

1 **APPROVED - ORTAB Meeting Minutes 1/28-29/2014**

2 **ORTAB Members Present:**

- 3 Jeff Budd - Chair - Represents Southeast Alaska / Non-Motorized
- 4 Kate Walters - Co-Chair - Represents Trail Users with Disabilities
- 5 Andy Morrison - ORTAB-SnowTRAC Liaison / Motorized / Diversified
- 6 Mike Rearden - Represents Western / Southwest Alaska
- 7 Ron Lurk - Represents Anchorage / Motorized / Diversified
- 8 Mickey Todd - Represents Motorized Trail Users
- 9 Steve Taylor - Represents Fairbanks / Northern Area
- 10 John Rowe - Represents Fairbanks / Northern Area

11
12 **DNR Staff Present:**

- 13 Ben Ellis - Director of Alaska State Parks
- 14 Darcy Harris - Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator
- 15 Steve Neel - Alaska State Parks Grants Administrator
- 16 Justin Wholey - Resource Specialist - Alaska State Trails Program

17
18 **Public:**

- 19 Rick Northey - Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers President
- 20 Janice Northey - Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers - Secretary
- 21 Elizabeth Trowbridge - Executive Director of Center for Alaska Coastal Studies
- 22 Ben Barclay - Director - Montana Creek Motor Musers
- 23 Kevin Walker - Board Member - Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
- 24 Steve Cleary - Executive Director - Alaska Trails
- 25 Ed Kessler - Board Member - Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers
- 26 Andy Schroeder - Executive Director - Island Trails Network

27
28 **Tuesday, January 28, 2014**

29
30 **Introductions**

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

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39 **Board Elections**

40

41 **Motion**

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

44

45 **Vote:** (7 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

46

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

48

49 **Public Comments**

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

55

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

62

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

70

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

76

77 Ed Kessler discussed how his group (Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers) was able to distribute
78 information about their bike park project via Facebook, and how they used a website that was created

79 with the help of Nation Park Service, RTCA to gather input about the project from the local community.
80 He also mentioned that the bike park was in the Mat-Su Borough Draft Master Plan, and expected the
81 project to be approved by the assembly in the next couple weeks.

82
83 Andy Morrison described to the board and the folks on the phone SnowTRAC's relationship to ORTAB,
84 including their shared application for grant funding. He described SnowTRAC as more supportive of
85 grooming, and less supportive of equipment purchases. The money for SnowTRAC is from DOT
86 snowmobile registration money, and is usually cannot fully fund all of the grooming requests. For this
87 reason SnowTRAC has talked about getting registration fees increased to get more money for the
88 program. In the past ORTAB has given money to SnowTRAC because there are often a lack of motorized
89 applications. Andy explained how snowmachine clubs use the money is conjunction with hard-working
90 volunteers. He also noted that there is a freeze on new areas being added to the grooming pool.

91

92 **Accounting Discussion**

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

97

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

105

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

114

115 Steve Neel also explained that ORTAB funds don't get rolled over if they aren't used, but SnowTRAC
116 funds do, and on top of that State DOT makes parks use it within 2 years. He mentioned that since State
117 Parks is subject to more stringent reporting from the RecTrails program, extensions on grant projects

118 will likely not happen in the future; Federal Highways also wants to get a billing at the very least every
119 six months during a project.

120
121 Another topic that Steve Neel touched on was that the ATI grant program was closed out in late 2013;
122 this was an earmark, so it won't likely return. He anticipated a continuing resolution for the MAP-21 Act
123 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act) in October, instead of a completely new federal
124 highway bill; this means that funding may only be approved as long as the continuing resolution, which
125 has made it difficult to plan for the program administrators in the past.

126
127 Steve Neel recounted a problem over the last year with advancing money for a bike park in Fairbanks. In
128 this situation there was a cash advance given, and then Alaska State Parks couldn't get in contact with
129 the applicants for billing and accounting. Steve said he had to eventually go through the contractor to
130 get the billing details. He said he would be wary of cash advances in the future.

131
132 One more thing he discussed is that the OMB (Office of Management and Budget) is combining circulars,
133 the result being the addition of risk assessment (financial risk) for grantees in the future, but not during
134 the current grant cycle.

135

136 **Discussion with Alaska State Parks Director Ben Ellis**

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

144
145 The Director also discussed his upcoming meeting with the legislature; he said that on Monday he has
146 the first hearing of the house subcommittee to discuss park fees, the volunteer program, and
147 restructuring to make Alaska State Parks sustainable on the operating side of the budget. He said he
148 wanted to look at alternative funding sources with projected declining state revenues. Director Ellis also
149 committed to a strong trails program until the administration changes in November, as he was not sure
150 who will be in his position after that.

151
152 Andy Morrison asked the director what he meant by making State Parks sustainable. Ben Ellis responded
153 by telling him that Governor Parnell doesn't support increasing user fees, but the legislature might. He
154 also said that Alaska State Parks has 60 million dollars in deferred maintenance that only the legislature
155 can address. He explained that Parks gets a little less than three million dollars in revenue from fees, and
156 there is a seven to ten million in operating cost before federal money is added. He said a couple ideas

157 were to increase user fees and to add more electronic fee stations (like the one at Glen Alps in Chugach
158 State Park).

159
160 Andy Morrison also asked what ORTAB & State Parks can do with left over money from unfunded
161 motorized projects. The director responded by saying that we need to communicate better with
162 motorized clubs, and there is a huge demand for ATV trails in the Mat-Su valley. He also said that the
163 Alaska Outdoor Council looking into an ATV user fee system to fund trails similar to SnowTRAC. He
164 mentioned that Alaska's registration fee is the cheapest in nation, and if we revamp this, I support a
165 one-time point-of sale registration (that would be valid for the entire life of the snowmachine). He said
166 that most revenue comes from point of sale (not from people re-registering used snowmachines). When
167 asked about how the sale of a snowmachines would work with this registration setup, Ben Ellis
168 explained that the idea would be that the next person wouldn't have to pay for registration, but the
169 details weren't worked out yet.

170
171 Rick Northey mentioned to the director that his club took a cut in funds for this grooming season, but he
172 received the same grooming contract, so the Cabin Hoppers needed to use more out-of-pocket funds.
173 He asked Ben Ellis if there is money left over on motor side, can this money be distributed to SnowTRAC
174 next for year? Darcy Harris responded by telling him that this was done for a few years in the past, but
175 Federal Highways no longer allowed this; she also mentioned that ORTAB is a good place to apply for
176 equipment purchases for groomers.

177
178 Andy Morrison asked if the lack of motorized applications could end up reducing the total funding
179 available. Darcy Harris said that could indeed happen (less money may be allocated by Federal Highways
180 the following year if all of the money is not used during the current year). Ben Ellis then asked the board
181 if they would entertain funding diversified trail projects from the State of Alaska to keep the limit up
182 (beyond the 50% of the RecTrails money that the State currently receives). Ben Ellis remarked that he
183 doesn't want to take money from trail organizations, but if there is money left over, and a state project
184 could be used to fill the gap, and ORTAB wants to make recommendation he support this.

185

186 **Trail Grant Discussion**

187 ORTAB began a discussion about moving some of the grant applications to different categories to
188 maximize funds available for trail projects. At the start of the discussion there was a shortage of
189 motorized applicants, so the goal was to possibly move some applications from motorized to diversified,
190 and from diversified to non-motorized if applicable. There is a required 30/30/40 percent split of
191 motorized / non-motorized /diversified projects, so to maximize the funds available for use, the
192 projects' dollar amounts need to reflect this breakdown. The board determined that the Tstalteshi Trails
193 grant belonged in non-motorized, Kodiak Trail Signage was moved from diversified to motorized, and
194 the Chena River SRA gate grant was moved to motorized. Another issue that was discussed was that
195 there was \$84,000 more in available money than there were funding requests.

196

197 **1. Trail Academy**

198 **Applicant:** Alaska Trails – Steve Cleary

199 **Category:** Safety & Education

200 **Average Score:** 93.33

201 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$18,000 / \$4,550

202 **Land Owner:** N/A

203 **Project Description:**

204 The purpose of this grant is to provide advanced trail trainings to trail professionals and volunteers
205 around the state using the Alaska Trails advanced education curriculum modules. Alaska Trails will plan,
206 organize, and conduct three separate trails trainings – one in Juneau, one in Fairbanks, and one in the
207 Anchorage / Mat-Su Valley area. These trainings will each be several days in length and take place in the
208 spring of 2015.

209 **ORTAB Comments:**

210 Steve Cleary explained that the academy is an attempt to bring folks together from different agencies to
211 participate in trainings that they couldn't do separately. Some concerns about the project were that it
212 wasn't actually building a trail like many of the other projects, and that under the new Federal Highways
213 rules this project competes with the Natural Resource Specialist II position in the State Trails Program
214 (both cannot be completely funded with the safety & education money available), and that there should
215 be more outreach to motorized users.

216 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

217

218 **2. Water Hole & Straight-In Trail**

219 **Applicant:** Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers – Janice Northey

220 **Category:** Motorized

221 **Average Score:** 88.67

222 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$8,373.40 / \$2,093.35

223 **Land Owner:** State of Alaska

224 **Project Description:**

225 Fill in washouts on Waterhole and Straight-In Trails; also reroute part of trail on Waterhole Trail.

226 **ORTAB Comments:**

227 Some concerns were the members wanted to see more letters of support, and that the same problem
228 may happen again. Rick Northey explained that in the past when a trail has become very eroded, they
229 move the trail over, clear the large vegetation, but keep the organic layer intact to prevent erosion, as
230 would be the case in this project. He also mentioned that although the trail is only intended for winter
231 use, it is general state land, and people can access it year-round on ATVs and side by sides.

232 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

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236 **3. Purchase Widetrack for Grooming**

237 **Applicant:** Montana Creek Motor Mushers – Ben Barclay

238 **Category:** Motorized

239 **Average Score:** 74.78

240 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$12,000 / \$3,000

241 **Land Owner:** State of Alaska / Mat-Su Borough

242 **Project Description:**

243 Purchase of a wide-track snowmachine to tow groomers on S Fork Montana Creek Trail. Will replace a
244 10 year old machine and allow for continued grooming for the users of this trail system.

245 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

248 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

249

250 **4. Palmer Bike Park**

251 **Applicant:** Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers (VMBAH) – Pat Owens

252 **Category:** Non-Motorized

253 **Average Score:** 88.22

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

255 **Land Owner:** Mat-Su Borough

256 **Project Description:**

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

261 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

270 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

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276 **5. Restoring Kachemak Bay's Interpretive Trails**

277 **Applicant:** Center for Alaska Coastal Studies – Elizabeth Trowbridge

278 **Category:** Non-Motorized

279 **Average Score:** 95.67

280 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$49,989 / \$12,497

281 **Land Owner:** Center for Alaska Coastal Studies / Seldovia Native Association

282 **Project Description:**

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

289 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

293 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

294

295 **6. Lookout Mountain Maintenance Building – Phase II**

296 **Applicant:** Kachemak Nordic Ski Club – Kevin Walker

297 **Category:** Non-Motorized

298 **Average Score:** 80.33

299 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$30,000 / \$7,500

300 **Land Owner:** Kenai Peninsula Borough

301 **Project Description:**

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

307 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

313 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

314

315

316 **7. Polaris UTV**

317 **Applicant:** Mat-Su Trails Council – Warren Templin

318 **Category:** Motorized

319 **Average Score:** 69.78

320 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$11,105 / \$2,776.25

321 **Land Owner:** N/A

322 **Project Description:**

323 The Mat-Su Trails Council seeks funds to purchase a Polaris diesel powered UTV. The UTV will be used to
324 support trail maintenance and trail construction projects.

325 **ORTAB Comments:**

326 ORTAB found many problems with this application including that the public notice used was Facebook,
327 and a need was not expressed in the application.

328 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

329

330 **8. Napaimute Winter Trail System**

331 **Applicant:** Village of Napaimute – Mark Leary

332 **Category:** Motorized

333 **Average Score:** 91.11

334 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$49,720 / \$12,430

335 **Land Owner:** N/A – Navigable Waterway

336 **Project Description:**

337 The Napaimute Winter Trail Project will use wooden markers with reflective tape locally made by
338 Kalskag High School Voc-Ed Students to mark a winter trail from Crooked Creek to Kalskag. This will link
339 the Middle and Lower Kuskokwim Trail Systems. The markers will enhance safe travel in marginal
340 weather, and at night for recreational purposes, as well as for public transportation.

341 **ORTAB Comments:**

342 One concern expressed by an ORTAB member was that this is the same project as they applied for two
343 years ago. One member liked that the project had a youth component. There was then a short
344 discussion among board members about why rural Alaska doesn't apply for grant funds; one thought
345 was it was difficult to deal with the various land owners to get permission to build a trail.

346 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

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355 **9. North Fork Trail Parking Lot Development**

356 **Applicant:** Snomads – Scott Connelly

357 **Category:** Motorized

358 **Average Score:** 93.29

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

360 **Land Owner:** State of Alaska

361 **Project Description:**

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

367 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

374 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

375

376 **10. Grooming Equipment Acquisition**

377 **Applicant:** Willow Area Community Organization – Steve Charles

378 **Category:** Motorized

379 **Average Score:** 86.89

380 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$49,096.38 / \$12,274.09

381 **Land Owner:** State of Alaska, Mat-Su Borough, BLM

382 **Project Description:**

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

387 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

393 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

394

395 **11. Tsalteshi Trails Equipment Upgrade**

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

397 **Category:** Non-Motorized

398 **Average Score:** 96.44

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

400 **Land Owner:** Kenai Peninsula Borough

401 **Project Description:**

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

408 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

411 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

412

413 **12. Kodiak Island Trail Signage Demonstration Project**

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

415 **Category:** Motorized

416 **Average Score:** 90.22

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

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

420 **Project Description:**

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

427 **ORTAB Comments:**

428 One member though that it was good that the group was cognizant of possible sign vandalism in their
429 proposal.

430 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

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435 **13.Trail Gate Purchase and Installation**

436 **Applicant:** State Parks Northern Region – Dane Happ

437 **Category:** Motorized

438 **Average Score:** 86

439 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$14,644 / \$3,661

440 **Land Owner:** Alaska State Parks

441 **Project Description:**

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

447 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

452 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

453

454 **14.Eyak Mountain Trail**

455 **Applicant:** Copper River Watershed Project – Kristin Carpenter

456 **Category:** Non-Motorized

457 **Average Score:** 93.89

458 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$17,781.19 / \$4,445.30

459 **Land Owner:** City of Cordova, State of Alaska

460 **Project Description:**

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

467 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

471 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

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475 **15.South Dog Park Loop Trail**

476 **Applicant:** Fairbanks Dog Park, Inc. – Janet Brown

477 **Category:** Non-Motorized

478 **Average Score:** 95

479 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$30,000 / \$7,500

480 **Land Owner:** Fairbanks North Star Borough

481 **Project Description:**

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

485 **ORTAB Comments:**

486 Board members liked the youth development opportunities and one member liked the ADA slope ratios.

487 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

488

489 **16.Fixing the Trails: Denali State park SCA Team**

490 **Applicant:** Student Conservation Association – Amanda Smith

491 **Category:** Non-Motorized

492 **Average Score:** 95

493 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$41,021 / \$10,255.25

494 **Land Owner:** Alaska State Parks

495 **Project Description:**

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

500 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

503 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

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514 **17. Fixing Mount Baldy: Layout and Construction**

515 **Applicant:** Student Conservation Association – Amanda Smith

516 **Category:** Non-Motorized

517 **Average Score:** 88

518 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$47,670 / \$11,917.50

519 **Land Owner:** Alaska State Parks, Municipality of Anchorage

520 **Project Description:**

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

526 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

530 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

531

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

533 **Applicant:** Fairbanks NSB, Department of Parks & Rec. – Steve Taylor

534 **Category:** Non-Motorized

535 **Average Score:** 97.88

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

537 **Land Owner:** Fairbanks North Star Borough

538 **Project Description:**

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

543 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

548 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

549

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553

554 **19. Upper Dewey Lake Trail Restoration - Phase IV**

555 **Applicant:** Skagway Development Corporation on behalf of the Municipality of Skagway – Emily Deach

556 **Category:** Non-Motorized

557 **Average Score:** 92.89

558 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$49,996 / \$12,499

559 **Land Owner:** Municipality of Skagway

560 **Project Description:**

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

564 **ORTAB Comments:**

565 One member mentioned that the trail builder chosen for this project is talented. One member didn't like
566 the use of helicopters in the project plans.

567 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

568

569 **20. Point Bridget Trail Restoration**

570 **Applicant:** Alaska State Parks Southeast Region – Kevin Murphy

571 **Category:** Non-Motorized

572 **Average Score:** 96.78

573 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$36,712 / \$9,178

574 **Land Owner:** Alaska State Parks

575 **Project Description:**

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

580 **ORTAB Comments:**

581 Some concerns discussed were inconsistencies in gravel amounts, the use of boats and helicopters
582 (expensive), and the possibility of the new section of trail getting flooded again.

583 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

584

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591

592 **21. Ruth Arcand Trail Improvement Project**

593 **Applicant:** Anchorage Horse Council – Nancy Burroughs

594 **Category:** Diversified

595 **Average Score:** 85.44

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

597 **Land Owner:** Municipality of Anchorage

598 **Project Description:**

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

605 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

611 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

612

613 **22. YRC North Peninsula Trail Maintenance**

614 **Applicant:** Youth Restoration Corps – Elvira Wolf

615 **Category:** Diversified

616 **Average Score:** 84.33

617 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$46,569 / \$11,642.25

618 **Land Owner:** Kenai Peninsula Borough

619 **Project Description:**

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

625 **ORTAB Comments:**

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

628 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

629

630

631

632 **23. Historic Iditarod Trail**

633 **Applicant:** Friends of Eagle River Nature Center – Asta Spurgis

634 **Category:** Diversified

635 **Average Score:** 88

636 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$10,406.50 / \$2,601.63

637 **Land Owner:** Alaska State Parks

638 **Project Description:**

639 The proposed grant supports improvements to 3 miles of the Historic Iditarod Trail which are under the
640 management of Friends of Eagle River Nature Center. Improvements include filling in and hardening low
641 spots, replacing rotting boards and supports of existing boardwalks, and cutting vegetation along the
642 length of trail. To accomplish this, the proposal requests funds to purchase 50 yards of D-1 and Type IIa
643 (3") gravel and rock; various sizes of outdoor grade lumber and hardware, and a "Billy Goat" BC26 Series
644 Outback Brushcutter.

645 **ORTAB Comments:**

646 One ORTAB member though the application included a good description of needs. Another mentioned
647 there was no quote for the billy goat.

648 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

649

650 **24. Eagle River Nature Center Trails**

651 **Applicant:** Friends of Eagle River Nature Center – Asta Spurgis

652 **Category:** Diversified

653 **Average Score:** 75

654 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$26,582 / \$6,645.50

655 **Land Owner:** Alaska State Parks

656 **Project Description:**

657 The proposed grant is for the purchase of a Bobcat Mini Track Loader MT55, ride behind model. It is
658 wide enough to use on trails and has a wide range of attachments which can be added: digger, backhoe,
659 snow blower, trencher and many others. One person will be able to accomplish difficult trail work,
660 including loading gravel and rock, digging trenches, and moving earth.

661 **ORTAB Comments:**

662 One board member was not convinced of the need, and though renting from a facility 12 miles away
663 was not difficult to overcome.

664 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

665

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671 **25. Girdwood Bridge Repair**

672 **Applicant:** Girdwood Nordic Ski Club – Deb Essex

673 **Category:** Diversified

674 **Average Score:** 90.22

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

676 **Land Owner:** State of Alaska, DOT (Girdwood Airport)

677 **Project Description:**

678 The project will repair and replace damaged bridges that are crucial for safety of recreational travel and
679 winter grooming. The bridges were placed to connect the cross country ski trails in Girdwood, and now
680 serve as a main trail connection within our trail system.

681 **ORTAB Comments:**

682 One member was surprised that Alyeska Resort is only helping out by sending a letter of support.

683 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

684

685 **26. The Fox Trails**

686 **Applicant:** Mat-Su Borough – Hugh Leslie

687 **Category:** Diversified

688 **Average Score:** 96.11

689 **Funds Requested / Match:** \$32,552 / \$8,138

690 **Land Owner:** Mat-Su Borough

691 **Project Description:**

692 Construct two 36" wide single track non-motorized trails totaling 1.2 miles using modern sustainable
693 best practices in the Matanuska Greenbelt on Matanuska Susitna Borough Public Recreation property.
694 The trails would enhance and expand the existing trail network, provide connectivity to adjoining trails,
695 and give trail users more options for dispersed recreation.

696 **ORTAB Comments:**

697 One concern was if the dump needs to expand yet again will these trails be lost?

698 **ORTAB Recommends for Funding:** Yes

699

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709 **Wednesday, January 29, 2014**

710

711 **Funding Discussion**

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

722

723 **Motion**

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

727

728 **Discussion:**

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

735

736 **Vote**

737 (8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

738

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

742

743 **Motion**

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

746

747 **Vote**

748 (8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

749 ****Note: The \$84,000 amount referenced in the minutes on page 19 was calculated using an incorrect***
750 ***spending authorization amount, so this amount was never actually available for trail projects.***

751
752 The board discussed the safety & education funding again. One thought was to use some of the safety &
753 education money to fund the NRSII position this time around as a patch, but this is not sustainable;
754 there needs to be a strong recommendation to have this funded somewhere else.

755
756 Steve Cleary noted that it would have been nice to know if there was safety & education money
757 available when he put his application in, and he spent a lot of time on the application; he also said that
758 he helped out with getting money from the general fund put towards the trails program. One other
759 option was to partially fund the AK trails project. Steve Cleary said that he could operate the project on
760 less funding, but of course would prefer full funding.

761
762 **Motion**
763 Jeff Budd moved to fund the Trail Academy (AK Trails Project) and recommend the rest go to the NRS II
764 position. Mickey Todd seconded.

765
766 **Discussion:**
767 Darcy Harris told everyone at the meeting that Steve Cleary and Alaska Trails worked very hard
768 to get funding for the Alaska State Trails Program into the Governor’s budget. He sent letters,
769 organized and campaigned. One idea was to move the Trail Academy to another category
770 (other than safety & education) by having a trail building component in it.

771
772 **Vote**
773 (8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

774
775 **Increasing the Motorized Project Cap**

776 **Motion**
777 Mickey Todd moved to raise the cap on motorized projects from \$50,000 to \$100,000. John Rowe
778 seconded.

779
780 **Discussion:**
781 Steve Neel mentioned that it can be difficult to find \$25,000 in match for some groups. One
782 benefit the board talked about is a decreased workload with fewer grants. ORTAB decided to
783 vote and change if needed.

784
785 **Vote**
786 (8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

787
788

789 **Motion**

790 Mike moved to support funding of all the applicants. Steve Taylor seconded.

791

792 **Vote**

793 (8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

794

795 **Discussion with Alaska State Parks Director Ben Ellis**

796 When Ben Ellis arrived the board had a list of recommendations for him:

797

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

801

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

804

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

808

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

810

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

812

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

818

819 **Application & Score Sheet Discussion**

820 The last part of the meeting revolved around making the grant applications and score sheets easier to
821 use, and remove the errors. One idea to make the process more streamlined was to add a comments
822 area and scores to the grant application instead of having a separate score sheet. Another idea was to
823 export the data entered by the applicant into a database, so scorers don't have to flip through the
824 application. Some ORTAB members mentioned that the "project need" is difficult to account for in the
825 current application; sometimes an application is put together well and scores well, but doesn't seem like
826 it should be a priority. ORTAB discussed how sometimes the application will score well but has typos and
827 is not put together well; one member suggested giving points for "quality of application." Another idea

828 was to have a separate application for capital purchases like other states have; this different application
829 could ask for a map of the project location, as well as where it would be stored and maintained.

830

831 **Fort Rousseau Causeway Historical Park Discussion**

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

835

836 **Motion**

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

839

840 **Vote**

841 (8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

842

843 **Motion**

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

845

846 **Vote**

847 (8 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

848

849 -Meeting is Adjourned-

850