

# **DRAFT - Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) 2017 Annual Meeting Minutes**

(Projects are listed in the order they were discussed, not by a ranking.)

**January 11, 2017**

## **ORTAB Members Present:**

Jeff Budd - Chair - Represents Southeast Alaska / Non-Motorized  
Mike Rearden - Represents Western / Southwest Alaska, Diversified  
Ron Lurk - Represents Anchorage / Motorized / Diversified  
Mickey Todd – Represents Homer/ Represents Motorized Trail Users  
Seth Adams - Represents Fairbanks Area /Northern Area, Non-Motorized trail users  
Mike Sirofchuck – Represents Kodiak / Southwest/Non-Motorized trail users  
Ira Edwards - Represents Trail Users Experiencing Disabilities statewide

## **DNR, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, (DPOR) Staff Present:**

Darcy Harris – DPOR, Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator  
Steve Neel – DPOR, Recreational Trails Program Grants Administrator  
Caitlan Dowling – OHA, Minutes  
Matt Wedeking – DPOR Deputy Director/ Operations Manager

Present for questions on related DPOR grants requests

Emily Angel – DPOR, Design and Construction, Interpretation and Education  
Luke Randall – DPOR Design and Construction, Engineer/Architect

## **Public Present in the morning**

Steve Cleary - Alaska Trails  
Glen Swan and John Scudder from Curry Ridge Riders  
Brad Muir of Anchorage Park Foundation

## **On the Phone:**

Margaret Tyler and Kyle Kelly from Girdwood Trails Committee  
Geoff Orth for Delta Junction Trails Association

*Meeting called to order 9:07*

Darcy Harris made introductions and introduced the agenda. The Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants will not be discussed due to the Program Manager's absence. She will be contacting the ORTAB at a later date about those. Please make sure Darcy gets all of your receipts for your hotel, taxi, etc. Thank you to those four that have renewed their terms; you do a lot of valuable work.

Jeff Budd noted that public comment is only allowed if asked a direct question by the ORTAB members. You may change your score based on discussion. Hearing no questions or additions, back to staff to hear about FY 17 funding.

Steve Neel gave an accounting of how much money is available for the program; this is the second year of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation or "FAST Act" for Transportation funding; the funding remains the same as last year, \$1,527,000 dollars; that is the money given to Alaska, State DOT&PF also has an obligation limitation on that amount. That gives the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) approximately \$1.3 million with a 7% administrative allowance, leaving about \$1.2 million for grants. The FAST Act is a five -year bill, so that amount will likely not change for a while. Steve then discussed the implications of the Federal Spending Bill passed in October that is only good through April on the program.

All the projects from 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 have been closed with the exception of one 2014 project with the Fairbanks Northstar Borough, who has an extension for the Skyline Bridge project. Most of the 2015 projects have been closed out as well. FHWA is auditing roughly 50% of the reimbursement request packages DPOR sends to Juneau, making sure things are done according to current regulations. Timelines for projects are important; an extension needs to be approved by FHWA and can only happen prior to the initial approved end date.

Darcy discussed the budget for the RTP program, and how it is required to have at least two people to administer the program to maintain checks and balances. Additionally, the program is working with FHWA to complete a risk analysis as required by the 2 CFR 200 on applicants and grantees, in hopes to streamline and improve processes. This program is very competitive and this year received \$463,000 more in requests than DPOR has to award.

Steve Neel mentioned that each state Governor does have the option to *opt out* of the program, but currently CT is the only state that opted out and FL came back in, we have not heard anything that the Alaskan Governor would consider this option.

There was discussion on how "old money" that has been de-obligated is spent before new allocations, and due to spending authority limits, money ends up going back to FHWA.

Darcy then introduced the spreadsheet and the desired 30/30/40 Motorized/Non-Motorized/Diversified split, with the option of subtracting 5% for Safety and Education from the total. Darcy points out the actual requests and the actual perfect proposed breakdown. In non-motorized, there were twice as many requests as available funds and less than 5% requested for Safety and Education. The ORTAB discussed the required balance between Motorized and Non-Motorized and its relevance in Alaska. Delaware, Rhode Island, and Connecticut are exempted from this requirement as they are too small in land size.

The ORTAB requested that Steve explain the math required for matches in grants.

Steve explained the history of the program's match requirement. Most states have an 20% match to 80% federal share limit; some western states, because of the population and amount of federal lands, have a smaller percentage of the match they have to turn in for each grant; AK is one of them. This was developed in the 1990s by a team of nuclear physicists at Oak Ridge, National Laboratory, in Tennessee. (The reference comes from the FHWA page on apportionments,

rescissions and obligations. The link to the 1999 Oak Ridge report is here: <http://cta.ornl.gov/cta/publications.shtml#1999>. ) That team was going to look at it again in a few years, but 20 years later they haven't; so it is still 90.7 Federal share, 9.03 as the match. As that is confusing, and we wanted the grantees to have some investment, we went with non-state grants being 80/20 for few years; a lot of people said they wanted to be at the same match level as the state. As the 90.7/9.03 is cumbersome to remember, last year it was changed to 90/10 for everybody; FHWA requires we only provide 9.03, but the state can request more if they want. The math, on many applications this year, is still wrong.

Steve and Darcy also explained that whatever the percentage match is set in their approved budget, that is the match % that will be required for each reimbursement request until the closing of the grant.

*Projects were discussed in order of people on the phone, people in the room, and then moving down the list in alphabetical order.*

### **1. Bluff Cabin Trail**

**Applicant:** Delta Junction Trails Association

**Category applied under:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$92,238/\$10.249

#### **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB discussed that it was a motorized project. The ORTAB discussed their scores, and that the applicant has not yet finished the required State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) survey of the project area. It was noted that if something noteworthy is found during the survey, the SHPO can help them either mitigate the site or reroute the trail. The ORTAB asked Geoff Orth (on the phone) if there was any further update on the survey, and Geoff noted over the phone that they have an *alternative route*, and that it would *be very easy to move that alignment*. There was no discussion of whether the alternate route has had an OHA survey, or other agency inspections.

The SHPO would not be able to conduct the survey until May 2017 after which a new alignment might need to be established. If the alternate alignment had different permitting requirements it could delay the project until further review was conducted. FHWA will not approve a project until the Environmental Review Checklist is complete.

**Other Discussion:** An ORTAB member brought up that there was only one quote for the bid, and this was an issue in many of the grants; Darcy noted that only one bid for labor is required, including if the contractor is providing the supplies; for materials or equipment, if it is over \$1,000, three bids are required, unless the applicant can prove that that entity is the only supplier that can provide the needed products. However, the contractor must break down their budget in the quote. Steve noted that there are only a few companies in Alaska that do trail work; Darcy followed that as they can get booked very quickly, it is recommended that if there is a contractor

doing labor, the proposed project schedule should be for two years, as a contingency, to ensure the contractor is available.

## **2. Liewer Trail Lighting**

**Applicant:** Delta Junction Trails Association

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$49,928/\$5,547

### **Project Discussion:**

Several ORTAB members noted this was a really good application; one ORTAB member noted that the applicant didn't make clear where the match was coming from. The ORTAB asked Geoff Orth (on the phone), who replied that the match is cash provided by the Delta Junction Trail Association. It was noted that this match was collected through many small donations to the DJTA. It was discussed that the project could qualify under the *diversified* category- in the winter the DJTA will groom the trail for skiers. Bikes are allowed only in the summer.

## **3. Iditarod National Historic Trail – Girdwood Lower Valley**

**Applicant:** Girdwood Trails Committee

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,556

### **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB asked how the volunteer rate of \$36/\$37/\$50 per hour was developed, when the going rate is \$27.51 for volunteers; Kyle Kelly noted the \$50 per hour is the professional rate for the surveyor, and that the \$37 per hour was used in past grants. The ORTAB asked how the rerouting of the Iditarod Trail would affect the easement; Kyle noted that they are going to revegetate the old trail, and that the new trail will be within the 200ft width of the current easement to push it as far away from the creek as they can. The ORTAB noted that there is a limit of 50 pages on applications, and this went well over that limit; *extra stuff* is not required. Kyle noted that he understood; it was their first RTP grant, and were trying to be thorough. Darcy noted they put the 50 page recommended limit a few years ago when they were getting 100 to 150 page applications, which made it difficult for staff and the ORTAB to review.

*A break was taken from 10:15 to 10:25.*

Ron Lurk stated for the record he is no longer on the Curry Ridge Riders Board of Directors or a member, but he did help review the application. Darcy commented that she appreciates when applicants ask for assistance or review, and they are welcome to ask their local ORTAB member for a review as well.

*Matt Wedeking joined the meeting.*

## **4. South Denali Trail Signs**

**Applicant:** Curry Ridge Riders

**Category applied under:** Motorized  
**Funds Requested/Match:** \$42,235/\$4,691  
**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB commented that this was a very well prepared application, with the quotes detailed down to the penny. They commented that the Northwest Arctic Borough has a similar application, and it would be great for the northern area of Alaska to get this money to improve trails. During discussion, the applicant noted that while they applied in the *motorized* category, they could also be *diversified* as many users in the area use these trails.

*Break: introduce everyone to Matt Wedeking, and Matt says hello and welcome*

## **5. Mirror Lake Phase II**

**Applicant:** Alaska Trails  
**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized  
**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,556  
**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB noted that Phase I had some good publicity in the Alaska Dispatch News. The ORTAB asked why it was not designed to be more accessible to users with differing abilities - it doesn't have to be American Disabilities act (ADA), but just not have barriers to access; Steve Cleary of Alaska Trails noted project that the was designed by Ed Kessler of Ptarmigan Trails and he could answer this better than he could. There was discussion that the administration costs were high, and parts of the application were copied and pasted from Phase I. The ORTAB asked about the public notice of the project, and Steve Cleary noted it went out October 1<sup>st</sup> on their Alaska Trails membership email list, and their Facebook page only, and not at the trail head.

**Other Discussion:** This proposal launched the ORTAB into a discussion of what constitutes Public Notice. Steve Neel noted that if it is an established trail or place and you put up public notice at the place, you have met the minimum requirement for public notice. If you don't do that and only post notice to a limited group of members, fails the test. If a visitor to the property wouldn't know about the project from being at the property, it is inadequate notice. Town halls, committees, grocery store or post office bulletin boards, and social media are all great but do not suffice within themselves.

## **6. Middle Fork Trail**

**Applicant:** Alaska Trails  
**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized  
**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,556  
**Project Discussion:**

The Administrative costs were discussed as being too high. The number of letters of support were discussed and clarified by Steve Cleary. The board discussed with Steve Cleary the high administrative costs, including asking why, for a 4-week project, there are 4 full, weeks of administrative costs requested; why did AK Trails request over a week of administrative time to *recruit volunteers* when in the application it specifically states they will be using the trained

volunteers from last year; ORTAB wanted explanation of the SCA crew of six and SCA's administrative costs, and overall why there appeared to be more hours of administration than project work. Steve Cleary stated that he did make the suggested changes in the budget that Darcy had suggested in October, and an ORTAB member confirmed this with the application. The ORTAB noted that the updated budget numbers referenced previously were the ones the board reviewed, but they were still too high. It was noted that this could fall into the *diversified* category if needed, as it would include hiking, biking etc.

**Other Discussion:** Darcy clarified for the board after they asked that it is just DPOR applications that do not need three letters, a resolution from the Citizens Advisory Board is sufficient. Some ORTAB members felt that a letter from the Citizens Advisory Board and a permission letter from the Park should be enough for any project taking place within a State Park, while others felt that it serves as a part of public notice. The fact that grant preparation is not reimbursable, and that they are often volunteers that prepare these grants, was discussed, along with whether non-profits should have a different process than DPOR applications. It was also noted that the application process was a lot easier than it was four years ago.

*Matt Wedeking leaves, Brad Muir of Anchorage Park Foundation arrives.*

## **7. 2017 Trail Guide Videos**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$39,070/\$4,208

**Project Discussion:**

It was noted that the 5% from Safety/Education just comes out of the total, reducing the amount to then be 30/30/40. This project is currently in the *diversified* category.

The ORTAB noted that the applicant's goal for each video was to cover preparation, gear, the trail, trail etiquette, safety, etc. all in 5 minutes, which is a lot to cover, and it takes hours to make that video; whether people would watch the whole thing was discussed. They want to make videos for several trails; this seems like a lot of money for a video, but on the other hand it could hopefully reduce possible search and rescue costs later. Darcy explained how the Interpretation and Education office of DPOR's budget is all project-based and not funded by the General Fund. The pros and cons of buying a drone versus renting a drone were discussed, including the legal issues of flying a drone in a state park (you can take off next to a park, fly into a park, and land outside the park, but you can't take off from or land in a park). It was noted that there are lots of things a park employee can do with administrative permission that the public can't do. It was noted that last year the video equipment was purchased to make the videos, so most of this application is for video editing time; they don't buy anything this year, other than to rent the drone. It was discussed that at Caines Head SRA the drone could just fly along the coast, and Reed Lakes isn't an *actual* park. The ORTAB discussed the quality of the application, formatting, and poor map graphics, including that the publication specialists should have better formatting and graphics; they discussed such concerns as not rotating the map to be in the proper orientation in the application. It was noted that this project would not produce VHS tapes, now it's all on YouTube. These videos can be shown in Visitor Centers, and the internet links would

be on the trail signs. One ORTAB member asked if it is their vision to do this for all the trails in State Parks in the future; Darcy noted that Alaska State Parks is always looking at new ways to communicate with the park users, keeping it updated, relevant, etc. and growing our social media presence. The ORTAB discussed whether this kind of work should be done in-house rather than contracting it out, as people do this professionally, and another ORTAB member noted that last year Emily Angel answered the same question and said their office has the expertise. Steve Neel noted that trail work on the ground is still the priority of the RTP.

## **8. Russian Jack Single Track**

**Applicant:** Anchorage Parks Foundation

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$49,962/\$5,551

### **Project Discussion:**

An ORTAB member noted that he thought this was a *great application*. The ORTAB asked for clarification on the mileage, as it was confusing on what is new versus old trail, and Brad Muir noted that there will be new trails built for flow through the system, and there will be a lot of social trails fixed. It was asked if this application was connected to the one submitted last year, and it was clarified that last year Alaska Trails put together the application, and this year it was the Anchorage Parks Foundation; the project is virtually the same. The ORTAB asked why the end date is in 2018 and not 2017, and Steve Neel said the people from the Anchorage Parks Foundation were asked to build in extra time in case the project doesn't get approved by FHWA until June/July. This won't limit them from working on or completing the project during the summer of 2017; Darcy stated it is better to build in some extra time since FHWA is very strict about end dates. An ORTAB member noted that he thought this was the first application he'd seen that mentions obesity, *which is great*. How administrative costs supplement or increase the salary of the admin person was clarified - for DPOR, people paid for with General Fund money can't charge to the Federal Share of these projects; Alaska Conservation Corps employees' time can be used as match; and the value of a Municipal/Parks Foundation employee can also be used as match. The ORTAB noted the design is appropriate for all levels and youth crews will do the work; they like to support youth involvement. An ORTAB member noted Russian Jack was a great lit-trail system that serves as an important connector, and it was noted that it really serves a section of town that is under-served; there is a need for this trail and a similar grant was not approved last year. Brad noted that Steve Cleary didn't help write the proposal but was a great resource; he also noted that this would be a great trail resource for the area, and the signage right now is *really bad*, so funding this project would make a better and safer area for both new people/visitors and the local community. Steve Neel noted that communication with the Anchorage Parks Foundation and the non-profit hired to put together this applications, Huddle, *has been great*.

***Break for lunch, 12:00 to 1:00***

## **9. Chugach Orientation Panels**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under: Education/Safety**  
**Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,328**  
**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB discussed the internal process of the Interpretation and Education section and that their production timeline seemed long; another ORTAB member mentioned it was internally consistent with other timelines doing similar work, but it was still a lot of money for installing two signs. It was also suggested that *someone in the non-profit world* was building a similar sign for \$2,000. It was noted that this area of Chugach State Park is heavily used, and would continue to be used whether it was signed or not. It was noted that this is the only motorized trail access in the area. It was noted that their labor contract was very expensive, and also not very detailed. It was explained that the Design and Construction office does external bids for many of the interpretive and construction projects around town. Everyone agreed that the whole application seemed expensive; the breakdown of the installation was discussed, and why it costs \$10,000 for mobilization was discussed. Again, how the DPOR pays for the office with individual projects is explained. Steve Neel commented that they always give a worst case scenario budget. Discussion Tabled until the DPOR team could comment.

*Later discussion with Luke Randall and Emily Angel:* The ORTAB asked why the prices for the signs were so high, when a non-profit had them for \$2,000; Emily asked if the signs were comparable. Luke then explained the mobilization costs, including the two employees with equipment for two days. He also commented that an engineer won't know what the ground is like under each sign, and, once excavated, the rock must be removed. Chugach is more expensive than Denali State Park due to bedrock and that the Municipality of Anchorage is the most expensive place to do projects because of permitting, etc. Emily then commented that they make a lot of orientation panels, normally plan 4 days of research, 4 days to write and create them, then an extensive one-week review, edits, another review; this is normally about \$7,000 a panel when there is a map involved; the state is very different, so it is hard to compare to the private sector. These are the signs the field staff requested as their highest priority panels. Luke commented that it is hard to speculate on projects without inspecting the field conditions and that they always plan for the worst case scenario. Emily commented that she has a statewide signage code that is about to expire that will serve as the match for this project. Luke discussed the logistics of sign installation for public-proof signs.

## **10. Caines Head State Recreation Area**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$49,336/\$5,061

**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB discussed that this is a very well used trail with 6,700 users and a well written application. It was noted that the maps that were included coordinated with the photos. It was noted that this was a really good application, and that both the Ranger and Park Specialist at Caines Head participated in both of this year's three-hour RTP grant trainings. It was noted, however, they did not rotate their maps in the application.



**Additional Discussion:** Park Specialists are not funded by the General Fund; Superintendents' time can be RTP match.

### **11. Tonsina Public Use Cabin**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$45,545/\$5,061

**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB was excited about a cabin related project, and Darcy clarified that she had already checked with FHWA and a cabin does qualify for an RTP grant under stipulation 2:4 as a trail facility. The high-use and revenue generation of cabins seems like a good investment. It is a Non-Motorized trail. The ORTAB commented that the application was very good, and addressed maintenance. They do have a letter of agreement in place with AVTEC (Alaska's Institute of Technology) to install the steel roof. The ORTAB noted that this cabin *seemed very cheap*.

**Other Discussion:** It was noted that having an agreement in place, such as in the above grant to actively use a youth crew, is preferred to simply saying "we'd like to use a youth crew".

### **12. Saddle Trail Reroute**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,564

**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB noted that the Saddle Trail in Kachemak Bay State Park has a pre-Park conservation easement, and has LWCF funds associated with it; *if it is moved, we have to vacate the old easement*, said one ORTAB member. *It is only a few miles, but it is outside the current easement; not sure how resurveying the easement would affect the LWCF money*. It was noted that the maps for the application were very poor. Darcy noted that the LWCF coordinator did sign off that no further environmental review was needed; Darcy clarified with the coordinator on the easement issue and the project will not have an adverse effect on LWCF property because it is a recreational trail.

### **13. Curry Ridge Phase III**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$49,705/\$6,075

**Project Discussion:**

It was noted by Steve Neel that Phase II of this project has received an extension, because they have only spent approximately 1/3 of their money. FHWA will not approve this project until Phase II is completely closed. It was noted that Phase II was dropped below the scoring line last year but approved for funding none-the-less. It was noted that parts of the application must have

been cut and pasted as there were inconsistencies in the text. The ORTAB asked if the new Visitor Center and campground was actually under construction, and two photos of the Visitor Center were shown. The use of this area was discussed. It was discussed that it seems like this will need to be a next year project if they have \$27,784 from last year, and they will not be able to get a Phase III contract until Phase II is closed out. It can be awarded in June, but has to be started before the end of the fiscal year. In their application it has September 2018 as the end of their project, so they have two seasons to complete it. It was noted their application anticipates an estimated 50,000 visitors a year, which was noted it seems like that is how many people drive the highway each year. It was mentioned that if the tour buses started stopping there, the number of visitors could be significant.

#### **14. Hatcher Pass Trail**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** 47,488/\$5700

**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB commented that this project would help with a lot of trespass issues in the area, and that Alaska State Parks is working on a land exchange for parts of it. It was commented that it was a good, simple project. Discussion on how you theoretically could ski on it, but it is not groomed for skiing.

*Luke Randall and Emily Angel came in to answer questions about the Chugach Orientation Panels. See entry #9 for discussion.*

#### **15. Granite Tors**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$47,404/\$5,270

**Project Discussion:**

An ORTAB member commented that this project is for a different segment than the very expensive section of trail that they applied for last year. It was discussed that the trail crew can get the wood out there much cheaper with the helicopter than they could with a snow machine; last year they packed a snow machine trail before they could start bringing in supplies. The ORTAB discussed the logistics of snow machining at Granite Tors and how far away it is from Fairbanks. They will carry the old wood and equipment out once the trail is complete. The use of three 8-in boards instead of two 12-in boards were used for flexibility, price, and ease of transportation. Additionally, a member commented that Granite Tors could use a bigger parking lot because it is Fairbanks' token trail, and is integral to the outdoor community. No one would do that hike without the trail there.

#### **16. Olnes Pond**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$92,906/\$10,326

## **Project Discussion:**

Darcy explained that in the past this unit was in *passive management*, and the DPOR Director talked to the legislature and secured funding to open it back up, clean up the trash, and pay someone to take care of it. It had fallen into disrepair because it had been underfunded for quite awhile. It was noted that the estimated end date for this project is likely 2018, not 2016 as stated in the application.

## **17. Training and Assessment SPOR**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$13,313/\$1,479

### **Project Discussion:**

Darcy noted that FHWA allows an applicant to apply every year for a “Training and Assessment” grant and the northern region is the only one that has taken advantage of that offer; the other areas still do similar training but it’s not paid for by the RTP. The ORTAB asked why they are asking for more training each year, and it was explained that each year there is a new crew. The length of time it takes to learn how to operate a chainsaw was discussed. The ORTAB noted that the Superintendent’s salary can be used as match but not federal share of the grant, and staff noted that that was an administrative issue with the application that could be fixed.

## **18. Seduction Point Trail (DPOR southeast)**

**Applicant:** DPOR

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$39,293/\$4,367

### **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB noted that the applicant called Haines the *adventure capitol of Alaska*. It was noted that there is only one company in Haines that can haul gravel with a helicopter. The ORTAB’s southeast representative noted that there are more and more people coming to southeast on the cruise ships, and a lot of people go to Haines since Ketchikan is so busy. Ketchikan, Skagway, and Juneau get more than a million tourists during the season. The ORTAB liked that the applicant included a trail counter, and that failing bridges are a priority. It was noted that the trail is always busy with *all types of people*, and is one of the only beach access trails.

**Other Discussion:** It was noted by the ORTAB that the new RTP score sheet is well liked, and that the scores are lower than in the past, which they think is good because reviewers are looking more closely at the applications. It was noted that consistently the State Parks’ applications are not very well written this year.

## **19. New Skandic/Equipment Purchase**

**Applicant:** Alaska Dog Musers Association

**Category applied under:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$11,530/\$1,609

## **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB questioned why they were replacing a machine that is only 3 years old, and whether the snow machine was broken, they wanted to have two, or a spare. It was noted later that their machine was broken and they had been renting a machine this season, although that is not noted in the application. The ORTAB felt that this was a very poor application overall; it was then discussed that this was their first application and that their 30 miles of trails are essential in the central area of Fairbanks. The land status was also discussed, as they have had an MOU from ADFG to use it for the past 40 years, but it has a 5-year renewal cycle when 10 years is required. It was noted that FHWA does not approve RTP funds for *contingency*.

**Other Discussion:** What happens to equipment purchased with RTP money was discussed. Steve Neel explained that the general rule is the equipment goes back to the state, however when accounting for the wear and tear, the value of that equipment is usually so low it is not worth the state coming back and taking that equipment to sit in storage until it goes to public auction. If someone called to complain that equipment was being used for personal use, DNR would take it back, but that hasn't happened. Chainsaws are considered hand tools; for ATVs, snowmachines, etc. FHWA and DNR want the equipment used as long as possible, most groups take good care of their equipment because they know it must last

## **20. Improvements at the Jodhpur Motocross Riding Area (Phase II)**

**Applicant:** Anchorage Parks Foundation

**Category applied under:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$96,002/\$10,667

### **Project Discussion:**

Steve Neel noted that this project is Phase II; Phase I is not complete but will be before Phase II gets started. The bleachers that were a part of Phase I will not be funded; RTP does not allow amenities for *spectators*, only *trail users*. If Phase II is approved, it will be held until the Phase I is closed. The Anchorage Park Foundation submitted the application with contracted help from Huddle AK; Steve and Darcy pointed out that they have been *great to work with* and kept DPOR staff updated on Jodhpur Phase I. The ORTAB asked what Phase I was, and Steve Neel explained it includes fencing and signage. Phase II is a lot of work; the rocks are really big, they want to grind them and bring in new dirt, they've done a lot of work there. The ORTAB discussed what sort of grooming currently takes place and how they will do the rock removal. The *special dirt* they will then bring in is not too dirty, not too dusty, etc. It was noted that the Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality of Anchorage included with their application, expired last fall. Additionally, it was noted that this project is categorized as *motorized* and gets a lot of use because there are very few dirt bike riding areas.

## **21. Bartlett Glacier Trail**

**Applicant:** USDA Chugach National Forest, Glacier Ranger District

**Category applied under:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$49,945/\$5,549

### **Project Discussion:**

Darcy noted that the U.S. Forest Service and State of Alaska lawyers have worked out the legal issues and DPOR is happy to have the USFS back as an applicant. The ORTAB discussed that this trail is located at an Alaska Railroad whistle-stop and will be located at the Grandview stop; it was commented that they used youth crews for the Spencer Glacier whistle-stop trail and camping area, and if they are planning to do so for this one too they should have noted that in their application. It was noted that riders have to pay a fee to ride the train, which is ok. It was noted that the Alaska Railroad is paying for several of these whistle stop developments, and transporting the supplies

## **22. Eaglecrest Trail Phase II**

**Applicant:** Juneau Mountain Bike Alliance

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,556

### **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB asked if the need for a wetland permit would eliminate this project, and Darcy commented that they are in the process of getting a permit. The ORTAB discussed the implications of the berms on the ski area. Phase I is complete. Steve Neel commented that this applicant has had issues with timely reimbursement requests and reports, and can be difficult to reach.

## **23. Skyline Ridge Phase II**

**Applicant:** FBNSB

**Category applied under:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,556

### **Project Discussion:**

It was noted that Phase I is not complete; the manufacturer no longer makes what they needed, so they got an extension through June 2017. It was discussed that 2019 is too late of a completion date because an applicant cannot wait 12 months without having any activity on an open grant, but that the timeline on their application lists 2018 so 2019 may be a typo. The ORTAB representative from Fairbanks noted that it is officially a non-motorized trail, but that this grant would repair damage caused by *big-rigs and four-wheelers*. Steve Neel noted that, at the time of this meeting, they still have an open 2015 grant.

## **24. Girdwood Bridge Repair**

**Applicant:** Girdwood Nordic Ski Club

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,556

### **Project Discussion:**

Darcy noted that RTP had approved this project before, however part of it was de-obligated; they *have all their ducks in the row now* and they are ready to complete the project. A ORTAB member noted that it is DNR land and that they have an approval already. It was noted that they

would have to follow their scope of work very closely. The ORTAB also noted that the bridge would be built to hold a very large load.

*Mike Rearden moved to adjourn for the evening; Mickey Todd seconded; no objections, all in favor. The ORTAB will reconvene tomorrow at 9.*

## **January 12, 2017/Day Two**

Darcy welcomed everyone to day-two and thanked everyone for coming. Travel reimbursement was discussed.

### **ORTAB Members Present:**

Jeff Budd - Chair - Represents Southeast Alaska / Non-Motorized  
Mike Rearden - Represents Western / Southwest Alaska, Diversified  
Ron Lurk - Represents Anchorage / Motorized / Diversified  
Mickey Todd – Represents Homer/ Represents Motorized Trail Users  
Seth Adams - Represents Fairbanks Area /Northern Area, Non-Motorized trail users  
Mike Sirofchuck – Represents Kodiak / Southwest/Non-Motorized trail users  
Ira Edwards - Represents Trail Users Experiencing Disabilities statewide

### **DNR, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, (DPOR) Staff Present:**

Darcy Harris – DPOR, Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator  
Steve Neel – DPOR, Recreational Trails Program Grants Administrator  
Caitlan Dowling – OHA, Minutes

### **Public Present throughout the day:**

Jeff Samuels – Student Conservation Association

### **On the Phone:**

Geoff Orth for Delta Junction Trails Association

Chair Jeff welcomed Jeff Samuels of the SCA to discuss the Alaska Trails' Middle Fork Trail project application; they are a partner in the project and attended yesterday as Jeff could not be here. Jeff said that it is a significant project for Chugach State Park this summer. *SCA has been doing this for a long time and are good at what they do*; they have a 5-member young adult crew with a young adult crew leader, and this would be a four week *hitch* for their 16-week season. Blane Smith would be the leader, advising and working with them. (Blane Smith was a Park Specialist with Chugach State Park for many years and just retired.)

Darcy noted that it is not typical to give partial funding for RTP projects and can cause the applicant to not have enough funding to complete the entire score of the project.

## **25. Taylor Bay**

**Applicant:** Ground Truth Trekking

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$7,475/\$910

**Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB discussed that the quality of the application was low with pages crossed out, things written in with pen, grammatical mistakes; overall a poor presentation. They also discussed if spending money on the new proposed trail would be useful and valuable when there are many very highly used trails in the Kachemak Bay State Park that need maintenance. It was noted that this project is only a route to be cleared, not ground work, out to the coast. The group has cleared 7 miles on the Homer side, and this was the other side; they were only clearing another half mile/mile of trail and the rest will be marked with rock-cairns. A point was brought up that the application does not address how Eric Clarke, the local Park Specialist, would get paid as a part of his job, or if he would be volunteering. The ORTAB discussed that a hiker has to take a water taxi to get to the start of the trail then hike across to the coast and hike back. It is in the park plan to eventually have a camping facility there, so may be a good investment for the future. It was noted that this area is a rainforest and that things require a lot of maintenance; with the changing climate, alders are growing faster, and higher and trails need *serious* clearing every 3 years. The ORTAB felt nothing should be built that can't be maintained; they were unsure about the number of people that would use the trail and if it would be valuable compared to the cost. Other ORTAB members felt that the RTP funds a lot of three mile trails, and not many long treks; this would end up being a 27-mile trail, and quite an adventure. It was noted that this project has a low dollar request and might be worth the money despite its draw-backs.

## **26. Hatcher Alpine Ski Trail Brushing**

**Applicant:** Hatcher Pass Xperience

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$4,480

**Project Discussion:**

An ORTAB member noted that the applicants already has a piston/bully for grooming, they built a giant garage to put it in, and have a parking lot from a grant seven or eight years ago. This is looking for money for trail-brushing to install a rope-tow. One ORTAB member commented that the community has been talking about a Hatcher Pass downhill ski area since the 1970s; another asked what they will do when it stops snowing in Southcentral; and another commented that with a bus stop a mile away this is another great way to get all Alaskans outside. The ORTAB brought up an issue with their match, as the application does not address the \$100,000 grant from the Mat-Su Borough and what it's used for; They will need to explain why they also need to have a \$50,000 RTP grant. The ORTAB discussed the broader issue of how an organization is to show that they are solvent but still require grant funding.

## **27. Shoup Trail**

**Applicant:** Levitation49

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$39,573/\$4,400

**Project Discussion:**

*Seth recused himself from ORTAB Discussion.*

The ORTAB discussed the similar issue from the previous grant: if the applicant has a \$150,000 grant from the City of Valdez why do they need RTP funding. It was noted the Copper River Valley parks have been dropped from Mat-Su Park's budget, so Levitation49 has an agreement with State Parks to manage these facilities. They are a non-profit. There are three Public Use Cabins out there, and they will be managing those as well. They are open for public reservation. This project could increase revenue for the organization by increasing PUC rentals. It was noted that it is not uncommon to have a concessionaire manage a Park area. It was also noted that this is independent of the equipment grant request.

## **28. Equipment Purchase**

**Applicant:** Levitation49

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$49,9887/\$5,554

**Project Discussion:**

*Seth recused himself from ORTAB Discussion.*

A ORTAB member commented that the application seemed rushed. Another ORTAB member was concern that two snow machines will not fit side by side in a 7-foot trailer; Seth explained that he talked to the store and they said this one would work. Everyone commented that if a person were just storing them in there, it would be ok, but that it would be difficult moving both machines in and out regularly. Steve Neel noted that 4 or 5 big pieces of equipment would be a lot of equipment for a first time applicant, or really any applicant. An ORTAB member asked if Seth addressed how many facilities Levitation49 is in charge of, and the answer was yes. Another ORTAB member said that the Skandic would take care of what you do with the RMK, and the Ranger would take care of anything the Foreman does; another member agreed with the Ranger, but the Skandic is too heavy for breaking trail; in response, it was noted if the RMK is just going to be used 5% of the time to break trail you can seasonally rent the RMK and the Skandic is a bigger bang for your buck. Seth responded that part of the RMK is breaking trail, but they also have a lot of events in Thompson Pass that they take people to the tops of the hills. It was discussed if this could be diversified, and if Valdez is considered rural.

*Break, KTUU shows up; leaves half way through next discussion.*

## **29. Snowmachine Trail Staking and Repair**

**Applicant:** Northwest Arctic Borough

**Category applied under:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$100,000/\$13,460

**Project Discussion:**

An ORTAB member noted that he was concerned with how the budget was broken down; Another member noted that he had reached out to the applicant about their project and the design



of the trail-marking tripod, and he provided these designs (*passed around for observation.*) An ORTAB member noted that last year he skied from Kobuk to Kotzebue, and noted marking tripods every 100 feet. This is a wonderful project, because these marked trails are their main transportation roadways. Another ORTAB member noted that they scored this project a bit lower because their project management costs and budget didn't seem clear. The ORTAB discussed the breakdown of costs, missing equipment rental totals, and material costs. Project management includes *a lot of hours*; the board discussed the difference between administrative vs project costs. 360 hours of project management *seems high*, but probably includes task overview and in-field project management, including coordinating with all of the involved villages. Another board member noted that some of the reference letters were written 20 years ago, although there were updated letters as well. They were also concerned that a lot of this is private land/RS2477/17B easements; are they going to require specific maps that say where they are? One of these trails crosses a Native Allotment; is FHWA going to require a map with land status? It was noted that this is the only rural applicant, and that NANA did provide a letter of support.

### **30. Huizer Fishing Access Site Enhancement Project**

**Applicant:** Southeast Alaska Land Trust

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000/\$5,556

#### **Project Discussion:**

A board member noted that the application mentions several times that this project will provide for fishing access and duck hunting, and there are other specific federal grants for fishing and hunting access. It was also noted that the project will have disability access, but its access is a *trailhead to nowhere*- the access is on the ocean side of the trailhead, with private property on either side. Another board member commented that as this is in a neighborhood, they did not want to contribute to parking problems like in the Chugach State Park. The ORTAB agreed that this project may also work as an LWCF grant, because the scope of work and the budget would be appropriate (\$35,000 stairwell and a \$10,000 parking lot). It was noted that the land was purchased by the Southeast Alaska Land Trust, and that there are a lot of people that live there and go to the beach.

### **31. Mosquito Cove Trail Repair Phase II**

**Applicant:** Sitka Trail Works

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$43,937/\$7,432

#### **Project Discussion:**

The applicant has completed Mosquito Cove Trail Repair Phase I. The ORTAB discussed the proposed 150 hours of administrative time; it was determined to be realistic with all on the front end of the project and a bit of wrap up. It was noted that the applicant did a good job explaining their purchases. An ORTAB member asked if having only one bid on lumber was realistic; an ORTAB member stated that yes, there is only one place in Sitka (Spenard Builder's Supply) to buy lumber; lumber is available in Hoonah, however then there are transportation costs. He also

noted that the number of visitors to Sitka in the summer is increasing; after government and fishing, tourism is the biggest industry. An ORTAB member said this project is *good bang for your buck*; lots of people, of all capabilities, use this trail. It is important to the community.

### **32. Chilkat Overlook Trail**

**Applicant:** Takshanuk Watershed Council

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$7,692/\$5,148

#### **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB discussed the budget numbers and that their match source does not qualify. The land purchase cost can be part of the match within 18<sup>th</sup> months, but it is past the 18 months; a board member mentioned it shouldn't be hard to make up the match in volunteer hours. The board asked if it is public land - it does have public access. Steve Neel discussed the applicant's previous grant, and that there are 90 days after the end of the project to get final billing to FHWA. Currently, this application has a 60/40 match listed, so would need to have a 40% match for each billing for this project. Additionally, it was discussed that the administrative costs are too high.

### **33. Susitna Valley High School Trail**

**Applicant:** Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District

**Category applied under:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$48,661/\$5,405

#### **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB discussed how the applicant planned to remove the roots in the trail, by hand or with equipment. It was noted, that the applicant didn't mention this, but they have a lot of their own equipment that they will use. Additionally, it was discussed that a lot of these trails are very heavily used, and that this could count as a *diversified* project.

### **34. Willow Park Trail**

**Applicant:** Willow Trails Committee

**Category applied under:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$38,382/\$4,265

#### **Project Discussion:**

The ORTAB agreed that this project could be considered a motorized project while the trail is being hardened for ATV use, in the winter snowmachiners and fat-tire bikers all use these trails and *get along well*.

*The ORTAB broke for lunch at 11:30, and the afternoon session started at 12:35. Mike Rearden and Ron Lurk returned slightly late. Geoff Orth joined on the phone. Darcy ranked all the projects by score during lunch to be viewed in order.*

The ORTAB discussed the scoring of the grant applications, what the average scores were, and where the cut-off line was. Grant recommendations were made for *motorized*, *non-motorized*, and *diversified*. It was decided to not use the 5% Safety and Education category because there was only one application under that category and it could qualify as *diversified*. The definition of *diversified* was discussed, as it means multiple sports: walking biking skating skiing etc. or even just walking in summer and ski in winter would qualify. The ORTAB attempted to get as close as possible to the required 30% motorized, 30% non-motorized, 40% diversified split while recommending funding for as many trail projects as possible. The final breakdown at the end of the meeting showed 32% non-motor, 31% motorized, and 37% diversified.

The ORTAB then engaged in a long discussion on how state Spending Authority works.

*After discussion was complete, Chair Jeff Budd noted that the ORTAB needed to approve this budget, approve old business, new business, would accept comments on the process or the grant application, and then discuss the timing of the grant application timeline and when the ORTAB would meet again.*

*Mike Sirofchuk motions to accept the fiscal year 17 budget; Seth Adams seconded; no discussion, unanimous vote of approval.*

Having no old or new business, the ORTAB discussed suggestions for how to make the grants easier to both read and write.

The ORTAB discussed how the most important step for applicants is to read all of the directions, start working on the applications for next year *now*, and ask the RTP staff for help/review. It was noted that including some guidance on administrative costs in the instructions may be helpful.

*Ira will draft language on administrative budget and will send to the ORTAB to approve.*

It was then discussed that applicants should use the provided score sheet to score their own application before submitting it. Simplicity is also important for applicants to remember- an entire paragraph is not needed when the answer comes to NO. It was noted that the number of letters of recommendation is set at three. The ORTAB noted that that the quality of the application does matter, and discussed the possibility of making the training required for applicants. It was noted that the applications have gotten better. Maybe because the program is more competitive

The ORTAB then discussed administrative details of the application package itself, and how the grants are presented to the ORTAB for review.

Moving on to when the ORTAB would next meet, it was discussed that having the applications slightly before the holiday would be helpful, but meeting within the first two weeks of January seem to work.

Chair Jeff Budd commented that there is an Alaska Trails Statewide Trails Conference, and he would be interested if DPOR could help pay for the ORTAB to be there.

Ira Edwards commented that the ORTAB had talked last year on how to get more applicants, and he had attended several rural groups, radio shows etc., but still only one rural application was submitted this year.

Ron Lurk commented that more *motorized* project applicants need to be recruited.

Mickey Todd motions Jeff Budd be voted as chairperson for another two-year term; Seth Adams seconded; Discussion: Jeff will do it. All in favor unanimous!

Darcy noted that Jeff has been doing this for nine years, and signed up for another three years (ten years next year!) Mike Rearden and Ron Lurk are in their second term and have one year left. Seth Adams term is through October 2017 and he plans to renew. This fall Mike Sirofchuk was reappointed through 2019, and Mickey Todd was reappointed to 2019. Ira Edwards is in his first term through October 2018.

Everyone liked the review notes provided by Darcy and Steve on the applications, the performance update emails by Steve, and having one document with everything scanned in order.

*(4:09 PM ) Seth Adams moved to adjourn; Mickey Todd seconded, all in favor aye, we are adjourned.*