



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630

P.O. Box 196650

Anchorage, AK 99519



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 12, 2026

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Cc: Taylor Keegan, Superintendent

From: Evan Sharp, EIT, Park Planner & Nicolette Dent, Park Planner

Subject: **PRC 26-06 Russian Jack Springs Park Improvements**

Overview

Anchorage Parks and Recreation is proposing improvements to existing features in the southern half of Russian Jack Springs Park based on the 2022 *Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan*. Through a combination of bond funding and federal grants, three existing features will be improved: 1) the multi-use trail called the Lighted Loop, 2) the popular sledding hill, and 3) the exterior gathering space and deck connected to the Lidia Selkregg Chalet.

Park Background

Russian Jack Springs Park is one of Anchorage's oldest and most popular parks. Located in the heart of East Anchorage, the 324-acre park provides opportunities for year-round recreation. The park also contains significant fish and wildlife habitat, including the headwaters of the Middle Fork of Chester Creek which emerge as Russian Jack Springs.

Six miles of paved and soft-surface trails span the park with 8.2 miles of groomed ski trails in the winter. Other developed facilities in the southern section of the park include a par-3 golf course, outdoor learning labs, greenhouses, and off-street parking. The Lidia Selkregg Chalet serves as a warming area, community rental space, and youth programming hub.

Lighted Loop Rehabilitation

In 2024, Parks and Recreation completed rehabilitation of 2,800 linear feet of multi-use paved trail (the Lighted Loop) along with installation of a new 65-foot steel bridge. This project will pick up where that project left off, continuing rehabilitation of the trail surface. The trail has deteriorated significantly in some areas, requiring subbase improvements, but many segments will only require surface improvement.

At the intersection near the Selkregg Chalet, a 40' steel bridge will replace the wooden bridge. The current T intersection will be realigned into a Y-shaped intersection. New trail lighting will also be added to the spur trail that connects the Nunaka Valley neighborhood to Russian Jack Springs Park underneath Boniface Parkway.



Above: Existing T intersection near Chalet.



Above: Spur trail where lighting will be added.



Above: Sledding hill runout zone with temporary safety intervention.



Above: Existing condition of the deck with deteriorating surface.

Sledding Hill Safety Improvements

The sledding hill at Russian Jack Springs Park has long been a favorite family destination during Anchorage's long winters. However, the orientation of the hill and mature vegetation in the runout zone has created serious safety concerns. Re-grading the slope and redirecting the runout zone was initially explored by the design team but ruled out due to high cost and the possibility of introducing new hazards. The proposal would remove trees from a 0.4-acre area at the base of the sledding hill and remove two light fixtures. A new light fixture will be installed outside of the sledding zone, maintaining ample lighting of the groomed ski trails.



Above: Summary of proposed trail improvements. This map shows the southern area of Russian Jack Springs Park, south of DeBarr Rd.

Selkregg Chalet Plaza, Deck, and Trailhead Improvements

Redeveloping the area surrounding the Selkregg Chalet will support recreation programs for youth, provide a safe gathering space for the public, and improve trail access. The existing Chalet deck will be demolished and replaced to accommodate regular outdoor recreation programs and private rentals. The new deck will use composite decking material that maintains a natural character and supports ease of snow removal. To expand the deck without affecting nearby utilities, the first tee of the golf course will be relocated approximately 80 feet to the southeast.

The lower plaza will become a flexible paved space to support four-season use. By keeping the paved area unobstructed, it can support uses such as food trucks, vendors, firepits or portable heaters, tabling events, and educational gatherings. A new trail entrance will connect from the plaza to the Lighted Loop to create safer access for pedestrians away from the parking area. Perennial landscaping will be incorporated to match the park's natural character without obstructing the flow of traffic or snow removal.



Above: Aerial view of the Chalet and sledding hill in fall.

Funding and Timeline

This project draws from two funding sources: municipal park bonds for Russian Jack Springs Park and a grant awarded from the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program (ORLP) in the amount of \$621,000. The trail, bridge, lighting, and Chalet deck and plaza improvements will be prepared to go out to bid in 2026 for 2027 construction. The sledding hill improvements are planned for 2026 via an existing term contract.

Public Involvement

This project implements recommendations from the 2022 *Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan*, which was created through a multi-year public process including the Russian Jack and Northeast Community Councils, park user groups, and parks staff. These proposed improvements have also been reviewed and supported by both the Russian Jack and Northeast Community Councils in the last six months.

Staff Recommendation

The Department recommends approval of the proposed improvements at Russian Jack Springs Park. This park is cherished by many for its expanse of forest and green space; however, the park's aging infrastructure creates safety concerns for users. Investment in Russian Jack Springs Park will reach approximately 60,000 Anchorage residents within one mile of their home, improve the quality of outdoor education programs, and invite families to safely explore the park year-round.

Attachments

- A. RJSP-TrailBridge-Improvements
- B. RJSP-Tree Clearing Limits near Sledding Hill- 3-24-2026
- C. RJSPChalet-Plaza-65% DRAFT PRELIMINARY
- D. RJCC December Minutes Approval
- E. NECC Parks&Rec Ltr_March 2, 2026

More Information

Project Website:

<https://www.muni.org/Departments/parks/Pages/RussianJackTrailImprovements.aspx>



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PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

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PRC RESOLUTION NO. 2026-05 Russian Jack Springs Park Improvements

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; 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 Russian Jack Springs Park is a 324-acre Special Use park that serves the year-round recreation needs of both nearby residents and the Anchorage community at large; and

WHEREAS, the 2022 *Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan* provides a 20-year vision for the management, maintenance, and development of the park, and was developed with significant public input; and

WHEREAS, using bond and federal grant funding, this proposal implements three projects from the Master Plan to improve existing popular features of the park: 1) the multi-use paved trail called the Lighted Loop, 2) the sledding hill, and 3) the exterior gathering space and deck connected to the Lidia Selkregg Chalet; and

WHEREAS, the improved trail, sledding hill, and exterior deck and plaza at the Chalet will improve the quality of outdoor education programs and invite families to safely explore the park year-round; and

WHEREAS, the projects have received supportive comments from the Russian Jack and Northeast community councils; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the proposal for improvements at Russian Jack Springs Park.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 9th day of April, 2026.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Director
Parks & Recreation Department