete. If MB1 is removed, user conflicts on Abe's and California Creek Trails still need to be addressed.



KEEP MB1 in the PLAN

MB2: Near the Nordic 5K

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – ADD the following sentences:

MB2 should be the first mountain bike area developed in the Girdwood Valley, prior to MB1 and MB3. All trails in MB2 should minimize impacts to the Winner Creek Trail viewshed. A variety of trails should be developed for a diversity of users' abilities so that bike pushing and e-bike assist is not necessary for the average rider.

MB3: End of Snowcat Trail

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – ADD the following sentence:

Of the mountain bike areas identified in this plan, MB3 should be developed last.

GIRDWOOD TRAILS PLAN



**GIRDWOOD TRAILS
ALASKA**

REVISED

Girdwood Trails Committee

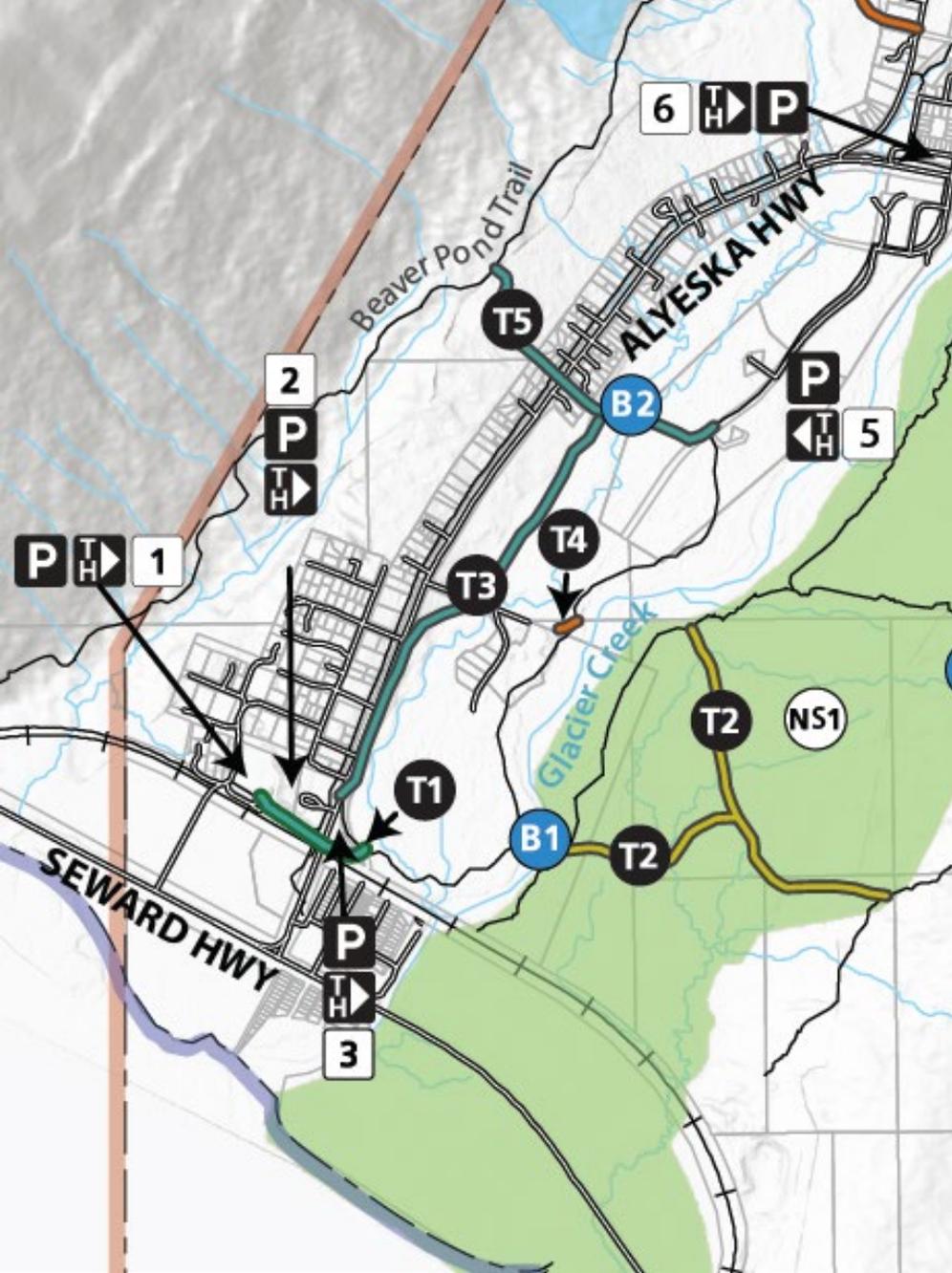
RE: GTP Public Review Draft

Recommended Changes

October 5, 2021



- Public Review Draft Comment Period: June 18 – July 26, 2021.
- 2000 written comments were received from over 120 people and reviewed by project staff.
- Following are recommended changes to the plan by project staff to address public comments.



T1: Separated Grade Crossing: Railroad Bridge at Alyeska Highway

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Slight narrative change to urge the DOT to include this improvement as part of the Alyeska Highway/Seward Highway intersection project, but overall, no substantive change to intent.

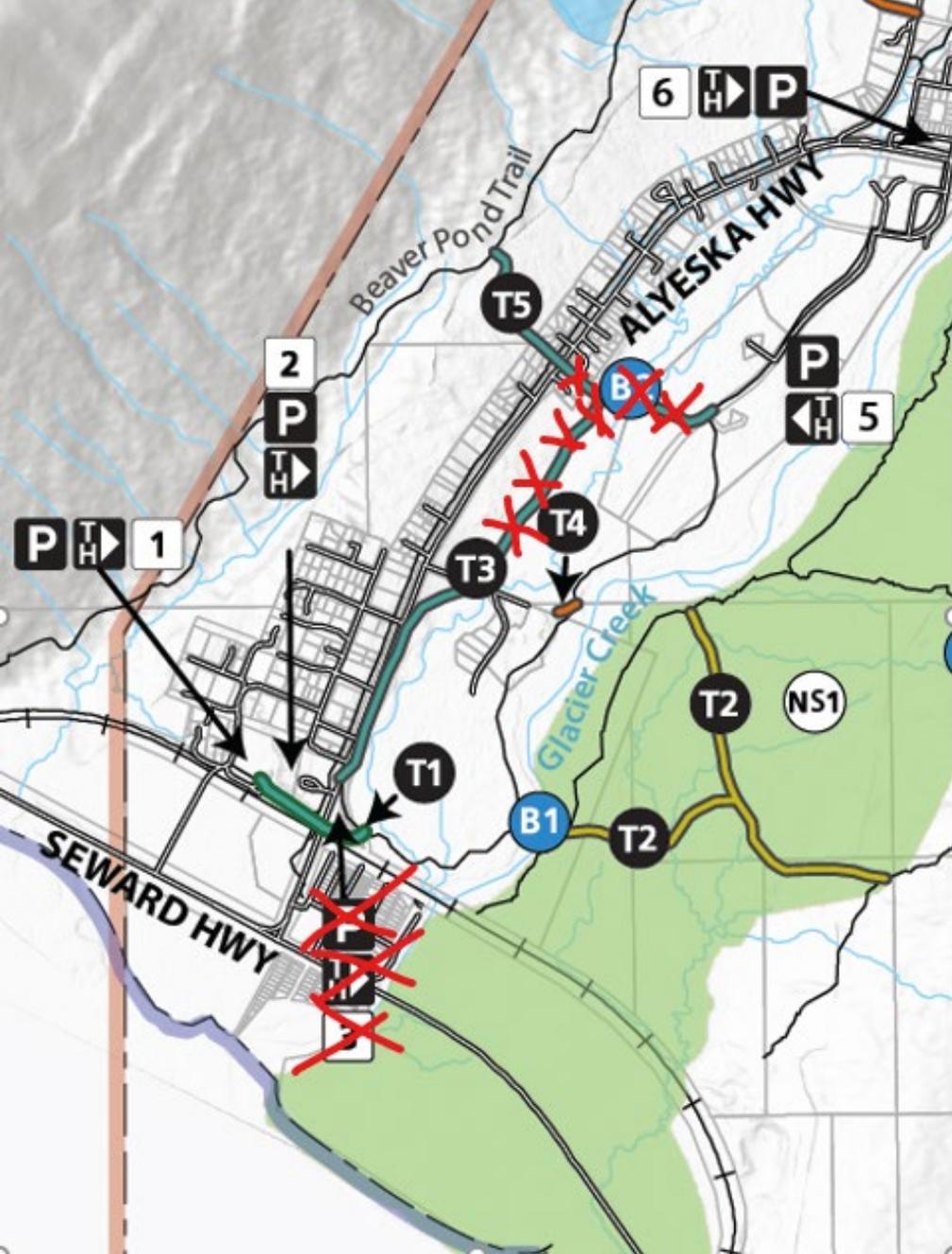
B1: Glacier Creek Trail Bridge – Lower Valley

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adding language to indicate that it would be beneficial to coordinate with the Alaska Railroad so that if/when the trestle is ever rebuilt over Glacier Creek maybe the future crossing can include a safe pedestrian connection – a future collocated bridge could also be part of the proposed southern extension of the Seward Highway Trail. Also recommend adding language that if this level of coordination is not successful, the most feasible location for a bridge in the lower valley should be identified.

T4: Ruane Road Trail Connection to Lower Iditarod

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED



T3: Lower Valley Trail Loop Connection

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove the upper portion of the trail from Ruane to residential area and develop the connection from Ruane, south to the Lower Iditarod.

WHY: Comments indicated that the upper portion of this trail was too impactful on the environment, the neighborhood, and redundant (already served by the Iditarod route). This change would also require the removal of B2. However, the lower loop would be a welcome addition for residents of the lower valley.

B2: California Creek Bridge

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this project from the plan. See project T3. **WHY:** See above.

TH 3

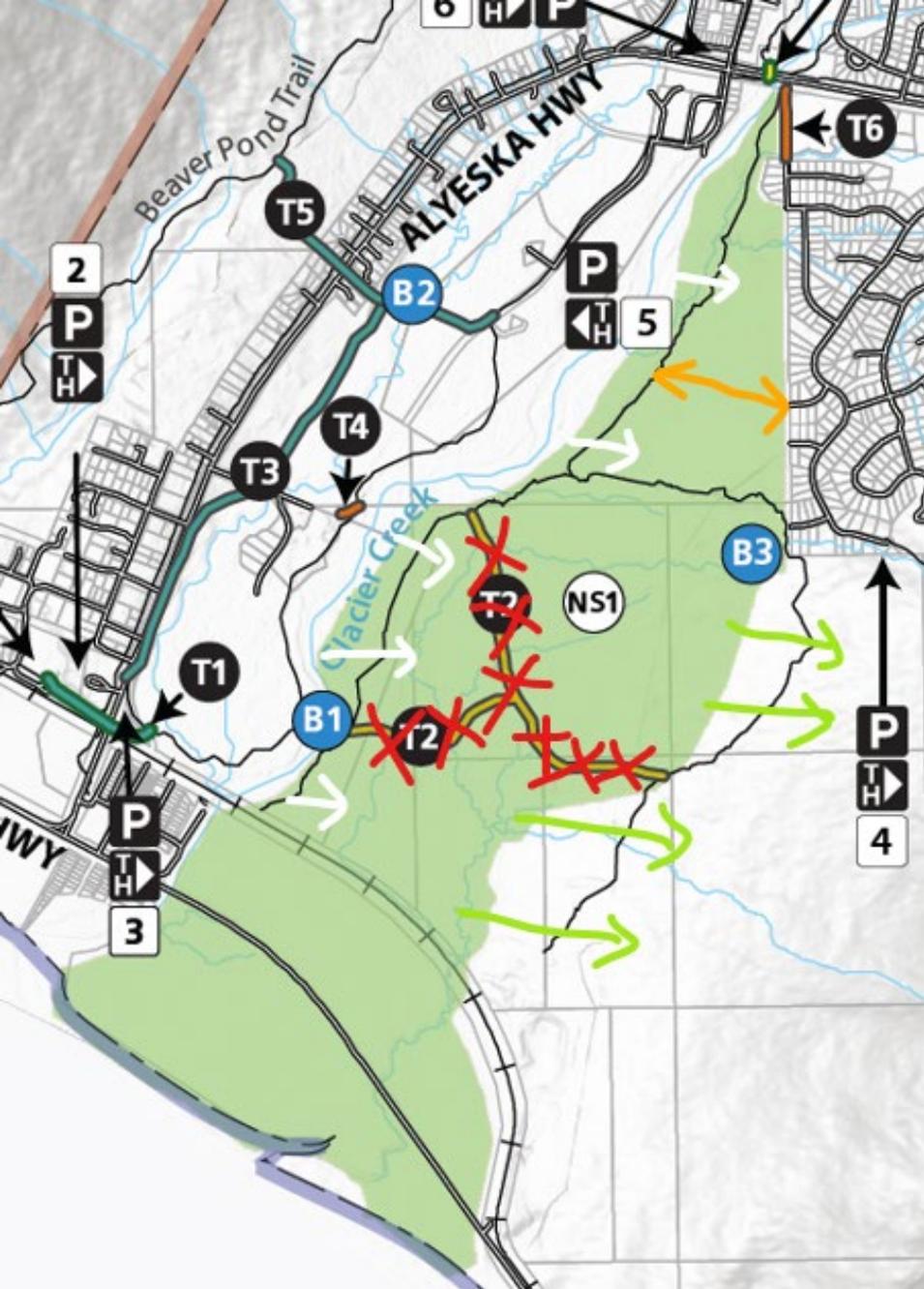
CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this trailhead from the plan.

WHY: Comments indicated there was not public support for this trailhead.

T5: Beaver Pond to Alyeska Highway

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

WHY: There were comments indicating this connection adjacent to residential property was not desired. Additionally, there were comments indicating a concern for safety if a trail user crossed the Alyeska Highway to connect to T3. T3 is recommended to be removed from the plan (see above). No substantive change is recommended because if housing is developed on Tract 18A and a roadway constructed on the Juniper Drive easement, it is prudent to ensure that pedestrian/trail connectivity is considered if future development proceeds. T5 should only be considered a priority for development if Tract 18A is developed.



T2: Wagon Trail – Lower Joe Danich Connection

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this project from the plan.

WHY: Comments exhibited concerns about the environmental and financial feasibility of developing this connection through the wetlands of the lower valley. Two forks of the trail in the draft are redundant.

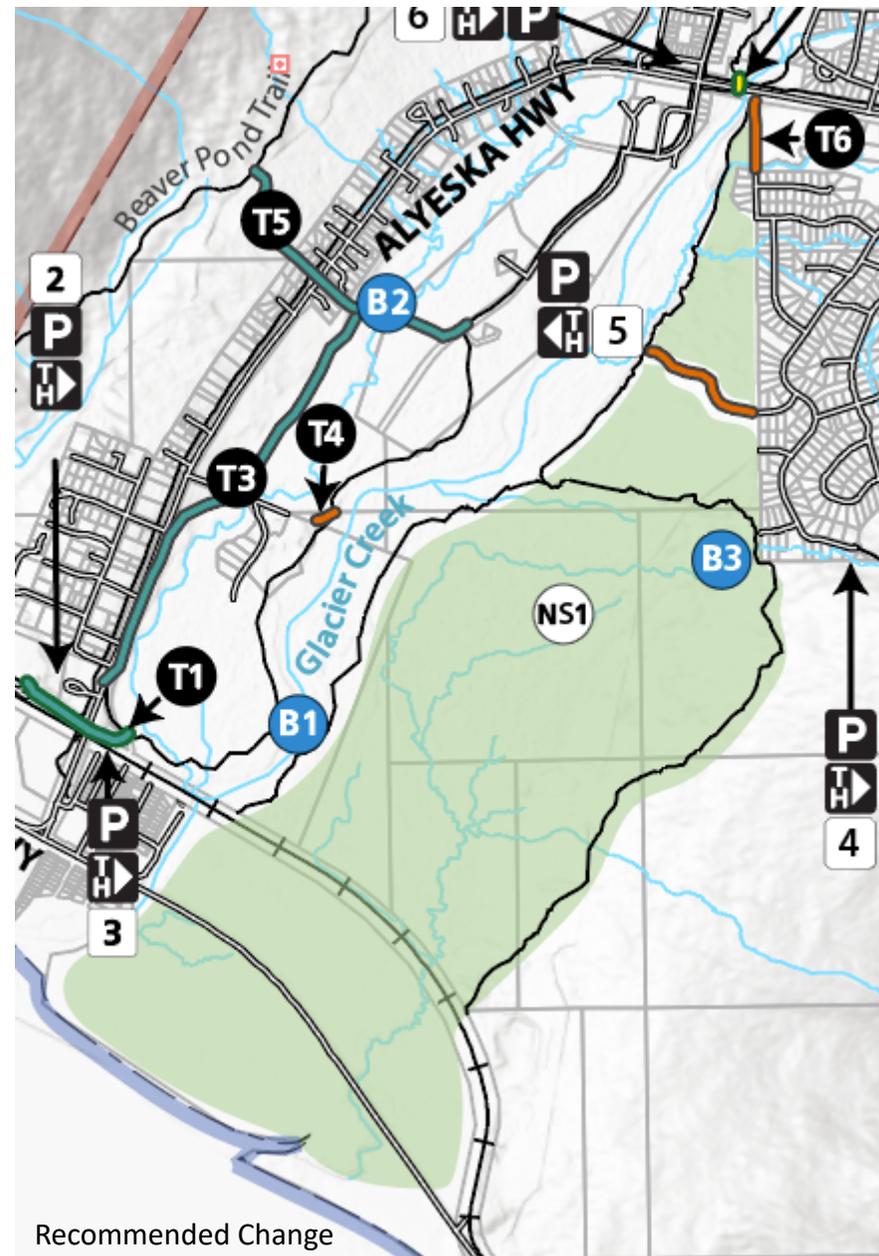
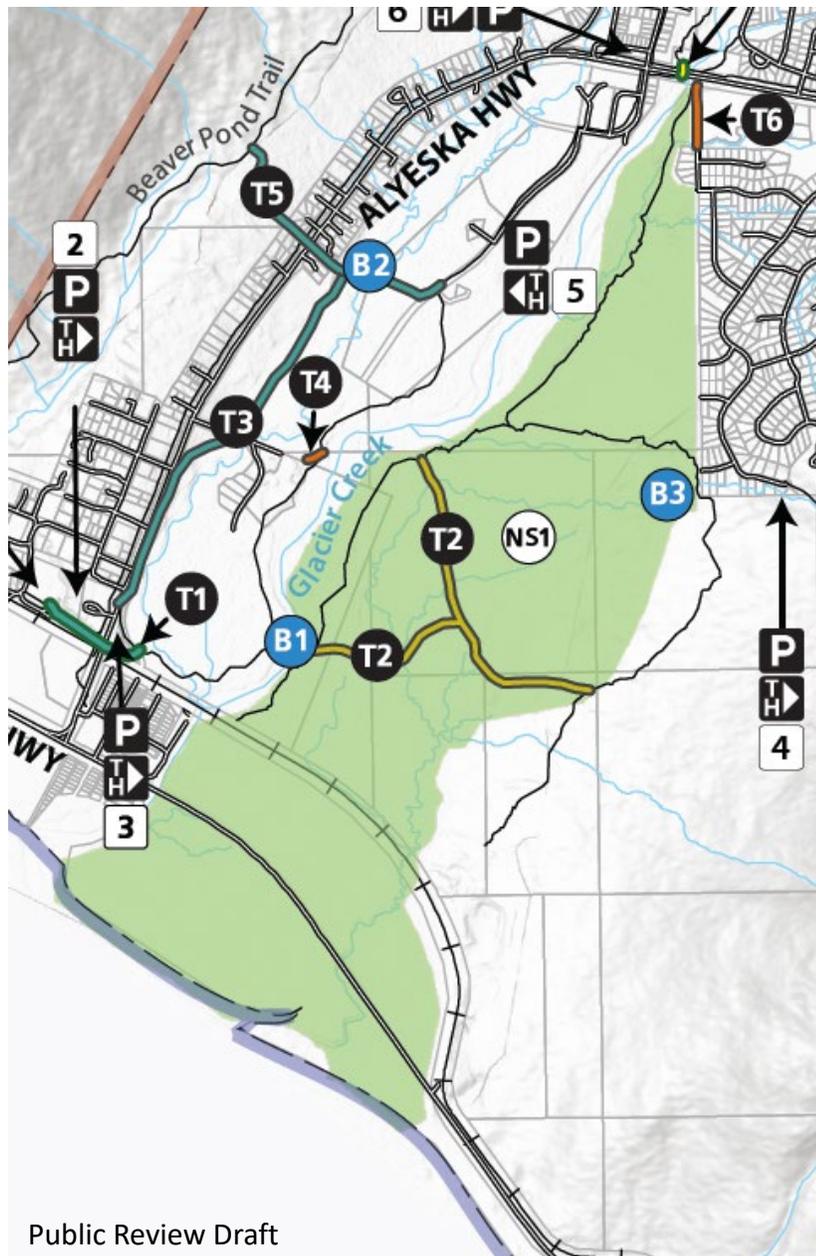
B3: Virgin Creek Bridge

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

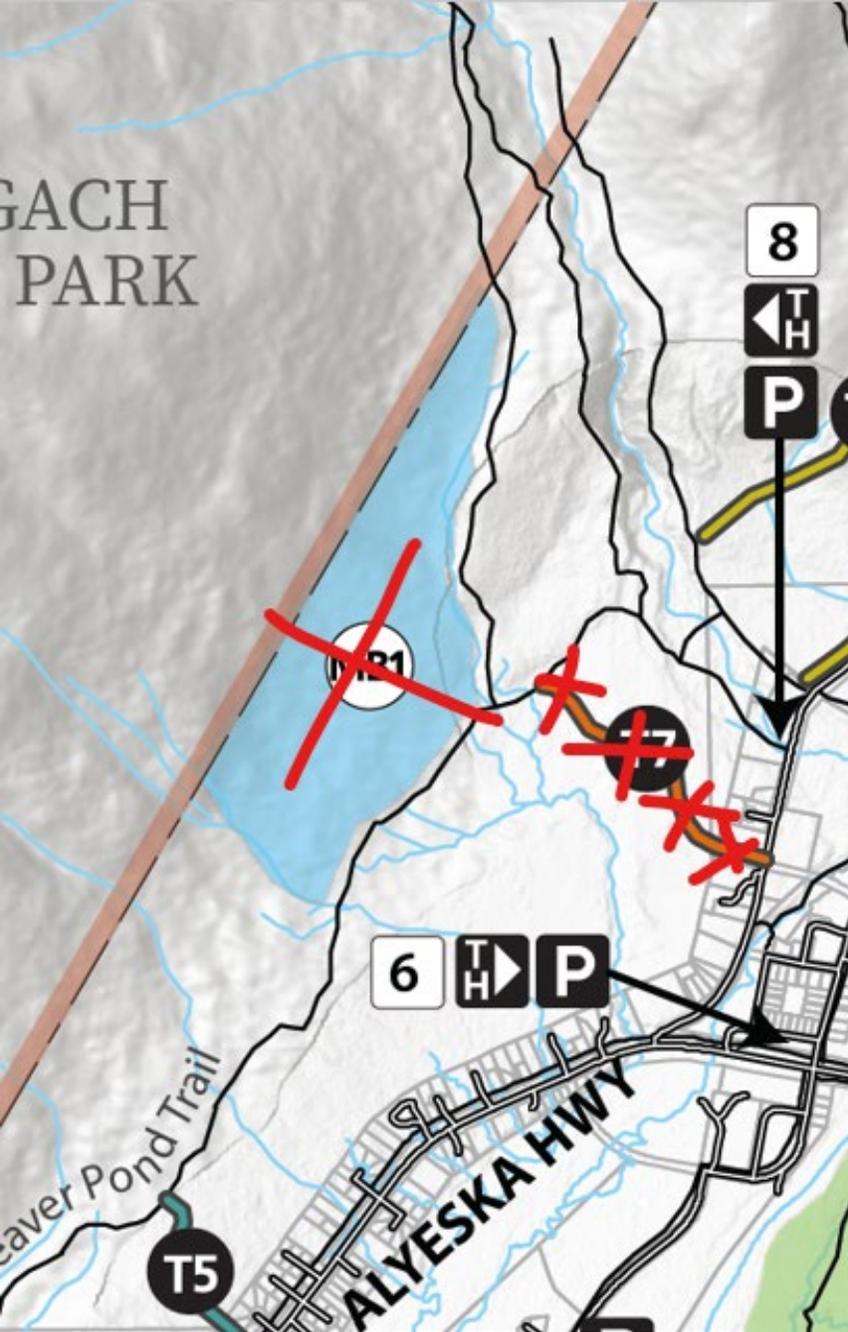
NS1: Virgin Creek Natural Space

CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adjusting the boundary of NS1. The eastern boundary should extend and include the Wagon Trail. The western boundary should be adjusted to remove the Joe Danich Trail from NS1. ADD a trail project to the plan that brings the Joe Danich up to a Class 3 trail constructed to the bicycle design parameter and relocate out of wetlands to uplands. ADD trail project to the plan to construct neighborhood connector trail (Class 3, bicycle design parameters, constructed in uplands) from the Turin and/or Carlina Drive cul-de-sacs to connect to the Joe Danich trail. NS1, with the adjusted boundary, remains non-mechanized with trails that are no greater than Class 2. **WHY:** Comments indicate that residents want a multi-use alternative trail to connect from the lower valley to the upper valley without using the road system. A Class 3 designation provides a sustainable connection to neighborhoods. The eastern boundary shift better aligns with a primitive experience for the Wagon Trail.



Lower Valley Recommended Changes



MB1: Beaver Pond MB Area

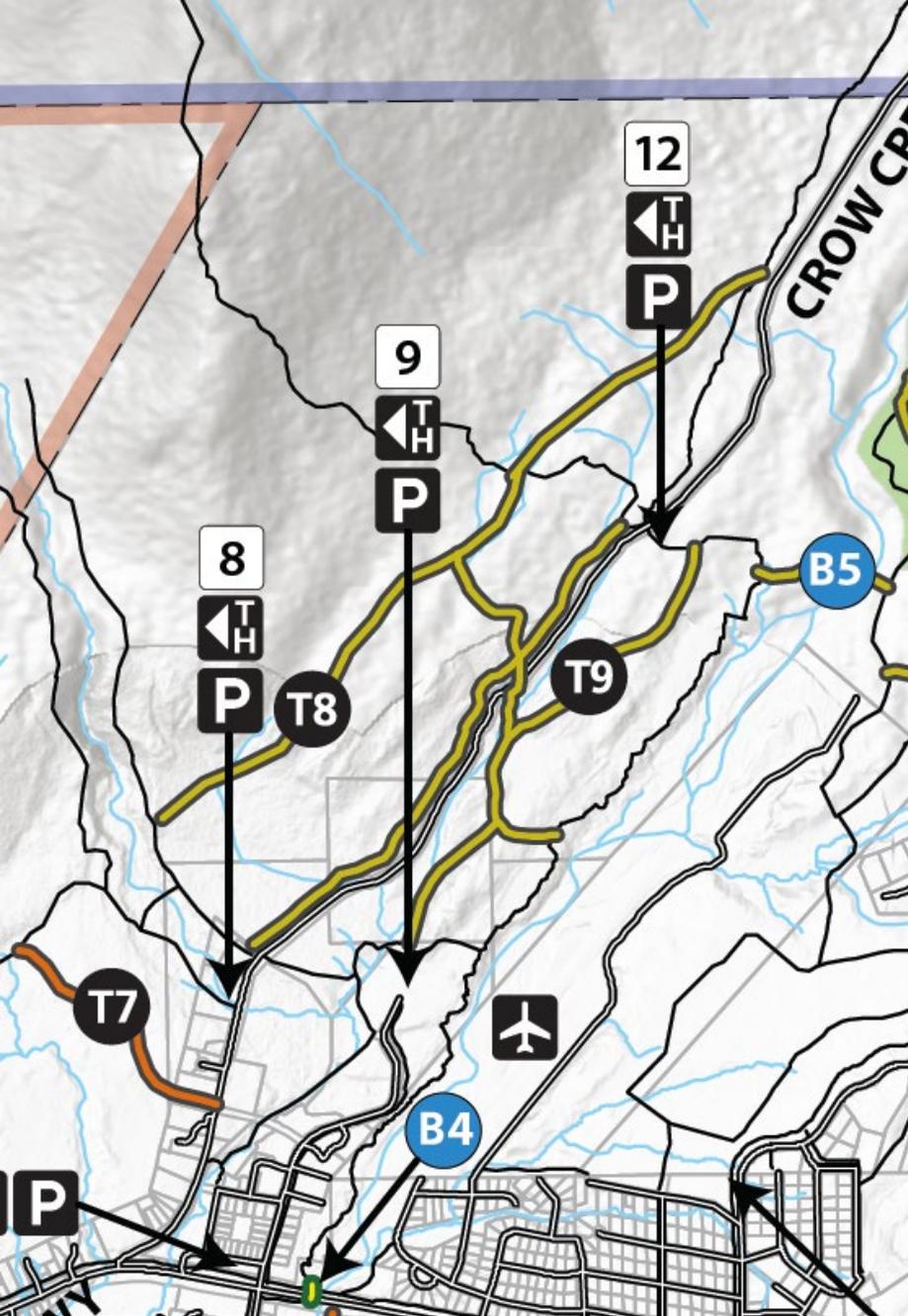
CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend removing MB1 from the plan. **WHY:** There is not consensus about this project. Needs more discussion – if included in the plan MB1 shall be developed in consultation with the Girdwood Trails Committee only after MB2 is complete. If MB1 is removed, user conflicts on Abe’s and California Creek Trails still needs to be addressed.

T7: Crow Creek Road to Beaver Bond Trail

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – DISCUSS IN CONCERT WITH MB1

WHY: Comments do not indicate consensus for MB1. If MB1 is removed from the plan, T7 should also be removed.



Girdwood Cemetery

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – ADD a trailhead at the Girdwood Cemetery and a discussion about how the proposed cemetery trails and cemetery phasing plan align with the trail network.

WHY: It makes sense to coordinate between the trail system and the Cemetery project. The parking area can serve multiple uses and the Cemetery trails should connect to the larger trail system.

T8: Toe Slope Trail – California Creek to Iditarod Trail

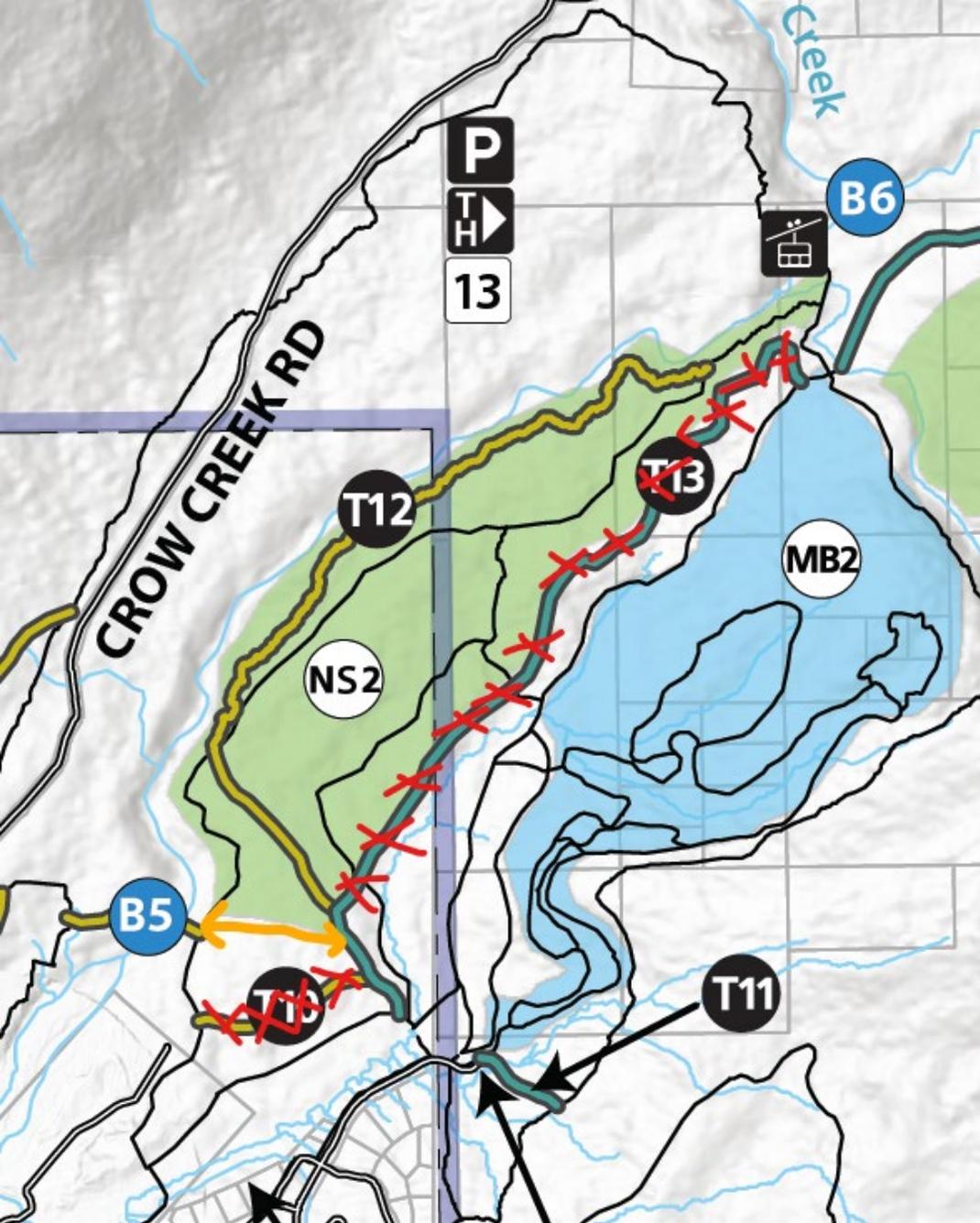
NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adding a bridge over California Creek. Recommend adding as a new bridge project.

T9: Crow Creek Neighborhood Trails

NO CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Although comments do not indicate consensus, it is recommended to leave these trails in the plan. **WHY:** This trail network is already included in an adopted plan, the Crow Creek Neighborhood Land Use Plan. Additionally, residential development is currently being considered for this area (Holtan Hills) – it will be important to require the development of trails within the neighborhood as well as connectivity out of the neighborhood to the Upper Iditarod and other important community connections.



T10: Cross Valley Trail

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Relocate this proposed trail and edit to Class 3 (Bicycle Design Parameter).

WHY: The proposed location of this trail should be adjusted to better align with and connect to B5. In addition, the trail classification should be adjusted to Class 3 to better match the trails to which T10 is intended to connect including the Upper Iditarod (Class 3). This alignment also better aligns with the future Holtan Hills development.

T13: Upper Valley Multi-Use Trail

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove this trail and ADD the Forest Loop concept back into the plan.

WHY: Public comments indicated that the area was crowded with trails and the route as indicated in the draft would be too damaging to wetlands. There was not consensus or support for T13. See NS2 for more recommendations.

NS2: Stumpy’s Natural Space

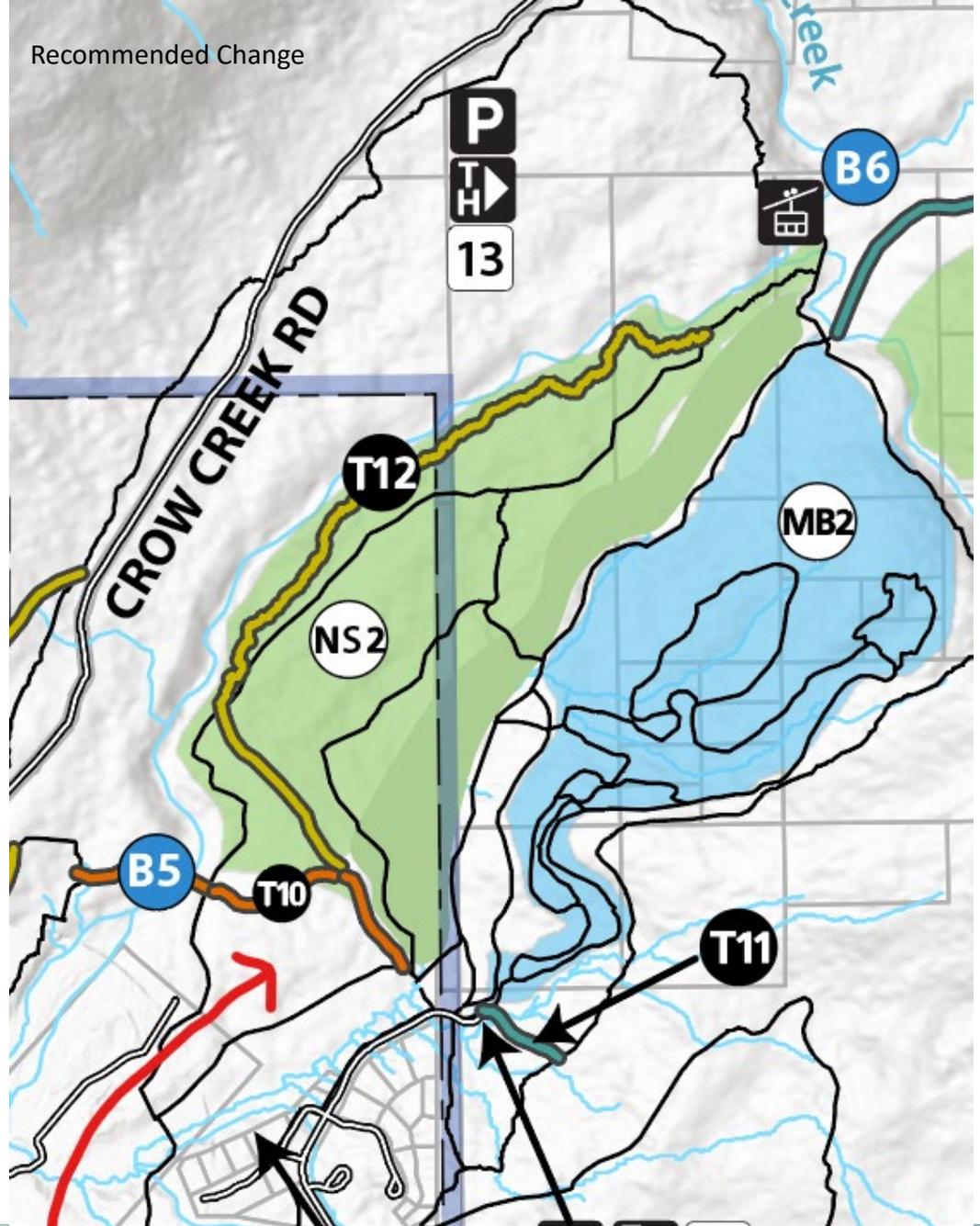
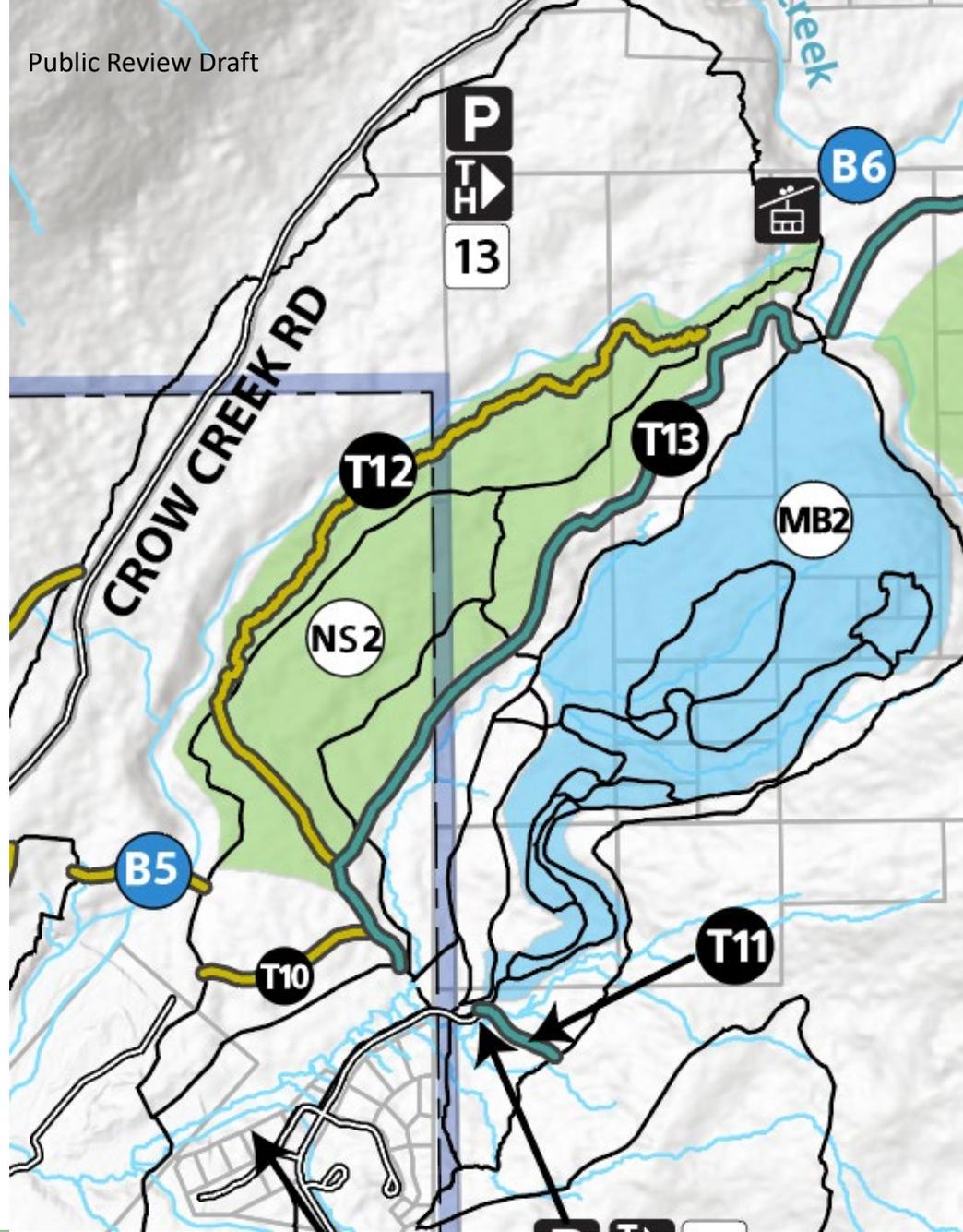
CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Recommend adjusting the boundary of NS2. Expand the boundary to the east to extend up to but not including the Snowcat Trail and the groomed section of Stumpy’s winter trail. **WHY:** There isn’t consensus for T13 and the wetlands are better suited for a more primitive experience.

B5: Glacier Creek Trail Bridge – North of Airport Land

NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RECOMMENDED

Add language to strengthen the concept that this bridge should connect directly to T10.



ADD FOREST LOOP

Mountain Bike Areas Description on Page 35

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove Mountain Biking Areas Title and replace with the following:

Areas for Mountain Biking Trail Development

The areas identified for mountain biking trail development don't limit the development of other recreational activities in the area.

Natural Spaces Description on Page 35

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – Remove Natural Space paragraph and replace with the following:

Areas for Primitive Trails

One way in which this plan improves the balance and diversity of Girdwood's trail system is by identifying areas where primitive trails are desired. Areas that prioritize primitive trails serve a variety of purposes, including both conservation and recreation, where non-mechanized recreation activities like trail walking, running, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, orienteering, foraging, wildlife viewing, education, solitude, and meditation are the primary uses.

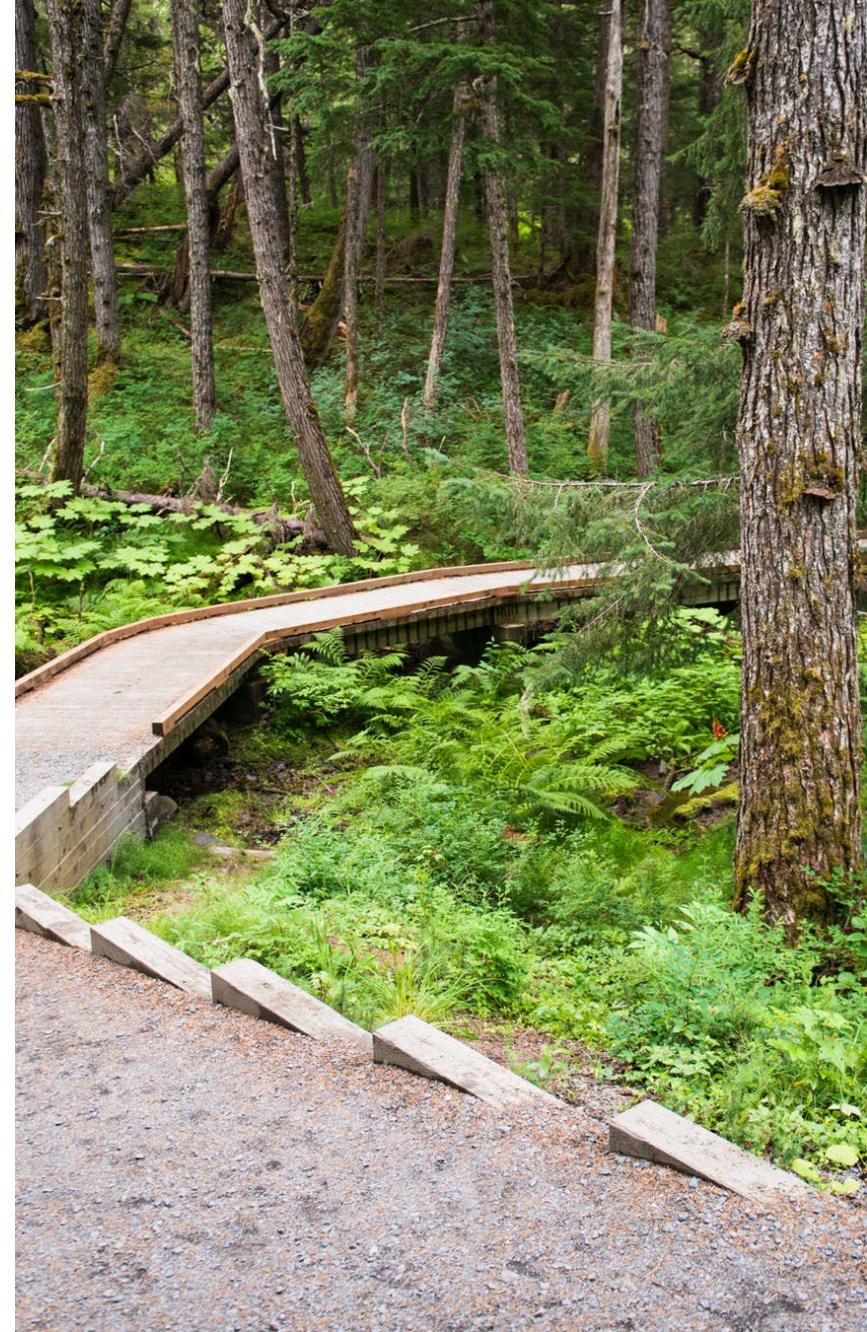
Natural Space Network & Mountain Bike Areas – Throughout the document

CHANGE RECOMMENDED – REMOVE all references to Natural Space Network and Mountain Bike Areas and adjust language to be consistent with the recommendations above.

WHY: Comments indicated that the use of the terms “mountain bike areas” and “natural space areas” gives the perception that the trail plan is making land use recommendations that will conflict with the Girdwood Area Plan, which is currently in development.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- October 5 - November 2: GTC member review
- November 2 GTC Meeting: Committee member recommendations for changes.
- November: Project Team will incorporate changes
- Land Use Committee, GBOS, HLBAC, PZC



To Girdwood Trails Committee,

Thank you for all the work going into the Girdwood Valley Trails Plan and for your work with previous community comments and concerns.

We're writing today to share thoughts on changes that were made to the Virgin Creek Natural Space and that are proposed for the Danish Trail.

Regarding moving the Natural Space boundaries away from Glacier Creek so that they do not include the Danish Trail, we think this is counter to both present recreational conditions in the area and the values of the creek corridor for wildlife. The creek corridor provides summer and winter habitat for loads of wildlife, including beaver, coyote, bears, moose, waterfowl, birds, and more. It stands out for its wildlife habitat and migration values in the lower valley, where wildlife must contend with human development, including trails. Instead of moving the Natural Space away from the creek, we think it should be moved to include the creek, which is consistent with the community's desire to protect wildlife habitat. Developing a Class III or Class IV trail in this area would create a more crowded human environment that would put pressure on wildlife and possibly lead to more human-wildlife conflict.

From a recreational standpoint we think it's important to acknowledge the Danish Trail has long been a Class I trail. At public meetings it is sometimes referred to as Class II, but the downed logs, narrow corridor, lack of installations, and overgrowth of alders and cranberries are far more consistent with Class I conditions. This is important to acknowledge so that community members can carefully consider the significant change that would occur if the Danish Trail were converted to a Class III or Class IV multi-use trail connected to a bridge that links to the more developed section of the Iditarod Trail.

We urge the group not to convert the Danish Trail to a higher condition class than is reflected on the ground today for the reasons listed below. However, we do support more maintenance of the trail to support its present Class I condition and would possibly support a well-planned multi-use Class III trail if it were placed closer to the Wagon Trail corridor, which would protect current wildlife and recreational opportunities closer to the creek.

Reasons in support of maintaining the Danish Trail in its current condition class:

- The community has not seen a map indicating the route for a Class III trail and how it would mitigate impacts on wildlife habitat and the area's abundant wetlands.
- In its current condition the Danish Trail provides an excellent corridor between Timberline and Old Girdwood. A modest pedestrian bridge negotiated with the railroad to solve the problem of people walking on the trestle would be great.
- The Danish Trail provides an unmatched opportunity in the lower valley for primitive hiking, skiing, exploring, berry-picking, enjoyment of solitude, and much more. Changing this to a Class III or IV trail would erode these current opportunities.
- As new houses and new (official and unofficial) trails have been developed in the lower valley, Girdwood residents are losing opportunities for remote Class I hiking and skiing opportunities like still exist on the Danish Trail.

- In the lower valley, the Danish Trail offers a good balance. While the Iditarod side of Glacier Creek has a higher development class and is more crowded year-round, the Danish side offers a more remote experience. The creek provides a natural boundary between these two experiences and is good to maintain for a spectrum of opportunities in the lower valley.
- A new Class III or Class IV trail on the Danish side of Glacier Creek may increase visitor traffic on Timberline and its side streets, increasing the problem of speeding in the neighborhoods. There is also no parking or plans for a trailhead for a proposed Class III or Class IV trail on the Danish side of the creek.

In short, a new Class III or Class IV developed trail on the Danish side of Glacier Creek would erode important space for wildlife, adversely impact current recreational opportunities, change the character of the Danish side of the valley, and possibly bring unwanted impacts to Timberline area neighborhoods

Thanks for considering our views.

Doug Penn and Laurie Van Huis

12-14-21

To Girdwood Trails Committee,

Thank you for all the work going into the Girdwood Valley Trails plan and for your work with previous community comments and concerns.

I'm writing today to share thoughts on changes that were made to the Virgin Creek Natural Space and that are proposed for the Danish Trail.

Regarding moving the Natural Space boundaries away from Glacier Creek so that they do not include the Danish Trail, I think this is counter to both present recreational conditions in the area and the values of the creek corridor for wildlife. The creek corridor provides summer and winter habitat for loads of wildlife, including beaver, coyote, bears, moose, waterfowl, birds, and more. It stands out for its wildlife habitat and migration values in the lower valley, where wildlife must contend with human development, including trails. Instead of moving the Natural Space away from the creek, I think it should be moved to include the creek, which is consistent with the community's desire to protect wildlife habitat. Developing a Class III or Class IV trail in this area would create a more crowded human environment that would put pressure on wildlife and possibly lead to more human-wildlife conflict.

As a resident of the Timberline area and a frequent user of the trail, I urge the group not to convert the Danish Trail to a higher condition class than is reflected on the ground today. However, I do support more maintenance of the trail to support its present Class I condition and I would support a multi-use Class III trail if it were placed closer to the Wagon Trail corridor.

I acknowledge that a lower valley loop is desired by many residents and so would emphasize exploring the potential option to upgrade the Wagon trail to a class III or IV to meet that need. Additionally, it would provide ample space between the river corridor and prevent damage to the fragile peatland meadows between Timberline and Glacier creek. Constructing trail through forests will result in the least amount of impact to plant communities (vs wetland or riparian shrub) and it will have the lowest likelihood of establishment of invasive species if canopy cover is preserved. In the longer term, it will be more cost effective to maintain as it will require minimal brushing or shrub encroachment.

With regards to the final trail plan for the whole valley, invasive species prevention measures (e.g. avoiding known infestations, regularly cleaning equipment before moving to new sites) should be taken during construction of any new trail, as numerous highly invasive and impactful species already occur in the valley such as orange hawkweed. The plan should also account for regular monitoring of these trails to rapidly detect new weed infestations before they spread. Mountain bikes, dogs, moose, bears, and hikers are all capable of picking up weed seeds and spreading them across this network of trails, resulting in a loss of native species diversity and potential harm to local ecosystems.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Kate Mohatt and Danial Keeler

To Girdwood Trails Committee,

Thank you for all the work going into the Girdwood Valley Trails Plan and for your work with previous community comments and concerns.

We're writing today to share thoughts on changes that were made to the Virgin Creek Natural Space and that are proposed for the Danish Trail.

Regarding moving the Natural Space boundaries away from Glacier Creek so that they do not include the Danish Trail, we think this is counter to both present recreational conditions in the area and the values of the creek corridor for wildlife. The creek corridor provides summer and winter habitat for loads of wildlife, including beaver, coyote, bears, moose, waterfowl, birds, and more. It stands out for its wildlife habitat and migration values in the lower valley, where wildlife must contend with human development, including trails. Instead of moving the Natural Space away from the creek, we think it should be moved to include the creek, which is consistent with the community's desire to protect wildlife habitat. Developing a Class III or Class IV trail in this area would create a more crowded human environment that would put pressure on wildlife and possibly lead to more human-wildlife conflict.

From a recreational standpoint we think it's important to acknowledge the Danish Trail has long been a Class I trail. At public meetings it is sometimes referred to as Class II, but the downed logs, narrow corridor, lack of installations, and overgrowth of alders and cranberries are far more consistent with Class I conditions. This is important to acknowledge so that community members can carefully consider the significant change that would occur if the Danish Trail were converted to a Class III or Class IV multi-use trail connected to a bridge that links to the more developed section of the Iditarod Trail.

We urge the group not to convert the Danish Trail to a higher condition class than is reflected on the ground today for the reasons listed below. However, we do support more maintenance of the trail to support its present Class I condition and would possibly support a well-planned multi-use Class III trail if it were placed closer to the Wagon Trail corridor, which would protect current wildlife and recreational opportunities closer to the creek.

Reasons in support of maintaining the Danish Trail in its current condition class:

- The community has not seen a map indicating the route for a Class III trail and how it would mitigate impacts on wildlife habitat and the area's abundant wetlands.
- In its current condition the Danish Trail provides an excellent corridor between Timberline and Old Girdwood. A modest pedestrian bridge negotiated with the railroad to solve the problem of people walking on the trestle would be great.
- The Danish Trail provides an unmatched opportunity in the lower valley for primitive hiking, skiing, exploring, berry-picking, enjoyment of solitude, and much more. Changing this to a Class III or IV trail would erode these current opportunities.
- As new houses and new (official and unofficial) trails have been developed in the lower valley, Girdwood residents are losing opportunities for remote Class I hiking and skiing opportunities like still exist on the Danish Trail.

- In the lower valley, the Danish Trail offers a good balance. While the Iditarod side of Glacier Creek has a higher development class and is more crowded year-round, the Danish side offers a more remote experience. The creek provides a natural boundary between these two experiences and is good to maintain for a spectrum of opportunities in the lower valley.
- A new Class III or Class IV trail on the Danish side of Glacier Creek may increase visitor traffic on Timberline and its side streets, increasing the problem of speeding in the neighborhoods. There is also no parking or plans for a trailhead for a proposed Class III or Class IV trail on the Danish side of the creek.

In short, a new Class III or Class IV developed trail on the Danish side of Glacier Creek would erode important space for wildlife, adversely impact current recreational opportunities, change the character of the Danish side of the valley, and possibly bring unwanted impacts to Timberline area neighborhoods

Thanks for considering our views.

Barbara Lydon, Tim Lydon

December 14, 2021

To Girdwood Trails Committee,

Although the comments below are not originally mine, they were shared with me by Tim Lydon, they are fully supported by me. I hope that you will consider these comments as you work to finalize the plan.

Re: Changes that were made to the Virgin Creek Natural Space and that are proposed for the Danish Trail.

Regarding moving the Natural Space boundaries away from Glacier Creek so that they do not include the Danish Trail, I think this is counter to both present recreational conditions in the area and the values of the creek corridor for wildlife. The creek corridor provides summer and winter habitat for loads of wildlife, including beaver, coyote, bears, moose, waterfowl, birds, and more. It stands out for its wildlife habitat and migration values in the lower valley, where wildlife must contend with human development, including trails. Instead of moving the Natural Space away from the creek, I think it should be moved to include the creek, which is consistent with the community's desire to protect wildlife habitat. Developing a Class III or Class IV trail in this area would create a more crowded human environment that would put pressure on wildlife and possibly lead to more human-wildlife conflict.

From a recreational standpoint I think it's important to acknowledge the Danish Trail has long been a Class I trail. At public meetings it is sometimes referred to as Class II, but the downed logs, narrow corridor, lack of installations, and overgrowth of alders and cranberries are far more consistent with Class I conditions. This is important to acknowledge so that community members can carefully consider the significant change that would occur if the Danish Trail were converted to a Class III or Class IV multi-use trail connected to a bridge that links to the more developed section of the Iditarod Trail.

I urge the group not to convert the Danish Trail to a higher condition class than is reflected on the ground today for the reasons listed below. However, I do support more maintenance of the trail to support its present Class I condition and I would support a multi-use Class III trail if it were placed closer to the Wagon Trail corridor.

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In short, a new Class III or Class IV developed trail on the Danish side of Glacier Creek would erode important space for wildlife, adversely impact current recreational opportunities, change the character of the Danish side of the valley, and possibly bring unwanted impacts to Timberline area neighborhoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The amount of time and energy that you put into maintaining our Girdwood trails and putting together the Girdwood Trail Plan is greatly appreciated.

/s/ Teresa Paquet

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