



MUNICIPALITY OF
ANCHORAGE

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

ANCHORAGE



PARKS & RECREATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 9, 2016

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Joshua Durand, Parks Superintendent

From: Maeve Nevins, Park Planner

Project: **PRC 16-18 Action Item: West Chester Lagoon Nature Trail**

INTRODUCTION

The Parks and Recreation Commission is asked to approve a proposed plan for improvements to the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and associated trailhead at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park to repair and rehabilitate one of Anchorage's oldest accessible nature trails.

Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation seeks to rehabilitate a dilapidated ADA accessible neighborhood connector trail known as the *Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail* and trailhead parking lot located in Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park south of Chester Creek and east of Spenard Road. The main purpose of this project is to restore the trail corridor to its original intent of serving as a fully accessible ADA multi-use nature trail, providing access from the adjacent neighborhoods to the south banks of Chester Creek and connecting to the Bunker Street trail spur of the "Lanie Fleischer" Chester Creek Trail.

The existing Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail parking area, amenities, and trail are in unusable condition due to deferred maintenance, age and root damage from Cottonwood trees. This Project includes maintenance repair and replacement of the parking lot, trailhead and trail surfaces due to safety hazards and limited accessibility per current codes. The addition of site and pedestrian level trail lighting is also included in the design for code compliance and safety in the parking lot and along the trail itself. A new 6-foot wide boardwalk is proposed to limit the disturbance of natural conditions and protect streambank habitat from impacts by off-path foot traffic and erosion. The trail was originally constructed in 1977-78 as an ADA accessible multi-use nature trail (see enclosed appendices).

LOCATION

The trail is located at Spenard Road and 19th Avenue, alongside the south banks of Chester Creek. It is the only municipal parkland on the south side of the Chester Creek greenbelt from C Street west to Cook Inlet. Located in one of the most actively-used corridors of parkland in the Municipality, *Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail* offers one of the only points of access to the Chester Creek Greenbelt from the neighborhood to the south. From the trailhead in the parking lot off of 19th Avenue the existing trail approaches and parallels the bank of the creek and branches off in a short, relatively level loop trail. Pedestrian access is from 19th Avenue and from the Chester Creek Trail and the spur trail at the terminus of Bunker Street to the east.

BACKGROUND

Rehabilitation of the original "Accessible Nature Trail For All" were originally proposed by an active community member and Project Champion, Glen Hemingson, to re-establish the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail as an accessible and functional public space. The potential to include improvements for environmental education, art and nature observation by community groups was identified as part of the project proposal in its earliest stage and has garnered considerable support along the way.

In addition to advocating for the project and working closely with Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, Glen has partnered with various community organizations to advance the Project by presenting to, and receiving support from, both of the local community councils; North Star and South Addition. The Anchorage Trails Initiative *Schools on Trails Program* has identified the project as a pilot project for implementation and has committed to facilitating student education and outreach along the improved Nature Trail. For example, the Project has already benefited from the removal of invasive species (*Prunus padus* or European Bird Cherry) along the nature trail corridor during an organized student and community work day with Stellar Secondary School in the fall of 2015. Additional work days dedicated to eradicating invasive species are anticipated.

This trail offers unique flora, fauna, wetlands and access to nature in an urbanized location where creek flow slacks and water begins to pool in the Westchester reservoir. It is the point where still water first thaws in spring, progressing westward across the upper lagoon as temperatures rebound from winter. Ducks, geese and moose are all present at various times of year, and songbirds abound during the summer months. The bog and creek shoreline offer a wide variety of flora providing a rich habitat for the salmon and trout living in the Chester Creek.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Proposed parking lot and trailhead improvements include removing and reconstructing the existing asphalt parking area, approximately 100-foot x 130-foot, to comply with current codes for vehicle access and maneuvering, ADA accessibility, required parking dimensions, grading. The addition of site lighting is proposed to meet code and improve safety. The parking area will accommodate twelve vehicles, including one van accessible space. The multi-use trailhead and parking will include appropriate site amenities such as a designated bike parking area with bike racks, bear-proof trash receptacle, lighting for safety, directional signage, a map kiosk, park rules signage, and interpretive educational signs.

Approximately 860-linear feet of existing 6' to 8' wide asphalt paved nature trail is to be improved with construction of 6'-0" wide elevated and accessible light penetrating boardwalk along the existing trail alignment. The boardwalk will be surfaced with fiberglass grid decking (*fibergrate*), and supported by pressure treated wood structure and helical pile footings. The shorter south loop of the nature trail is proposed to be resurfaced with asphalt pavement.

Three overlook viewing decks will be added to the boardwalk serving as educational opportunities for interacting with the Chester Creek. The overlooks would also be constructed with the light penetrating fibergrate with 4 inch diameter driven piling and PT wood framing. The overlooks will include fall protection rails as required by current code in areas 30" or above adjacent finish grade.

Streambank habitat restoration has been identified for existing cut banks and areas impacted by foot traffic and erosion. Trail interpretive and directional signage is to be included in the project, funded by the Anchorage Park Foundation as part of the Challenge Grant program.

The installation of a +/-500 square foot low-impact outdoor education space ("Learning Lab") for environmental education with local schools and organizations is proposed to replace existing asphalt paved picnic area north of parking lot and south of Chester Creek. This trail is within walking distance of seven ASD schools and the outdoor classroom is intended to support the efforts of the AEDC Live.Work.Play Anchorage Trails Initiative *Schools on Trails Program* and supplement the overlook decks as key locations along the trail for education and interpretation. The purpose is to promote outdoor learning, student health and environmental education. A map depicting the location of neighborhood public schools is included for reference (note that the Russian Educational Center – Oomnichka, is located across the street from the trail head on W 19th Avenue).

This "shovel ready" and fully permitted, community-supported project has brought together partnerships from the Municipality of Anchorage Public Works Department, the Anchorage Park Foundation, the Anchorage Museum, and the Anchorage Schools on Trails branch of the Anchorage Economic

Development Corporation's *Live.Work.Play* campaign and the Anchorage Trails Initiative. This partnership also includes representatives from the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, Anchorage School District, Alaska Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the National Park Service. Recently, the project has gained the attention of Visit Anchorage and the Anchorage Museum with both organizations interested in providing resources or supporting the project as appropriate.

In addition the parking and trail improvements, several custom designed benches developed by local students are anticipated to be fabricated and installed to replace at least two benches being removed. The student design detailing tasks are currently in progress as part of the Schools on Trails Program facilitated by local members of the Alaska Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Each of the site amenities will take safety into account and will be located and designed to specifically deter negative behavior such as sleeping on benches, graffiti, etc.

Trail lighting will meet current code with down-casting LED fixtures. The Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail parking area and trail rehabilitation will avoid disturbance to adjacent wetlands and waterways by limiting work to within the footprint of the existing parking area and trail corridor. The proposed improvements have been carefully planned and designed to use the structural base in existing paved areas. Fill slopes will be constructed at 2:1 (H:V) to reduce disturbance and fill impacts. All disturbed areas and fill slopes will receive Hydraulic Growth Medium and Wetland Seed Mix atop native soil backfill. All disturbed and fill areas shall include Best Management Practices (BMP) meeting or exceeding Alaska DEC requirements.

PLANNING

In addition to project specific planning and public involvement efforts undertaken by the Project Champion (Glen Hemingson) and Project Team, this pedestrian improvement project supports broader goals outlined in approved Municipal planning documents.

One of the main goals of the **Anchorage Bowl 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan** (LRTP) as stated on page 124 under *Funding Priorities- repair and Maintenance of Trails and Sidewalks*, identifies "the repair and maintenance of the existing trails and sidewalks as a funding priority that takes precedence over the addition of new trails when determining budget allocations." The **AMATS Anchorage Bike Plan** also has the goal of analyzing existing pathways and trails for rehabilitation needs community-wide and promotes specific projects to rehabilitate those existing pathways. While this project is not specifically identified in the AMATS plan, this project seeks to rehabilitate existing recreation trails within the Spenard Road Corridor and the Chester Creek Greenbelt while improving pedestrian safety and access for all to the adjacent neighborhood and public parkland. This trail type would meet the criteria for interpretive trail route or site selection criteria as described in the **The Areawide Trails Plan** on page 75.

CONNECTIVITY

While the original intent of the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail was to provide access to "nature" and the Chester Creek greenbelt, this trail is also a neighborhood connector being that it is located off of Spenard Road and 19th Avenue. It is the only municipal parkland on the south side of the Chester Creek greenbelt from C Street west to Cook Inlet. Located in one of the most actively-used corridors of parkland in the Municipality, the trail offers one of the only ADA accessible points of access to Chester Creek in this stream section.

The parking lot trailhead serves as an access point for the greenbelt trail system and specifically for visitors coming from the south. Access to the Chester Creek trail is convenient and once on the trail, users can connect to the Coastal Trail and beyond. The project trailhead is also conveniently located within very close proximity to the PeopleMover Bus Route # 7 stop (located at Spenard & 19TH Avenue NNE), allowing for door to trail accessible access to the Chester Creek Greenbelt trail system. Once the outdoor learning lab is constructed, it will become a destination for local schools and other educational programs within walking distance. The accessible overlook viewing platforms along the Chester Creek will

enable visitors to engage with the creek's shoreline in a safe, inclusive manner and provide sites for water quality and habitat monitoring for people of all abilities.

SAFETY & MOBILITY

The historical intent of the site was "intended to provide public land access that is free of physical barriers to the elderly or disabled community," as per the original design documents of 1977. The current site condition is not safe or accessible resulting in closing the trailhead parking lot and removal of site amenities. While pedestrian or bicycle crash history is not available, there have been several complaints from local Community Councils and Assembly members regarding the hazard that the current trail poses to the public due to its poor condition. During the reconstruction of the Chester Creek Trail planning phase, a public survey of over 500 community members was taken asking what the priorities of the project funding should include; rehabilitation of this trail and access to the parking lot trailhead was cited as a priority.

Implementation of this project would directly benefit the North Star neighborhood adjacent to the south, a mixed-use, assortment of single- and multi-family residences, and would connect trail users from across the creek traveling from the main Chester Creek Trail corridor on the north bank. The seven ASD schools within walking distance would have a renewed, safer, and more educational venue for physical, scientific and civic education. The project would complete a series of recent improvements along the western Chester Creek greenbelt, and has great potential for transforming an under-used and neglected public space into a magnet for outdoor activity and learning that could be enjoyed by everyone, including those with disabilities.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This "shovel ready" and fully permitted, community-supported project has brought together partnerships from the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation, MOA Public Works Department, the Anchorage Park Foundation, and the Anchorage Schools on Trails Program.

This project has received resolutions of support from the South Addition and North Star Community Councils. All relative permits are now approved and the construction documents are complete.

In addition to outreach to community members and organizational partners the Schools on Trails Program initiated an online survey to all teachers in the (7) nearby ASD schools with 23 respondents. The survey offered information pertaining to the existing and potential uses of the site for educational purposes. The results of the survey questions are enclosed as an appendix to this document.

This project has gained widespread support and has benefited from establishment of multiple partnerships to advance outdoor learning and understanding. The following partners are recognized as having provided significant technical expertise, chaperone assistance, financial support, and administrative capacity to help move this project and mission forward. The Parks and Recreation Department will provide additional guidance as appropriate in final planning and construction.

- Anchorage Parks and Recreation – *Project Management, Technical + Programming Support*
- Anchorage Park Foundation - *Challenge Grant Award*
- Anchorage Department of Public Works – *Funding Assistance*
- Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Systems (AMATS) – *Funding Assistance*
- Alaska Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects – *Technical Assistance + Project Support*
- U.S. Department of the Interior - *Schools on Trails Program Administrator*
- University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service – *Outdoor Education Resources*
- Anchorage School District Health and Physical Education Department – *Advocacy, Agency + Technical Support*

- Anchorage Economic Development Corporation *Live.Work.Play.* Anchorage Trails Initiative – *Advocacy + Organizational Support*
- National Park Service: Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program – *Technical Resources*
- Visit Anchorage – *Advocacy and Outreach Resources*
- Anchorage Museum – *Interpretive Material Development*

FUNDING

The MOA Parks and Recreation Department is currently anticipating phased construction of the project with available funding and starting this summer (2016). Additional funding sources for future phases of construction are being identified and pursued concurrent with improvements. Currently available funds include:

- March 2015 Anchorage Park Foundation awarded a \$40,000 matching Challenge Grant to the Schools on Trails Program for construction of an outdoor classroom, design/installation of four new benches, and design/installation of interpretive and wayfinding signage.
- Fall of 2015, the Parks Department received a \$100,000 *Salmon in the City Grant* which was used to complete the site, trail and parking lot design, permitting and construction documents, and early procurement of portions of the light penetrating boardwalk material.
- Spring of 2016, the Parks Department was awarded a \$261,000 Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAPS) grant through the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Systems (AMATS), to be administered by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF). This funding will be used to complete Phase One of construction improvements including:
 - Rehabilitation of the existing asphalt paved trailhead parking area, including: reconstruction of the structural base, new asphalt pavement and striping, new site lighting, and required landscaping
 - Resurfacing of the south loop of Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail (WLNT) with leveling course and 6-foot wide paved asphalt surface
 - Installation of pedestrian trail lighting along the existing alignment of the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail from the parking area on West 19th to the Bunker Street Trail Spur, including: pile driven light pole foundations, pedestrian scale light poles, LED light fixtures, load center upgrades and appurtenant hardware, switches, conduits, and wiring

This project seeks additional funding to complete construction of Phase 2 improvements, including:

- Removal of existing asphalt pavement and Construction of an accessible boardwalk with light penetrating fiberglass decking along the existing alignment
- Construction of (3) Overlook Decks along the WLNT
- Stabilization of eroding streambank using methods outlined in *Streambank Revegetation and Protection: A Guide for Alaska* (ADF&G 2005)
- Continued Removal and Management of invasive species

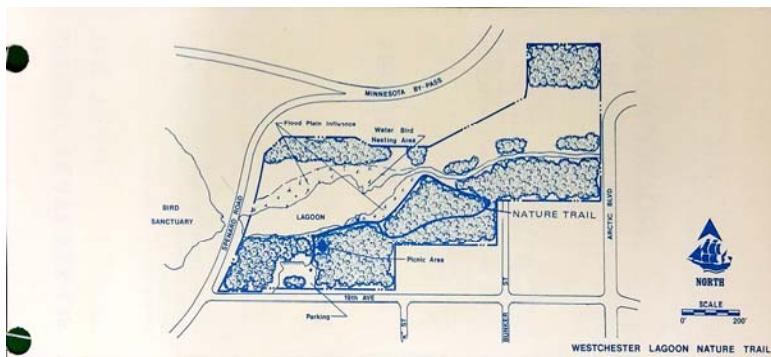
STAFF RECOMMENDATION

For the last ten years, residents of the South Addition and North Star neighborhoods have been requesting that this trail be repaired. It has become a “diamond in the rough” trail corridor to those that know about it, and to others it has been a hazardous safety concern. With the support of active citizens this site should no longer be forgotten, it is ready to be rebuilt and returned to the community as a jewel landmark in our beloved greenbelt trail system. The Department recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission pass the proposed Resolution to support this project.

APPENDIX A: IMAGES



Cover and inset of *Nature Trail For All People* pamphlet (1978)



Trail Map for Westchester Lagoon Trail, the "Nature Trail For All People" (1978)

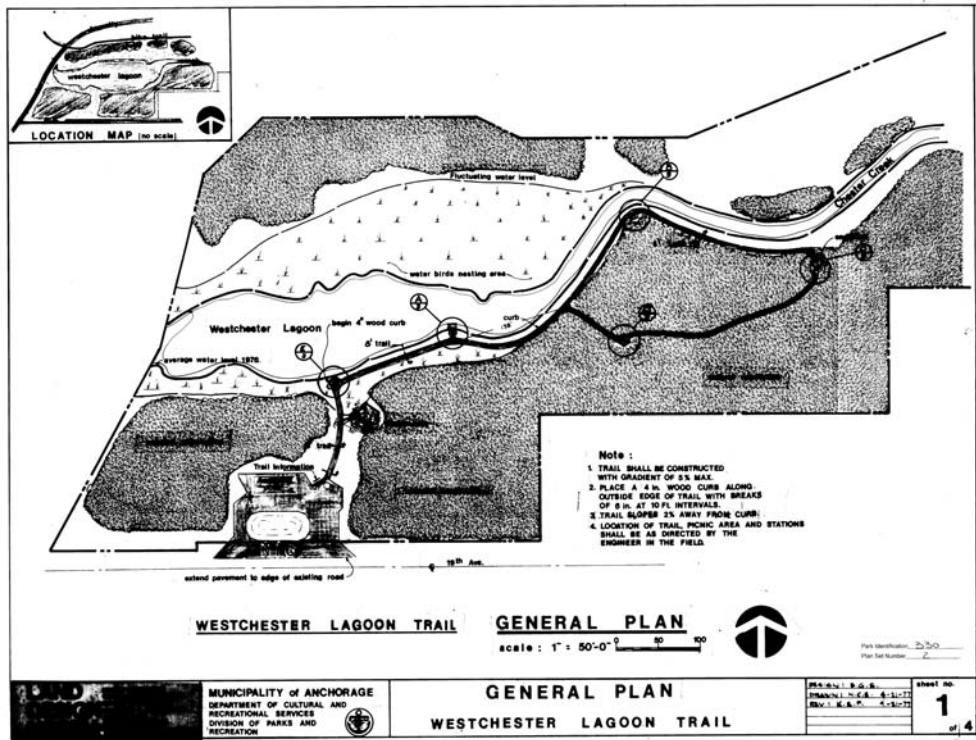
MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF PARKS & RECREATION
WESTCHESTER LAGOON TRAIL
NATURE TRAIL FOR THE HANDICAPPED

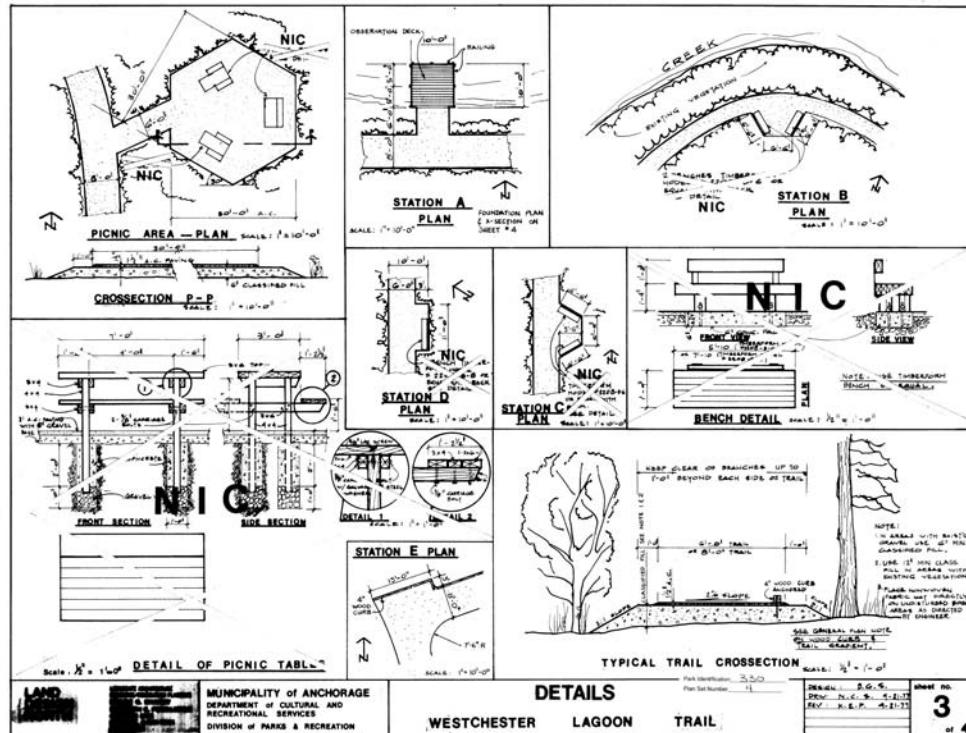
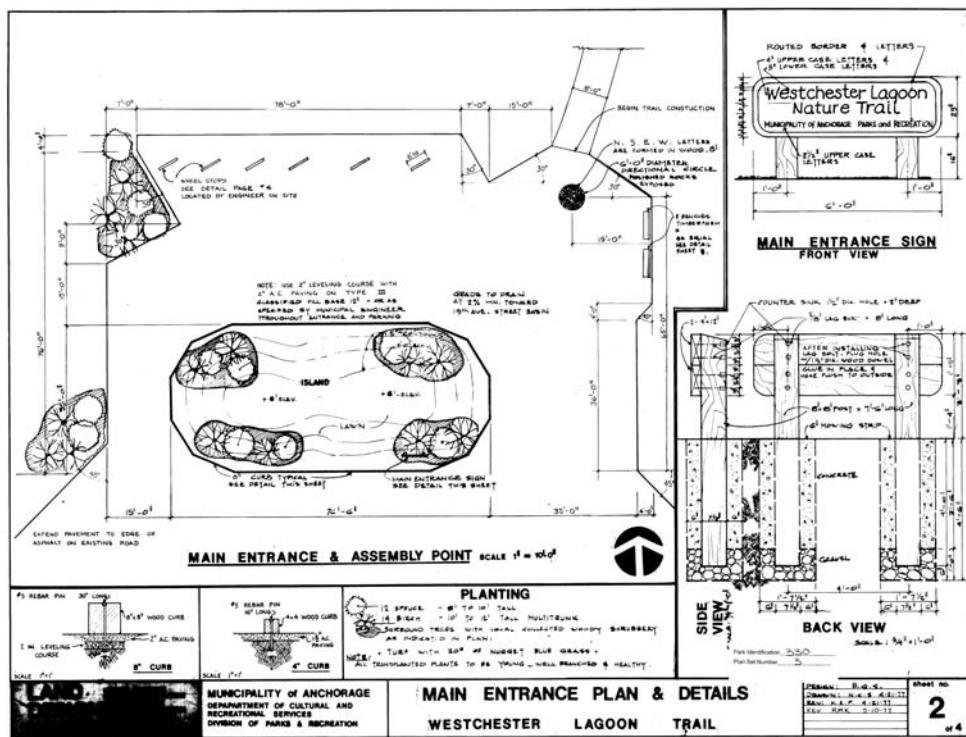
INDEX:

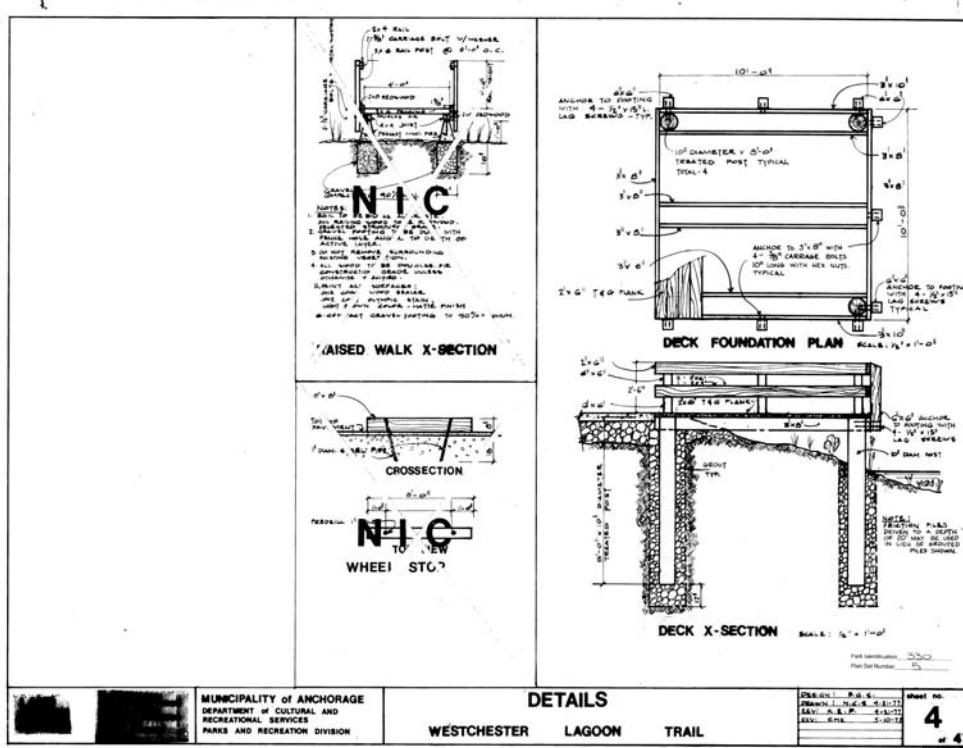
GENERAL PLAN & LOCATION MAP	Sheet 1
MAIN ENTRANCE & PARKING PLAN	Sheet 2
CONSTRUCTION DETAILS	Sheet 3
CONSTRUCTION DETAILS	Sheet 4



ANCHORAGE PARK #
WESTCHESTER CREEK 400



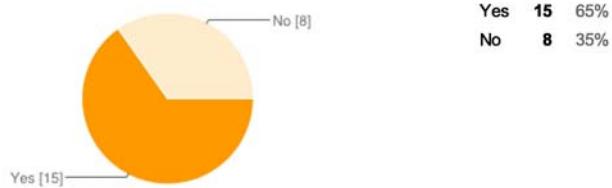




Original Construction Documents for Westchester Lagoon [Nature] Trail (1977)

Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and adjacent ASD Schools

Do you currently use the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail for school-related or personal activities?



If you could make any improvement to this section of park what would it be?

Seating areas, grass re-seeded, boardwalk on periphery of lagoon.

Bring back the disc golf course!

Build a pavilion or chalet that would shelter at least 50 students. Access to restroom facilities. Make sure there are proper waste disposal area to keep trash out of reach of wildlife.

Patrol for homeless/drunk people during school hours. Have a police presence in or near Valley of the Moon Park where criminal activity takes place. Organize a litter prevention/trail improvement project for classes/groups- this may help them take ownership of the area.

Safety improvements: * clearing vegetation well away from the path so that there's good visibility vs.

Excerpt of online survey of teachers at 7 nearby schools (2014)

June 9, 2016

APPENDIX A: Page 5 of 9



Existing trail root damage



Existing trail root damage



*Schools on Trails Invasive Weed (*Prunus padus*) removal with Stellar Secondary School students [images: Jody Overstreet]*

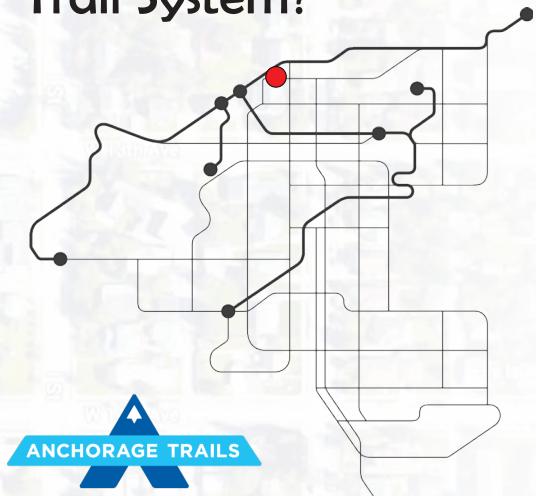
Inlet View Elementary School

Chester Creek Trail and Westchester Lagoon

Nature Trail Activity Map

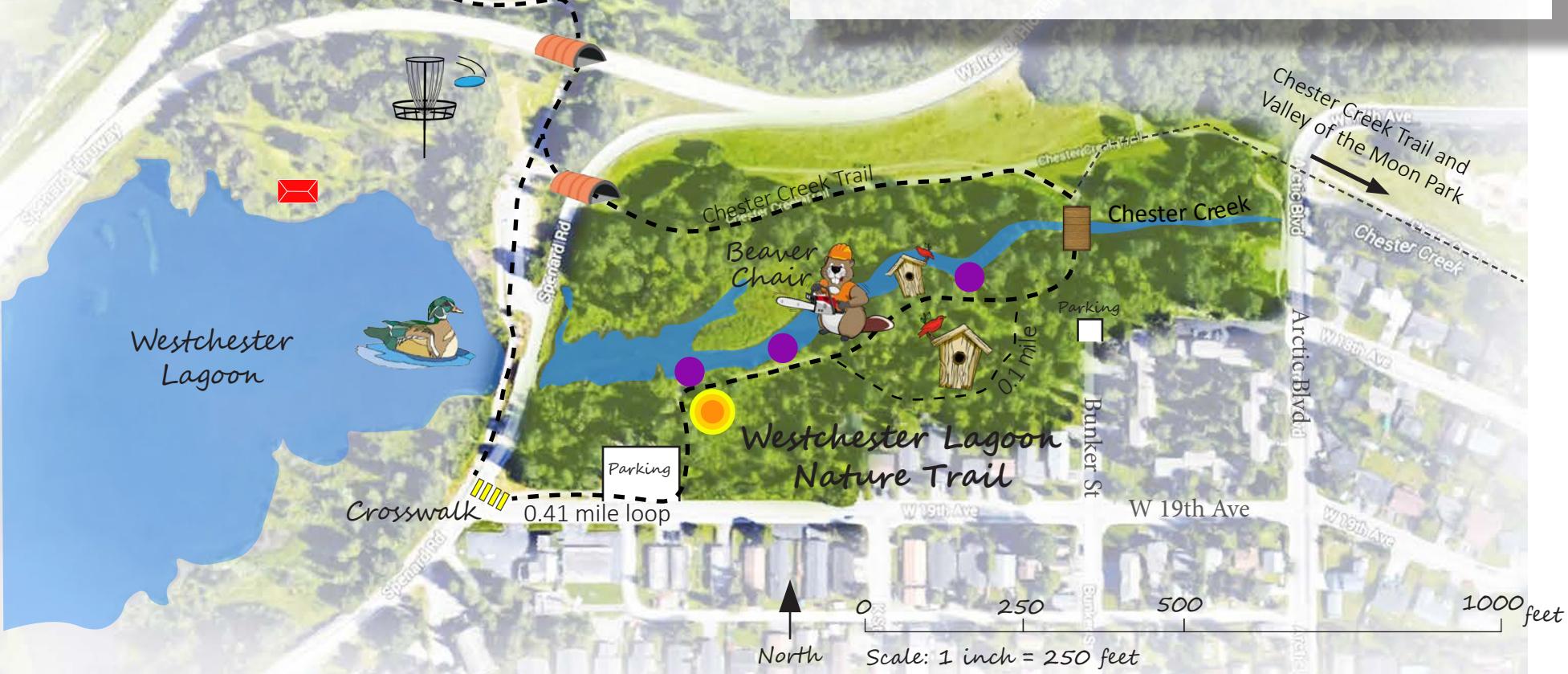


Where in the Anchorage Trail System?



Map Key

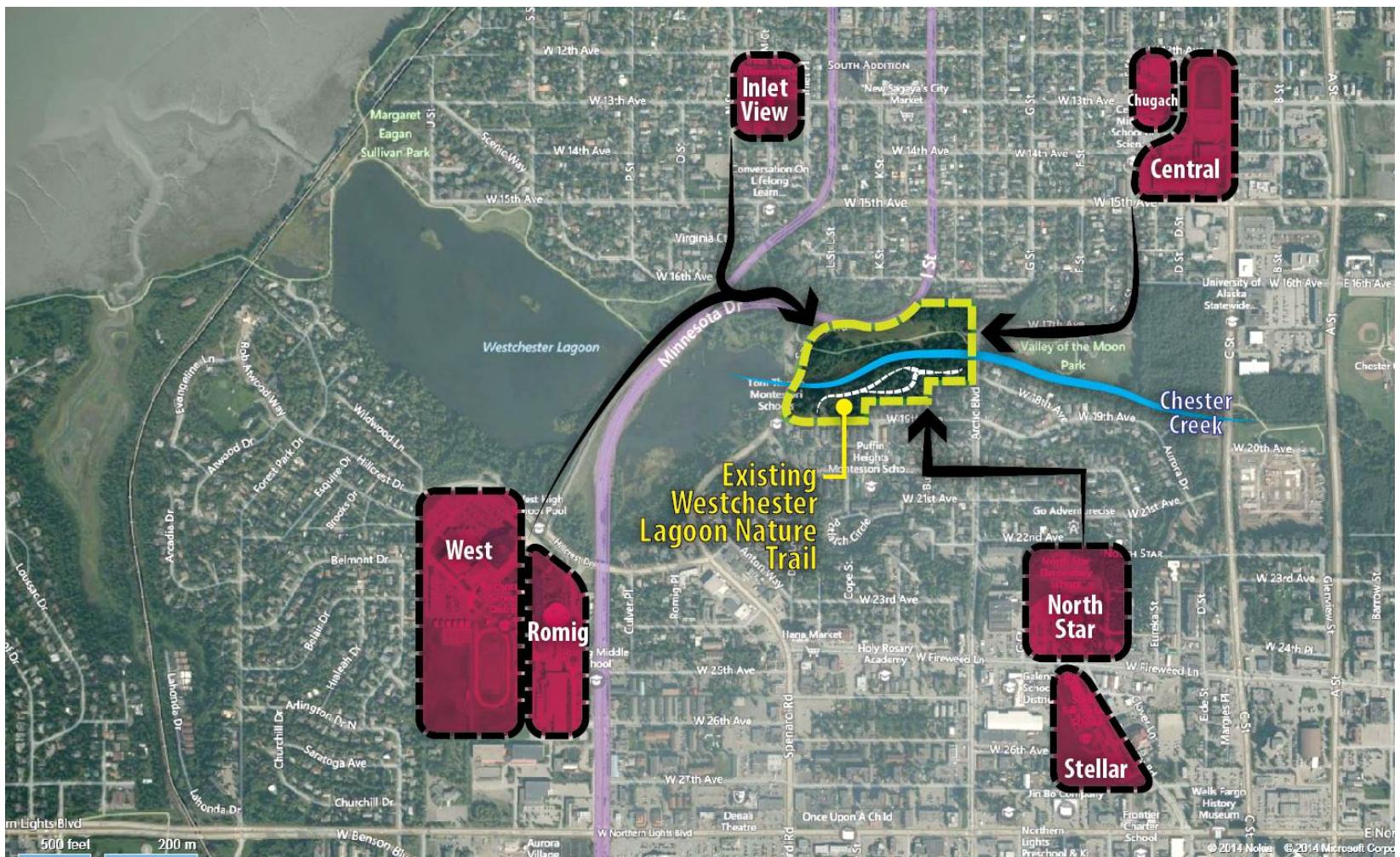
- | | | | |
|--|-------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| | Playground | | Proposed Site for Outdoor Classroom |
| | Hockey Rink | | Shelter |
| | Tunnel | | Bird House |
| | Bridge | | Proposed Stream Overlook |



The Inlet View Elementary School trail connection to the Chester Creek Trail and Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail is part of the Schools on Trails initiative to promote outdoor learning, student health and environmental education.

For more information visit www.anchorageparkfoundation.org/programs/trails-initiative/schools-trails

Project Location showing seven nearby schools





Graphic Site Plan
Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail

BETTISWORTH NORTH





Entry Features

Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail

BETTISWORTH-NORTH  ANCHORAGE 

Light penetrating boardwalk and trail entry concept



Overlook Deck

Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail

BETTISWORTH-NORTH  ANCHORAGE 

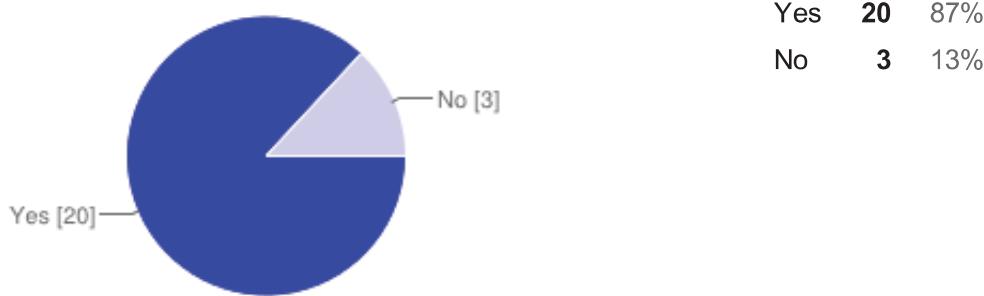
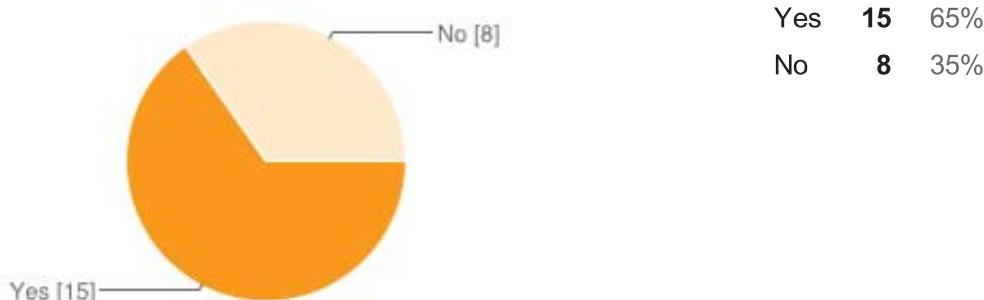
Light penetrating overlook deck concept at Chester Creek

PRC 2016-18: APPENDIX B - ASD Teacher Survey Responses

23 responses

[View all responses](#)[Publish analytics](#)

Summary

Are you aware of the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail in Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park?**Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and adjacent ASD Schools****Do you currently use the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail for school-related or personal activities?****If you could make any improvement to this section of park what would it be?**

Seating areas, grass re-seeded, boardwalk on periphery of lagoon.

Bring back the disc golf course!

Build a pavilion or chalet that would shelter at least 50 students. Access to restroom facilities. Make sure there are proper waste disposal area to keep trash out of reach of wildlife.

Patrol for homeless/drunk people during school hours. Have a police presence in or near Valley of the Moon Park where criminal activity takes place. Organize a litter prevention/trail improvement project for classes/groups- this may help them take ownership of the area.

Safety improvements: * clearing vegetation well away from the path so that there's good visibility vs.

potential assailants/moose, etc.. *Police/neighborhood watch patrols. *Posted, low speed limits for bikes, etc.

Yes I am personally moving to the neighborhood and love the location for its amazing nature and proximity to downtown and great schools. I would love to see more access and improvements. Also as a teacher at Romig MS, we often use the trails and nature areas with students during school as well as our athletes after school for xc skiing/running, etc.

Adding some fitness "stations" and some informational signs about wildlife/plants/landmarks/history of the area perhaps

Upgrade trail surface. Re-open and make improvements to parking area off West 19th Avenue.

I'd like to see a workout section along the trail system. There is currently one over at the equestrian trails off of Abbot between Lake Otis and Elmore. I'd like to see something like this put in. I believe it would be something all the schools and community would benefit from.

Clear out some of the foliage so there are not so many homeless camps and loitering individuals. It does not seem like a safe area to take Kindergartners. The tunnel under Minnesota Drive which we would need to use to get to the nature trail is scary. That needs to be improved. I personally use the coastal trail around Westchester, but not the nature trail. It is relatively isolated and feels generally unsafe.

As a coach of XC running I wish that there were more established dirt or gravel trails, my athletes are on pavement so much.

I have not been down there since last May, so do not know the condition. When I did take my classes there to do some water quality studies, my concern was that the area was becoming somewhat unkempt and students were put off by the debris and evidence of "squatting". Just a general clean up was what I would recommend.

I would say leave the area as is, other than simply improving the condition of the trail (pavement). The edges are eroded in places, and roots stick through. It is a nice area to take students to the water to study macroinvertebrates and water quality.

Improve trail surface and prevent bank erosion. Reopen and improve the parking area off 19th Avenue, or convert it to an open recreational multipurpose entrance to the nature trail. Improvements should enhance natural characteristics of the riparian zone for outdoor studies in natural science.

What single most important concern would you have about development or use on the nature trail or in the park?

Human impact on nature

Safety for pedestrians of all ages, especially at night.

Homeless Camps

increased use adding more trash to the watershed

Inebriates

Safety- from other humans

too many people would be there.

maintain for wildlife....

pollution of the creek

Safety issues and misuse since this area is somewhat isolated from street view and is part of a wildlife corridor. .

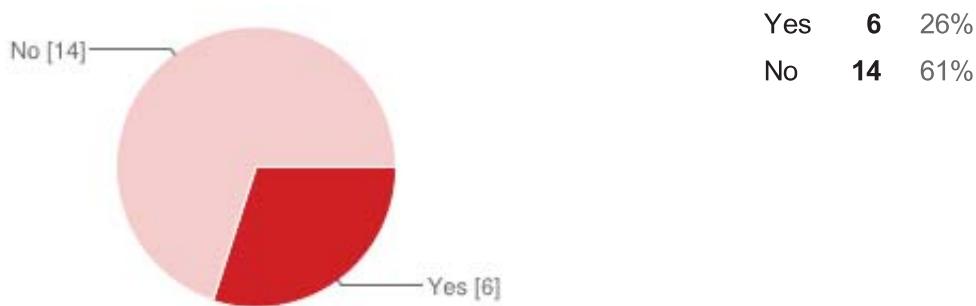
safety ######

Improvement with kids in mind, safer and easier access.

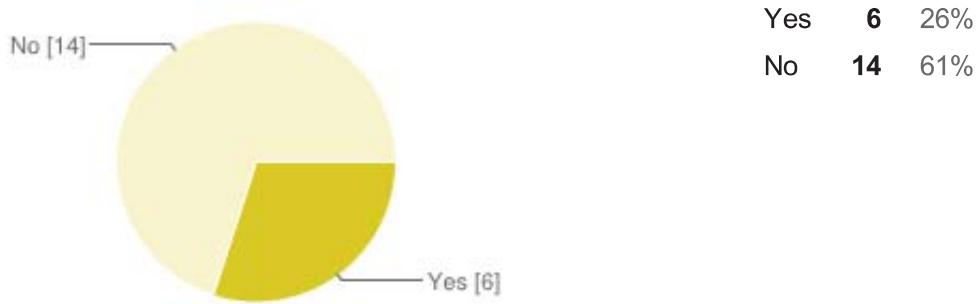
trails

safety

Are you willing to participate in additional master planning efforts to improve the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and/or this easternmost section of Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park?



Are you willing to champion an effort in your school to assist in the effort to improve this nature trail and park for learning or student-focused activities.



Can we contact you for additional information or to share progress about efforts and events associated with the master plan of the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park?

REDACTED

Number of daily responses



November 18, 2015

To: South Addition Community Council

From: Schools on Trails Program of the Anchorage Park Foundation

Re: Request for approval of a Resolution supporting Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail Rehabilitation Project

- Whereas, educating kids outside in the natural environment has health, academic, behavioral, confidence-building, and many other positive benefits;
- Whereas, Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail is within easy walking distance of seven ASD schools - North Star Elementary, Steller Secondary, Central Middle School, Chugach Optional Elementary, Inlet View Elementary, Romig Middle School and West High;
- Whereas, the Schools on Trails program of the Anchorage Park Foundation Trails Initiative strives to:
 - Identify and raise awareness of trails, parks, streams and natural habitat near Anchorage schools;
 - Connect schools and families to these nearby public spaces and encourage outdoor educational opportunities;
 - Engage staff and students in creation, planning and implementation of improvement projects;
 - Leverage school interest for project fundraising and long-term success;
 - Involve students in each step of the process as real-life lessons in civic engagement and project management;
 - Provide continuing education incentives to school staff and other volunteers for professional participation;
- Whereas, project champions in neighborhood schools have expressed interest in making Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail a more accessible and flexible outdoor space for learning all subjects;
- Whereas, staff and students will work with local landscape design professionals, community organizations and leaders, and entities such as the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and UAF Cooperative Extension Service;
- Whereas, the improvement project will encourage staff and students of neighborhood schools as leaders in the stewardship and advocacy of Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail as a neighborhood and community resource;
- Whereas, students and staff at neighborhood schools will activate families, neighbors, visitors and commuters near Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail with the need for improved safety in, extended ownership of, and responsibility for, the Nature Trail area;
- Whereas, long overdue maintenance improvements are required to rehabilitate the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and repair the damaged paved surface in order to service visitors of all abilities as an Accessible Nature Trail, as it was originally designed in 1977.
- Whereas, improvements to trail segments, parking and amenities are required to meet updated code, requirements for safety, and regulations governing the Flood Way of Chester Creek, Municipality of Anchorage Class "A" Wetlands, and critical Anadromous fish (Salmon) and waterfowl habitat.

- Therefore, be it resolved that the South Addition Community Council supports the proposed Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail Rehabilitation Project that includes trail improvements, interpretive signage, public art, installation, outdoor learning space and safety upgrades for broad community use and educational functions.

NORTH STAR COMMUNITY COUNCIL (NSCC)

7:00 to 9:00 p.m. 2nd Wednesday of each month September thru May
North Star Elementary School (Library) - 605 West Fireweed Lane
Federation of Community Councils - <http://communitycouncils.org/servlet/content/24.html>
Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/groups/northstarcommunitycouncil/>

RESOLUTION

- Whereas, educating kids outside in the natural environment has health, academic, behavioral, confidence-building, and many other positive benefits;
- Whereas, Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail is within easy walking distance of seven ASD schools - North Star Elementary, Steller Secondary, Central Middle School, Chugach Optional Elementary, Inlet View Elementary, Romig Middle School and West High;
- Whereas, the Schools on Trails program of the Anchorage Park Foundation Trails Initiative strives to:
 - Identify and raise awareness of trails, parks, streams and natural habitat near Anchorage schools;
 - Connect schools and families to these nearby public spaces and encourage outdoor educational opportunities;
 - Engage staff and students in creation, planning and implementation of improvement projects;
 - Leverage school interest for project fundraising and long-term success;
 - Involve students in each step of the process as real-life lessons in civic engagement and project management;
 - Provide continuing education incentives to school staff and other volunteers for professional participation;
- Whereas, project champions in neighborhood schools have expressed interest in making Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail a more accessible and flexible outdoor space for learning all subjects;
- Whereas, staff and students will work with local landscape design professionals, community organizations and leaders, and entities such as the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and UAF Cooperative Extension Service;
- Whereas, the improvement project will encourage staff and students of neighborhood schools as leaders in the stewardship and advocacy of Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail as a neighborhood and community resource;
- Whereas, students and staff at neighborhood schools will activate families, neighbors, visitors and commuters near Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail with the need for improved safety in, extended ownership of, and responsibility for, the Nature Trail area;
- Whereas, long overdue maintenance improvements are required to rehabilitate the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and repair the damaged paved surface in order to service visitors of all abilities as an Accessible Nature Trail, as it was originally designed in 1977.
- Whereas, improvements to trail segments, parking and amenities are required to meet updated code, requirements for safety, and regulations governing the Flood Way of Chester Creek, Municipality of Anchorage Class "A" Wetlands, and critical Anadromous fish (Salmon) and waterfowl habitat.
- Therefore, be it resolved that the North Star Community Council supports the proposed Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail Rehabilitation Project that includes trail improvements, interpretive signage, public art, installation, outdoor learning space and safety upgrades for broad community use and educational functions.



Samuel A. Moore
President

Wednesday, November 11, 2015

Approved by a majority vote this date

NSCC general membership meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of each month (Sept – May) at 7pm at North Star Elementary School, 605 West Fireweed Lane, in the school Library. The Municipality of Anchorage complies with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Reasonable accommodations will be made available to qualified individuals upon request. Contact the Community Councils Center at (907) 277-1977 at least 10 days in advance of need.



**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

ANCHORAGE



PARKS & RECREATION

**PRC RES NO. 2016-16
Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail**

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 development of facilities in support of School-Park Partnerships to enhance the potential community benefits of such associations; 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 West Chester Lagoon Nature Trail project rehabilitates and updates an existing park asset to meet current codes and standards for accessibility; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department partnered with local Project Champions, Community Councils, community organizations, stakeholders and user groups to identify and prioritize desired improvements for the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail; and

WHEREAS, the improvements proposed are based on community and stakeholder input, and was designed and permitted to meet multiple Agencies Having Jurisdiction requirements for improvements in a sensitive habitat, adjacent to wetlands and located within the Floodplain and Floodway of Chester Creek; and

WHEREAS, the North Star and South Addition Community Councils have been engaged throughout the project and process, and have long supported improvements to the Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and trailhead parking area for improved access, safety and accessibility; and

WHEREAS, the proposed plan minimizes short- and long-term impacts to sensitive habitats, ecosystems, and adjacent property owners by removing impervious surfaces, maintaining the existing footprint to the extent practicable, and constructing improvements that encourage environmental observation and education; and

WHEREAS, the Schools on Trials program—under the Anchorage Trails Initiative of the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, *Live.Work.Play*—is supported by the

Anchorage Park Foundation with a challenge grant to develop a Learning Lab and educational resources that benefit seven (7) nearby ASD Schools and their educational mission; and

WHEREAS, the grantees have worked with the schools, educational organizations, and the community to develop plans to improve the Nature Trail and install features to establish the Learning Lab funded by the challenge grant and Schools on Trails programs; and

WHEREAS, the accessible Learning Lab, Overlook Decks and Boardwalk would be a valuable asset to the community and enhance the park for educational use and increase appreciation for natural resource values of the park, in particular the flora, fauna, streams, and ecosystems; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves in the proposed plan for the rehabilitation of Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail and trailhead parking area at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park generally as proposed.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 9th day of June 2016.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

John Rodda, Director
Parks & Recreation Department