ORTAB Members Present:
Jeff Budd - Chair - Represents Southeast Alaska / Non-Motorized
Kate Walters - Co-Chair - Represents Trail Users with Disabilities
Andy Morrison - ORTAB-SnowTRAC Liaison / Motorized / Diversified
Mike Rearden - Represents Western / Southwest Alaska
Ron Lurk - Represents Anchorage / Motorized / Diversified
Mickey Todd - Represents Motorized Trail Users
Steve Taylor - Represents Fairbanks / Northern Area
John Rowe - Represents Fairbanks / Northern Area

DNR Staff Present:
Ben Ellis - Director of Alaska State Parks
Darcy Harris - Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator
Steve Neel - Alaska State Parks Grants Administrator
Justin Wholey - Resource Specialist - Alaska State Trails Program

Public:
Rick Northey - Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers President
Janice Northey - Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers - Secretary
Elizabeth Trowbridge - Executive Director of Center for Alaska Coastal Studies
Ben Barclay - Director - Montana Creek Motor Mushers
Kevin Walker - Board Member - Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
Steve Cleary - Executive Director - Alaska Trails
Ed Kessler - Board Member - Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers
Andy Schroeder - Executive Director - Island Trails Network

Tuesday, January 28, 2014

Introductions
ORTAB members, DNR staff, and the public introduced themselves. Some joined the meeting via teleconference. New board member Mickey Todd was in attendance. Channel 2 News was in attendance for approximately one hour as the meeting begun. Channel 4 News showed up at noon and interviewed ORTAB Chair Jeff Budd.
Board Elections

Motion
Ron Lurk nominated Jeff Budd for the Chair position again, and Kate Walters as the Co-Chair again. Mike Rearden seconded the nominations.

Vote: (7 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

Jeff Budd is Chair once again, and Kate Walters is again Co-Chair.

Public Comments
Rick Northey explained that he is relatively new to the ORTAB process, and that he came to see how the process worked. He mentioned that Janice Northey has written and submitted two grant applications to ORTAB in the past (including one for the current grant cycle). He mentioned that his club (Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers) grooms and maintains a multi-use winter trail system that is used by ski-jorers, mushers, side-by-sides, and snowmachines; the club’s focus is trail-grooming and safety.

Ben Barclay explained that his club (Montana Creek Motor Mushers) has groomed from the end of Yoder Road up the trail to timberline for the last ten years; once you get past the first six miles there is a million acres of good alpine snowmachine riding. He mentioned that this year he applied for funds for another snowmachine to pull a groomer with. He also said that someone is his club forgot to apply for SnowTRAC funds to groom for the current season, so he put in a request to State Parks for a donation box.

Kevin Walker explained that his club (Kachemak Nordic Ski Club) submitted a grant this to finish the building that RecTrails funded to construct last year. He said that the building will help store equipment, as well as be a place for folks to warm up during events; one of the focuses of this phase is to add insulation and heat. He also mentioned that Kachemak Nordic Ski Club works closely with the Snomads for a yearly race that uses Snomads trails, and he also said that he would be happy to have the Snomads groomer park in the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club’s building until the ski club had a large groomer of their own.

Elizabeth Trowbridge described her organization (Center for Alaska Coastal Studies) and their two facilities in the Homer area. She described her grant proposal as a project to make a trail more accessible at one of the facilities, and to repair a deteriorating trail used for children’s ecology programs at the other. She said this is her first year applying for a RecTrails grant, and called into the meeting to learn more about how the ORTAB process works.

Ed Kessler discussed how his group (Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers) was able to distribute information about their bike park project via Facebook, and how they used a website that was created
with the help of Nation Park Service, RTCA to gather input about the project from the local community. He also mentioned that the bike park was in the Mat-Su Borough Draft Master Plan, and expected the project to be approved by the assembly in the next couple weeks.

Andy Morrison described to the board and the folks on the phone SnowTRAC’s relationship to ORTAB, including their shared application for grant funding. He described SnowTRAC as more supportive of grooming, and less supportive of equipment purchases. The money for SnowTRAC is from DOT snowmobile registration money, and is usually cannot fully fund all of the grooming requests. For this reason SnowTRAC has talked about getting registration fees increased to get more money for the program. In the past ORTAB has given money to SnowTRAC because there are often a lack of motorized applications. Andy explained how snowmachine clubs use the money is conjunction with hard-working volunteers. He also noted that there is a freeze on new areas being added to the grooming pool.

Accounting Discussion
Grants administrator Steve Neel updated the ORTAB and the public about changes in Federal Highways operating procedures; the general trend is more restrictive reporting. The budgets as of late have been scrutinized more than normal; every grant application budget this cycle had to be sent back to applicants for more clarification.

Darcy Harris also explained that under the stricter program the Natural Resource Specialist II position in the State Trails Program office could no longer be funded from the diversified category; Federal Highways did inform her that the position could be funded from the safety & education category. Since safety & education grants can only be 5% of the total grant funds, there is not enough money to fully fund the NRS II position, much less the NRS II position and the Alaska Trails safety & education grant. Two options are either to fund the NRS II position or fund the Alaska Trails safety & education grant, and with the left over money fund some of the NRS II position. Another option is to partially fund both.

Another difficulty, Steve accounted, was that for the current grant cycle Federal Highways decided that they needed individual grant applications for each trail project in each region rather than just one application per region; unfortunately the notice about this was given very close to the end of the federal fiscal year, and the State Park regions didn’t have enough time to create the grant applications. The outcome of this was that State Parks lost the spending authority from State DOT for the money that was to be used for trail crews. Although the money is still available it cannot be used due to DOT rules. The only way to get permission to use this money is to increase the spending authority; for that to happen the Director of State Parks and the Commissioner of Alaska DOT need to meet.

Steve Neel also explained that ORTAB funds don’t get rolled over if they aren’t used, but SnowTRAC funds do, and on top of that State DOT makes parks use it within 2 years. He mentioned that since State Parks is subject to more stringent reporting from the RecTrails program, extensions on grant projects...
will likely not happen in the future; Federal Highways also wants to get a billing at the very least every six months during a project.

Another topic that Steve Neel touched on was that the ATI grant program was closed out in late 2013; this was an earmark, so it won’t likely return. He anticipated a continuing resolution for the MAP-21 Act (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act) in October, instead of a completely new federal highway bill; this means that funding may only be approved as long as the continuing resolution, which has made it difficult to plan for the program administrators in the past.

Steve Neel recounted a problem over the last year with advancing money for a bike park in Fairbanks. In this situation there was a cash advance given, and then Alaska State Parks couldn’t get in contact with the applicants for billing and accounting. Steve said he had to eventually go through the contractor to get the billing details. He said he would be wary of cash advances in the future.

One more thing he discussed is that the OMB (Office of Management and Budget) is combining circulars, the result being the addition of risk assessment (financial risk) for grantees in the future, but not during the current grant cycle.

Discussion with Alaska State Parks Director Ben Ellis

Director Ellis greeted everyone and thanked ORTAB for their hard work. The director explained that with the ending of the Alaska Trails Initiative grant program (ATI), there was a shortage of money to fund administration of the Alaska State Trails Program. He said that the good news is that Governor Parnell added $200,000 to his budget which will make up for the shortfall, this seems to be recognition of how important this program is; the legislature will still need to approve this money. The director also explained that half of the RecTrails money goes to non-profits and trails organizations across the state, and the other half goes to Alaska State Parks.

The Director also discussed his upcoming meeting with the legislature; he said that on Monday he has the first hearing of the house subcommittee to discuss park fees, the volunteer program, and restructuring to make Alaska State Parks sustainable on the operating side of the budget. He said he wanted to look at alternative funding sources with projected declining state revenues. Director Ellis also committed to a strong trails program until the administration changes in November, as he was not sure who will be in his position after that.

Andy Morrison asked the director what he meant by making State Parks sustainable. Ben Ellis responded by telling him that Governor Parnell doesn’t support increasing user fees, but the legislature might. He also said that Alaska State Parks has 60 million dollars in deferred maintenance that only the legislature can address. He explained that Parks gets a little less than three million dollars in revenue from fees, and there is a seven to ten million in operating cost before federal money is added. He said a couple ideas
were to increase user fees and to add more electronic fee stations (like the one at Glen Alps in Chugach State Park).

Andy Morrison also asked what ORTAB & State Parks can do with left over money from unfunded motorized projects. The director responded by saying that we need to communicate better with motorized clubs, and there is a huge demand for ATV trails in the Mat-Su valley. He also said that the Alaska Outdoor Council looking into an ATV user fee system to fund trails similar to SnowTRAC. He said that Alaska’s registration fee is the cheapest in nation, and if we revamp this, I support a one-time point-of-sale registration (that would be valid for the entire life of the snowmachine). He said that most revenue comes from point of sale (not from people re-registering used snowmachines). When asked about how the sale of a snowmachines would work with this registration setup, Ben Ellis explained that the idea would be that the next person wouldn’t have to pay for registration, but the details weren’t worked out yet.

Rick Northey mentioned to the director that his club took a cut in funds for this grooming season, but he received the same grooming contract, so the Cabin Hoppers needed to use more out-of-pocket funds. He asked Ben Ellis if there is money left over on motor side, can this money be distributed to SnowTRAC next for year? Darcy Harris responded by telling him that this was done for a few years in the past, but Federal Highways no longer allowed this; she also mentioned that ORTAB is a good place to apply for equipment purchases for groomers.

Andy Morrison asked if the lack of motorized applications could end up reducing the total funding available. Darcy Harris said that could indeed happen (less money may be allocated by Federal Highways the following year if all of the money is not used during the current year). Ben Ellis then asked the board if they would entertain funding diversified trail projects from the State of Alaska to keep the limit up (beyond the 50% of the RecTrails money that the State currently receives). Ben Ellis remarked that he doesn’t want to take money from trail organizations, but if there is money left over, and a state project could be used to fill the gap, and ORTAB wants to make recommendation he support this.

Trail Grant Discussion
ORTAB began a discussion about moving some of the grant applications to different categories to maximize funds available for trail projects. At the start of the discussion there was a shortage of motorized applicants, so the goal was to possibly move some applications from motorized to diversified, and from diversified to non-motorized if applicable. There is a required 30/30/40 percent split of motorized / non-motorized /diversified projects, so to maximize the funds available for use, the projects’ dollar amounts need to reflect this breakdown. The board determined that the Tshalteshi Trails grant belonged in non-motorized, Kodiak Trail Signage was moved from diversified to motorized, and the Chena River SRA gate grant was moved to motorized. Another issue that was discussed was that there was $84,000 more in available money than there were funding requests.
1. **Trail Academy**
   Applicant: Alaska Trails – Steve Cleary  
   Category: Safety & Education  
   Average Score: 93.33  
   Funds Requested / Match: $18,000 / $4,550  
   Land Owner: N/A  
   Project Description:  
   The purpose of this grant is to provide advanced trail trainings to trail professionals and volunteers around the state using the Alaska Trails advanced education curriculum modules. Alaska Trails will plan, organize, and conduct three separate trails trainings – one in Juneau, one in Fairbanks, and one in the Anchorage / Mat-Su Valley area. These trainings will each be several days in length and take place in the spring of 2015.  
   ORTAB Comments:  
   Steve Cleary explained that the academy is an attempt to bring folks together from different agencies to participate in trainings that they couldn’t do separately. Some concerns about the project were that it wasn’t actually building a trail like many of the other projects, and that under the new Federal Highways rules this project competes with the Natural Resource Specialist II position in the State Trails Program (both cannot be completely funded with the safety & education money available), and that there should be more outreach to motorized users.  
   ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

2. **Water Hole & Straight-In Trail**  
   Applicant: Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers – Janice Northey  
   Category: Motorized  
   Average Score: 88.67  
   Funds Requested / Match: $8,373.40 / $2,093.35  
   Land Owner: State of Alaska  
   Project Description:  
   Fill in washouts on Waterhole and Straight-In Trails; also reroute part of trail on Waterhole Trail.  
   ORTAB Comments:  
   Some concerns were the members wanted to see more letters of support, and that the same problem may happen again. Rick Northey explained that in the past when a trail has become very eroded, they move the trail over, clear the large vegetation, but keep the organic layer intact to prevent erosion, as would be the case in this project. He also mentioned that although the trail is only intended for winter use, it is general state land, and people can access it year-round on ATVs and side by sides.  
   ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
3. **Purchase Widetrack for Grooming**

   **Applicant:** Montana Creek Motor Mushers – Ben Barclay  
   **Category:** Motorized  
   **Average Score:** 74.78  
   **Funds Requested / Match:** $12,000 / $3,000  
   **Land Owner:** State of Alaska / Mat-Su Borough  

   **Project Description:**  
   Purchase of a wide-track snowmachine to tow groomers on S Fork Montana Creek Trail. Will replace a 10 year old machine and allow for continued grooming for the users of this trail system.

   **ORTAB Comments:**  
   Some ORTAB members would have liked to see a grooming schedule, maps, and more explanation on the work being done on the application.

   **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

4. **Palmer Bike Park**

   **Applicant:** Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers (VMBAH) – Pat Owens  
   **Category:** Non-Motorized  
   **Average Score:** 88.22  
   **Funds Requested / Match:** $50,000 / $12,500  
   **Land Owner:** Mat-Su Borough  

   **Project Description:**  
   Our goal is to build a community bike park within the Matanuska River Park – a place where cyclists of all ages and abilities can learn new biking skills and ride with confidence on all types of terrain. New trails will incorporate ideas from the Matanuska River Park Master Plan, which include a small pump track trail, dirt jump trail, and beginner-intermediate flow trail.

   **ORTAB Comments:**  
   Some concerns that the board had were that the bike ramps were expensive, the shipping costs were high, and the labor cost seemed high. One member was curious about who would pay for insurance and who will own this park, and another was concerned that the planning wasn’t complete. Ed Kessler explained that the ramps they selected were actually cheaper than their competitors, and that other ramps they considered that cost less would require more maintenance (and thus costs). He also said that the bike park was included in the Mat-Su Borough’s Matanuska River Park Draft Master Plan, the borough owned the park, and the borough would insure the park. He mentioned that the park would be maintained by VMBA through a management agreement with the Mat-Su Borough.

   **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes
5. *Restoring Kachemak Bay’s Interpretive Trails*

**Applicant:** Center for Alaska Coastal Studies – Elizabeth Trowbridge  
**Category:** Non-Motorized  
**Average Score:** 95.67  
**Funds Requested / Match:** $49,989 / $12,497  
**Land Owner:** Center for Alaska Coastal Studies / Seldovia Native Association

**Project Description:**
This project will restore 443 feet of heavily used trail at the Peterson Bay Field Station by brushing trail, clearing, and removing large stumps and roots, and re-routing 170 feet of the trail to higher ground. It will also improve 1,190 feet of trail at the Carl E. Wynn Nature Center so that it is more accessible to young children, mildly impaired individuals and senior citizens. It will involve trail clearing and stump removal as well as the building of puncheons and boardwalk at each location in designated spots on the trail.

**ORTAB Comments:**
ORTAB thought the grant was written well and the included maps were helpful. They also liked that it was a community project. One comment was that it is easier for accounting if one item is cited as match rather than a little bit from each item in the budget.

**ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

6. *Lookout Mountain Maintenance Building – Phase II*

**Applicant:** Kachemak Nordic Ski Club – Kevin Walker  
**Category:** Non-Motorized  
**Average Score:** 80.33  
**Funds Requested / Match:** $30,000 / $7,500  
**Land Owner:** Kenai Peninsula Borough

**Project Description:**
Project funding will allow Kachemak Nordic Ski Club members and volunteers to complete phase II of the Lookout Mountain Maintenance Building which was constructed with support from a 2012 RTP grant. Phase II improvements would include electrical, heating, insulation, exterior siding, interior sheetrock, workbenches and shelving, chairs, fuel tank installation, shed roof addition, seeding, bollards, a short trail to connect the building to the existing trail system, and a trailhead kiosk.

**ORTAB Comments:**
Some concerns about this project were that it had outdated support letters, there was not enough detail about the work to be done, and that it might need an Environmental Review Checklist. Darcy Harris explained that the trail to be constructed was on an already disturbed area so more permitting was not necessary. Kevin Walker commented that everyone who originally sent in support letters still support the project.

**ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes
7. **Polaris UTV**

Applicant: Mat-Su Trails Council – Warren Templin  
Category: Motorized  
Average Score: 69.78  
Funds Requested / Match: $11,105 / $2,776.25  
Land Owner: N/A  
Project Description:  
The Mat-Su Trails Council seeks funds to purchase a Polaris diesel powered UTV. The UTV will be used to support trail maintenance and trail construction projects.

ORTAB Comments:  
ORTAB found many problems with this application including that the public notice used was Facebook, and a need was not expressed in the application.  
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

8. **Napaimute Winter Trail System**

Applicant: Village of Napaimute – Mark Leary  
Category: Motorized  
Average Score: 91.11  
Funds Requested / Match: $49,720 / $12,430  
Land Owner: N/A – Navigable Waterway  
Project Description:  
The Napaimute Winter Trail Project will use wooden markers with reflective tape locally made by Kalskag High School Voc-Ed Students to mark a winter trail from Crooked Creek to Kalskag. This will link the Middle and Lower Kuskokwim Trail Systems. The markers will enhance safe travel in marginal weather, and at night for recreational purposes, as well as for public transportation.

ORTAB Comments:  
One concern expressed by an ORTAB member was that this is the same project as they applied for two years ago. One member liked that the project had a youth component. There was then a short discussion among board members about why rural Alaska doesn’t apply for grant funds; one thought was it was difficult to deal with the various land owners to get permission to build a trail.  
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
9. North Fork Trail Parking Lot Development

Applicant: Snomads – Scott Connelly
Category: Motorized
Average Score: 93.29
Funds Requested / Match: $50,000 / $12,500
Land Owner: State of Alaska

Project Description:
This project involves construction of a 1.4 acre parking lot on State Land at the beginning of the multi-use North Fork Trail and adjacent to North Fork Road. This well used trail accesses prime recreation and hunting areas on the lower Kenai Peninsula. Developing a parking area at this trailhead will increase public access to these resources, and will prevent environmental degradation and adjacent landowner conflicts by establishing sufficient legal parking for all users.

ORTAB Comments:
Some concerns about the project were that many of the support letters had the same content, but different names, the project didn’t have all the permits in place, and didn’t seem shovel-ready. One member was curious if the owner of the home near the trailhead was involved in the planning process for this. Darcy Harris explained that permitting isn’t required before a project is approved, just the Environmental Review Checklist, to show that the applicant has an idea of what needs to be done if their project is funded.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

10. Grooming Equipment Acquisition

Applicant: Willow Area Community Organization – Steve Charles
Category: Motorized
Average Score: 86.89
Funds Requested / Match: $49,096.38 / $12,274.09
Land Owner: State of Alaska, Mat-Su Borough, BLM

Project Description:
This project will involve the purchase of a hydraulic, multi-bladed snow groomer/drag and a front blade assembly including all attachments for use with a Willow Trail Committee owned Snowcat tracked vehicle. When this project is completed, the equipment will be used for grooming and maintaining the West Gateway Trail System in Willow.

ORTAB Comments:
Some members were concerned that it cost $120 an hour to add additional attachments to the equipment. One member questioned who will own the equipment. Steve Neel explained that the State of Alaska owns the equipment, and in theory, could take equipment back at the end of a grant cycle, but that is not what happens. One issue with this grant is that it may not follow the Buy American Act, as required by RecTrails when steel is purchased. This needs to be looked into further.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
11. Tsalteshi Trails Equipment Upgrade

**Applicant:** Tsalteshi Trails Association – Bill Holt

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Average Score:** 96.44

**Funds Requested / Match:** $50,000 / $12,500

**Land Owner:** Kenai Peninsula Borough

**Project Description:**
Tsalteshi Trails Association (TTA) has constructed over 20 kilometers of trails on approximately 400 acres of land owned by the Kenai Peninsula Borough. There is no more room for major trail construction and now the trails association is tasked with maintaining and improving the trail system. The purchase of a skid steer (compact track loader) with available attachments will enable us to mow, mulch, grade, set posts for signs, move downed trees, and landscape, etc. during the summer and move snow and break up frost heaves in the winter.

**ORTAB Comments:**
The board generally agrees that the application is well put together. One member questions the need for this expensive piece of equipment by a well established group.

**ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

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12. Kodiak Island Trail Signage Demonstration Project

**Applicant:** Island Trails Network – Andy Schroeder

**Category:** Motorized

**Average Score:** 90.22

**Funds Requested / Match:** $22,251 / $5,562.75

**Land Owner:** Ouzinkie Native Corporation, Leisnoi Native Corporation, Kodiak Island Borough, City of Kodiak

**Project Description:**
Island Trails Network proposes to acquire sign-making equipment and carry out a series of demonstration projects to begin implementing a uniform and cost-effective system informational and directional signage throughout the 368-mile trail system of the Kodiak Island Borough. This is in keeping with the Kodiak Island Borough Master Trails Plan and will encourage safety of trail users, to encourage responsible trail use, and to more formally designate existing trails that may have obscure or conflicting names.

**ORTAB Comments:**
One member though that it was good that the group was cognizant of possible sign vandalism in their proposal.

**ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes
13. **Trail Gate Purchase and Installation**

**Applicant:** State Parks Northern Region – Dane Happ  
**Category:** Motorized  
**Average Score:** 86  
**Funds Requested / Match:** $14,644 / $3,661  
**Land Owner:** Alaska State Parks  

**Project Description:**  
This grant will fund the purchase and installation of locking gates at: Compeau Trail, Stiles Creek Trail System (3 gates), Mastodon Trail, Granite Tors, Lower Chena Dome, Angel Rocks and Angel Creek Tail in the Chena River State Recreation Area. Temporarily closing these locking gates during spring break-up will help protect natural resources, decrease maintenance costs, and reduce trail degradation. They may also be used to temporary close the trail for management or public safety reasons.

**ORTAB Comments:**  
One concern about this project were that gates often keep honest people out, while others just make new trails to get around the gates. Other members didn't like blocking access to an area. One member explained that State Parks was just trying to protect their investment they made in constructing their trails.

**ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

14. **Eyak Mountain Trail**

**Applicant:** Copper River Watershed Project – Kristin Carpenter  
**Category:** Non-Motorized  
**Average Score:** 93.89  
**Funds Requested / Match:** $17,781.19 / $4,445.30  
**Land Owner:** City of Cordova, State of Alaska  

**Project Description:**  
The Copper River Watershed Project requests funds to complete restoration of the Eyak Mountain Trail, a historic trail originally constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1935. Work will consist of finishing establishment of 487' of new trail bed sections in a public right of way (in summer 2013 we began moving this trail section from private lots to public ROW) and installing 656 linear feet of "step and run" board walk sections in boggy muskeg meadows to protect these wetlands areas. This one-mile trail connects with a 16-mile network of several other Cordova area trails.

**ORTAB Comments:**  
One ORTAB member thought $750 for campground lodging seemed expensive. Another issue they found was that there was too much background information in the narrative, and not enough about the project description.

**ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes
15. South Dog Park Loop Trail

Applicant: Fairbanks Dog Park, Inc. – Janet Brown

Category: Non-Motorized

Average Score: 95

Funds Requested / Match: $30,000 / $7,500

Land Owner: Fairbanks North Star Borough

Project Description:

This request would 1) construct an additional 500 foot long trail loop, 2) smooth frost heaves in the existing trail and 3) link the existing fenced training area to the existing trail. One trail link would include a culvert to convey seasonal runoff.

ORTAB Comments:
Board members liked the youth development opportunities and one member liked the ADA slope ratios.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

16. Fixing the Trails: Denali State Park SCA Team

Applicant: Student Conservation Association – Amanda Smith

Category: Non-Motorized

Average Score: 95

Funds Requested / Match: $41,021 / $10,255.25

Land Owner: Alaska State Parks

Project Description:

In collaboration with Denali State Park, SCA will provide a multi-week trail crew to improve, harden, and maintain Troublesome Creek and Byers Lake Trail in their most used sections. The crew will install an 80' boardwalk at TM 99+00 on Troublesome. Trail work will focus on tread work and will include drainage control, brushing, rock work and other maintenance.

ORTAB Comments:
Some comments from board members were that the application was poorly written, had errors in it, and had less than helpful maps.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
17. Fixing Mount Baldy: Layout and Construction

Applicant: Student Conservation Association – Amanda Smith
Category: Non-Motorized
Average Score: 88
Funds Requested / Match: $47,670 / $11,917.50
Land Owner: Alaska State Parks, Municipality of Anchorage

Project Description:
Funding will support the trail layout, design, re-routing and maintenance construction of the extremely popular Mt Baldy Trail. Due to its popularity, the trail suffers from serious erosion, braiding social trails, and will continue to get worse. Funding will cover the cost for Interior Trails to do the layout according to federal and state specifications and SCA will provide a multi-week trail crew to begin repair the Mt Baldy Trail.

ORTAB Comments:
There is concern among some board members that it would be very difficult to construct an ADA trail up Mount Baldy because it is such steep terrain. There was also mention that the project didn’t seem well planned, and that it scored well but isn’t necessary a desirable project.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

18. Tanana Lake Trail Non-Motorized Trail – Phase III

Applicant: Fairbanks NSB, Department of Parks & Rec. – Steve Taylor
Category: Non-Motorized
Average Score: 97.88
Funds Requested / Match: $50,000 / $12,500
Land Owner: Fairbanks North Star Borough

Project Description:
With funding from the Recreational Trails Program, the FNSB will construct a 2,000ft section of the non-motorized trail within the Tanana Lakes Recreation Area. This portion of trail will be constructed of gravel and recycled asphalt pavement and will follow the shoreline of Goose Island providing vistas of the non-motorized lake which is managed for swimming, paddling and birding.

ORTAB Comments:
Board member Steve Taylor declared a conflict of interest, and did not score it because he was the applicant. Steve explained that the river changed course after a levee was built leaving the area drier with small lakes. The area subsequently attracted partiers who abused the area, as well as birds and birders. Fairbanks then turned the area into a park to protect it.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
19. Upper Dewey Lake Trail Restoration - Phase IV

Applicant: Skagway Development Corporation on behalf of the Municipality of Skagway – Emily Deach
Category: Non-Motorized
Average Score: 92.89
Funds Requested / Match: $49,996 / $12,499
Land Owner: Municipality of Skagway

Project Description:
This project is part of a multi-stage process of restoring the Upper Dewey Lake Trail as well as performing deferred maintenance to remedy rutted and dangerous sections of the trail bed. The proposed reconstruction will restore safe footing and be easier to maintain.

ORTAB Comments:
One member mentioned that the trail builder chosen for this project is talented. One member didn’t like the use of helicopters in the project plans.
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

20. Point Bridget Trail Restoration

Applicant: Alaska State Parks Southeast Region – Kevin Murphy
Category: Non-Motorized
Average Score: 96.78
Funds Requested / Match: $36,712 / $9,178
Land Owner: Alaska State Parks

Project Description:
This project goal is to repair and reclaim 3/4 mile of heavily damaged sections of the Point Bridget Trail, improving access to three of the most popular public use cabins on the Juneau road system. Grant funding is sought to provide contract labor, gravel, helicopter time, lumber, and subsistence food for trail crews.

ORTAB Comments:
Some concerns discussed were inconsistencies in gravel amounts, the use of boats and helicopters (expensive), and the possibility of the new section of trail getting flooded again.
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
21. Ruth Arcand Trail Improvement Project

Applicant: Anchorage Horse Council – Nancy Burroughs
Category: Diversified
Average Score: 85.44
Funds Requested / Match: $50,000 / $12,500
Land Owner: Municipality of Anchorage

Project Description:
This funding will allow the Anchorage Horse Council (AHC) to continue its program to rehabilitate, reclaim, and enhance the multi-use trail system within the Ruth Arcand Park. This includes, but is not limited to, providing elevation, grading, drainage improvements, and the installation and compaction of high-strength geotech fabric and appropriate footing material in order to protect trail surfaces from future degradation, improve water quality, and to provide a safer, more enjoyable environment for all park users.

ORTAB Comments:
Steve Neel discussed a RecTrails grant that the Anchorage Horse Council had in 2010 that almost expired, but Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District (ASWCD) stepped in and helped finish the project. Darcy Harris mentioned that it looks like ASWCD will provide continued support; she also mentioned that she requested additional budget information from the Anchorage Horse Council, but never heard from the applicant.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

22. YRC North Peninsula Trail Maintenance

Applicant: Youth Restoration Corps – Elvira Wolf
Category: Diversified
Average Score: 84.33
Funds Requested / Match: $46,569 / $11,642.25
Land Owner: Kenai Peninsula Borough

Project Description:
Youth Restoration Corps youth crews of six high school aged youth 16 to 19 y.o.a will work under the supervision of YRC adult leaders with the planned project oversight of North Peninsula Recreation service area to provide needed Trail maintenance on existing trails. This collective effort will include sign placements developed by Nikiski high School students, Trail brush clearing, gravel placement, better water drainage and improvement to existing trails for all to enjoy.

ORTAB Comments:
One member was impressed with the completeness and experience the application backed up, others thought it lacked a comprehensive plan for the project.

ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
23. Historic Iditarod Trail
Applicant: Friends of Eagle River Nature Center – Asta Spurgis
Category: Diversified
Average Score: 88
Funds Requested / Match: $10,406.50 / $2,601.63
Land Owner: Alaska State Parks
Project Description:
The proposed grant supports improvements to 3 miles of the Historic Iditarod Trail which are under the management of Friends of Eagle River Nature Center. Improvements include filling in and hardening low spots, replacing rotting boards and supports of existing boardwalks, and cutting vegetation along the length of trail. To accomplish this, the proposal requests funds to purchase 50 yards of D-1 and Type Ila (3") gravel and rock; various sizes of outdoor grade lumber and hardware, and a "Billy Goat" BC26 Series Outback Brushcutter.
ORTAB Comments:
One ORTAB member though the application included a good description of needs. Another mentioned there was no quote for the billy goat.
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

24. Eagle River Nature Center Trails
Applicant: Friends of Eagle River Nature Center – Asta Spurgis
Category: Diversified
Average Score: 75
Funds Requested / Match: $26,582 / $6,645.50
Land Owner: Alaska State Parks
Project Description:
The proposed grant is for the purchase of a Bobacat Mini Track Loader MT55, ride behind model. It is wide enough to use on trails and has a wide range of attachments which can be added: digger, backhoe, snow blower, trencher and many others. One person will be able to accomplish difficult trail work, including loading gravel and rock, digging trenches, and moving earth.
ORTAB Comments:
One board member was not convinced of the need, and though renting from a facility 12 miles away was not difficult to overcome.
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
25. Girdwood Bridge Repair

Applicant: Girdwood Nordic Ski Club – Deb Essex
Category: Diversified
Average Score: 90.22
Funds Requested / Match: $50,000 / $12,500
Land Owner: State of Alaska, DOT (Girdwood Airport)
Project Description:
The project will repair and replace damaged bridges that are crucial for safety of recreational travel and winter grooming. The bridges were placed to connect the cross country ski trails in Girdwood, and now serve as a main trail connection within our trail system.
ORTAB Comments:
One member was surprised that Alyeska Resort is only helping out by sending a letter of support.
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes

26. The Fox Trails

Applicant: Mat-Su Borough – Hugh Leslie
Category: Diversified
Average Score: 96.11
Funds Requested / Match: $32,552 / $8,138
Land Owner: Mat-Su Borough
Project Description:
Construct two 36” wide single track non-motorized trails totaling 1.2 miles using modern sustainable best practices in the Matanuska Greenbelt on Matanuska Susitna Borough Public Recreation property. The trails would enhance and expand the existing trail network, provide connectivity to adjoining trails, and give trail users more options for dispersed recreation.
ORTAB Comments:
One concern was if the dump needs to expand yet again will these trails be lost?
ORTAB Recommends for Funding: Yes
Wednesday, January 29, 2014

Funding Discussion

ORTAB begins the meeting by discussing ways to use as much of the available RecTrails money as possible by satisfying the 30/30/40 (motorized / non-motorized / diversified) split of the projects. Some of the ideas were to try and fund some of the unfunded SnowTRAC grants from their last funding cycle, although this wouldn’t work because they are all in the Safety & Education category. Another idea was to give more money to motorized applicants from the current RecTrails grant cycle. To help clarify some of the funding rules, Steve Neel left to briefly talk on the phone with the RecTrails representative. Steve explained that the State Parks trail crews would no longer all be thrown into the diversified category; they will be classified on specifically by project (this means it will be difficult to figure out the 30/30/40 (motorized / non-motorized / diversified) split during this meeting). After looking at each project, the board found a couple projects to move to diversified.

Motion

Mickey Todd moved to move Tsalteshi Trails and the Center for Alaska Coastal Studies project to the diversified category. Steve Taylor seconded. Mickey Todd amended the motion to move Lookout Mountain to diversified, as well. Steve Taylor seconded again.

Discussion:

Much of the discussion touched on the inability to predict what State Parks projects will be proposed, so the board decided that the best they could do would be to get the projects currently being evaluated to fit into the 30/30/40 (motorized / non-motorized / diversified) split, and make a recommendation for parks to fund more motorized projects. There was also a suggestion to distribute $84,000 (the left over available money if all projects were funded) to the current motorized applicants, to maximize funds available to all.

Vote

(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

A few of the board members didn’t like the idea of assigning the money to motorized projects without a demonstrated need first. Another option discussed was to give the remaining money to State parks for the trail crews to use.

Motion

Kate Walters moved to move the remaining $84,000 (the left over available money if all projects were funded) to State Parks trail crews. Steve Taylor seconded.

Vote

(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed
*Note: The $84,000 amount referenced in the minutes on page 19 was calculated using an incorrect spending authorization amount, so this amount was never actually available for trail projects.

The board discussed the safety & education funding again. One thought was to use some of the safety & education money to fund the NRSII position this time around as a patch, but this is not sustainable; there needs to be a strong recommendation to have this funded somewhere else.

Steve Cleary noted that it would have been nice to know if there was safety & education money available when he put his application in, and he spent a lot of time on the application; he also said that he helped out with getting money from the general fund put towards the trails program. One other option was to partially fund the AK trails project. Steve Cleary said that he could operate the project on less funding, but of course would prefer full funding.

**Motion**

Jeff Budd moved to fund the Trail Academy (AK Trails Project) and recommend the rest go to the NRS II position. Mickey Todd seconded.

**Discussion:**

Darcy Harris told everyone at the meeting that Steve Cleary and Alaska Trails worked very hard to get funding for the Alaska State Trails Program into the Governor’s budget. He sent letters, organized and campaigned. One idea was to move the Trail Academy to another category (other than safety & education) by having a trail building component in it.

**Vote**

(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

**Increasing the Motorized Project Cap**

**Motion**

Mickey Todd moved to raise the cap on motorized projects from $50,000 to $100,000. John Rowe seconded.

**Discussion:**

Steve Neel mentioned that it can be difficult to find $25,000 in match for some groups. One benefit the board talked about is a decreased workload with fewer grants. ORTAB decided to vote and change if needed.

**Vote**

(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed
Motion
Mike moved to support funding of all the applicants. Steve Taylor seconded.

Vote
(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

Discussion with Alaska State Parks Director Ben Ellis
When Ben Ellis arrived the board had a list of recommendations for him:

1) They suggested that the director should have a conversation with the Commissioner of Alaska DOT to increase the spending authority to use all of the FY 13 RecTrails money (The idea being to spend the additional $494,000 that there isn’t spending authority for).

2) They said that the NRS II is critical to the Trails Program and recommend getting that position funded. There is currently a $31,000 shortfall for the position, and it could prevent safety projects in the future.

3) The board decided to increase the motorized project spending cap from $50,000 to $100,000 to help preserve the required 30/30/40 split (motorized / non-motorized / diversified); it is also difficult to perform motorized trail work with only $50,000.

3) ORTAB recommend that all grants should be funded that were submitted.

4) For FY14 ORTAB recommended that trail crews stick to the 30/30/40 breakdown for projects.

Ben Ellis mentioned that he supported getting funding for the NRS II position and would be happy to contact the DOT Commissioner. He also mentioned the possibility of the Division of Mining Land using State Parks trail crews after putting in an application. He also said that someone from DOT was testifying before a committee in Juneau. He said he was going to check in on this to see how this may relate to trail and Alaska State Parks.

Application & Score Sheet Discussion
The last part of the meeting revolved around making the grant applications and score sheets easier to use, and remove the errors. One idea to make the process more streamlined was to add a comments area and scores to the grant application instead of having a separate score sheet. Another idea was to export the data entered by the applicant into a database, so scorers don’t have to flip through the application. Some ORTAB members mentioned that the “project need” is difficult to account for in the current application; sometimes an application is put together well and scores well, but doesn’t seem like it should be a priority. ORTAB discussed how sometimes the application will score well but has typos and is not put together well; one member suggested giving points for “quality of application.” Another idea
was to have a separate application for capital purchases like other states have; this different application could ask for a map of the project location, as well as where it would be stored and maintained.

Fort Rousseau Causeway Historical Park Discussion

Jeff Budd began a discussion about how difficult it is to access Fort Rousseau. He explained that currently the only access is by boat, because there is no access across a runway on the island where the park is. He wanted the public access to this area to be easier.

Motion

Mike Rearden moved to write a letter that the ORTAB advocates finding a solution to access to Fort Rousseau by foot. Mickey Todd seconded.

Vote

(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

Motion

Steve Taylor moved to end the meeting. Mike Rearden seconded.

Vote

(8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

-Meeting is Adjourned-