

## **Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes**

### **January 22, 2020/ Day One**

#### **ORTAB Members Present:**

Mike Rearden: Represents Western / Southwest Alaska / Diversified Trail Users  
Meghan McClain: Represents Anchorage / Motorized Trail Users  
Seth Adams: Represents Fairbanks Area / Northern Area / Diversified Trail Users  
Mike Sirofchuck: Represents Kodiak / Southwest / Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Libby Kugel: Represents Anchorage / Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Sally Andersen: Represents Haines / Diversified Trail Users

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

Ricky Gease: DPOR, Director  
Samantha Hudson: DPOR, Administrative Officer II  
Melissa Richie: DPOR, Admin Operations Manager II  
Tara Epperson: DPOR, Grants Administrator II

#### **Present for questions on related State grant request:**

Allison Arians: Division of Forestry  
Joe Hall: DPOR, Chugach State Park

#### **Public Present:**

Betty Caudle from Accu-Type Depositions  
Lindsay Garrett from Alaska Trails  
Kyle Kelley from Girdwood Iditarod Trail Project  
Sunny Morrison from Accu-Type Depositions  
Steve Neel (interested party)  
Margaret Tyler from Girdwood Iditarod Trail Project  
Terri Warren

#### **On the Phone:**

Jack Blackwell from Kenai DPOR  
Miles Brookes from Juneau FHWA  
Brad Garasky from Southeast DPOR  
Preston Kroes from Southeast DPOR  
Jason Okuly from Kenai DPOR  
Ben Shryock from Kodiak DPOR  
Jeff Wartz from Fairbanks

*Meeting called to order 9:43 am*

Samantha Hudson called the meeting to order. She reviewed the safety procedures, building logistics, and cell phone etiquette. Samantha informed Accu-Type Depositions is recording

the meeting and will transcribe the meeting minutes. She requested all speakers state their name in order to be reflected correctly in the minutes. ORTAB members, DPOR staff, and the public who were present introduced themselves and stated their affiliation, if any. Samantha indicated there will be an ORTAB public notice recruitment in the spring.

Samantha noted an email was sent to ORTAB members regarding an amended grant round process. Clarification was provided on the Buy America confusion and issues pertaining to the manufacturing process of steel and iron in the United States, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings. Samantha read the clarification given by Miles Brookes. She will post examples of the certification types on the RTP website in the future. Samantha explained the timeline of the amended grant round process for the possible six applications that will not be discussed today. The round two ORTAB meeting will be held via teleconference on February 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>. A WebEx will be available for members to view identical screen information. Samantha requested members respond to her email indicating the preferred date for the teleconference meeting.

Ricky Gease then discussed two alternative ideas he came up with for the amended grant process for members to consider. More information will be known on Friday regarding which projects will return an amended application. A teleconference could be held to review the returned applications. Members could delegate authority to the Chair to review and accelerate the timeline. Final process parameters can be decided at tomorrow's meeting. Chair Mike Sirofchuck suggested this issue is placed on the agenda under New Business during tomorrow's meeting. There was no objection.

Mike S. read the house rules. Public comments during the grant scoring period are only allowed if the applicant is asked a direct question by a Board member. ORTAB members may change the original scores during the meeting. In accordance with AS 39.52.220, ORTAB members are responsible for making declaration of any interest or activities which could result in a violation of the code of ethics. Mike S. indicated his preference is to follow last year's process and provide an opportunity before each application is presented for members to declare any conflict of interest, and for the Board Chair to rule on such declarations. There was no objection.

Samantha showed the live RTP project funding spreadsheet on the screen, which was created by Tara Epperson. A hard copy will be distributed to members. There is approximately \$1.3 million available and authorized for project funding. Funds not obligated this year cannot be obligated later. The applications are listed by federal share, match, classification, and activity. The current average score is shown and Tara will dynamically update the screen during today's meeting with any changes to scores or classifications. The updates will be reflected in the minutes.

Samantha noted the subtotal request to review today does not including the six applications in the amended grant round process. Currently, State Parks is \$404,282, and non-State Parks is \$429,764. The administration fee request is \$106,956. The subtotal request for the six applications in the amended grant round process for State Parks is \$155,070, and for non-

State Parks is approximately \$155,000. The total amount for all applications is below the authorized project funding amount threshold.

Samantha provided an update on Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), which will expire on September 30<sup>th</sup>. A new highway bill is under development in Congress. Samantha indicated Miles does not believe a new reauthorization act will be signed by September 30<sup>th</sup>, and short-term extensions of the FAST Act will most likely occur. These could include prorated funding amounts, which are subject to obligation rules. Samantha informed applications for next year DPOR will accept all stipulations. There was insufficient time this year to accept any stipulation beyond Stipulation 1 (STIP 1), thus all applications were limited to STIP 1 projects.

Mike S. opened the floor for public comments. There were no public comments. The public who joined the meeting late introduced themselves and stated their affiliation.

*A break was taken at 10:11 am*

Mike S. expressed appreciation to the new staff and Director for their efforts.

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

- 1. Project Title:** Rosie Creek Valle Trail  
**Applying Organization:** DNR Forestry  
**Project Category:** Motorized  
**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**  
\$100,000.00 / \$11,111.00 / \$0 / 90.00%  
**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$111,111.00 / \$111,111.00  
**Final ORTAB Score:** 87.83 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Mike S. asked if anyone had a conflict of interest. Sally Andersen requested additional information as to what level of involvement constitutes a conflict of interest. Mike S. explained any connection to the project that a member feels is a conflict of interest should be disclosed. Samantha added if a member has had any involvement in the application or with the organization, the member should disclose the information.

Seth Adams expressed support for the project. Mike S. expressed support for the project and requested additional clarification regarding the mention of commercial logging in the area. Allison Arians explained one of the goals of the Board of Forestry is educating the public on the benefits of sustainable forestry and timber management. The trail network is a Forestry road network within the Tanana Valley State Forest. Timber management and harvest will continue throughout the Sate Forest and the road network will be maintained for 30 years, until the trees are ready again for harvest. Allison believes this is a prime opportunity to advance the

collaboration between Forestry and recreation. At the point timber harvest begins again, part of the trail network will be closed to public use for weeks or months due to safety reasons.

Seth believes additional trail work would be beneficial. Alison noted additional discussions are occurring, but cannot be reviewed during this application. Seth informed he is on the Fairbanks North Star Borough Trails Advisory Commission and recused himself from their written letter of support for this application. Seth believes this project could be moved into the motorized category, if necessary.

**Suggestion:** Provide an updated USGS map to overlay the trails next time.

**2. Project Title:** Ptarmigan Valley Trail

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Chugach

**Project Category:** Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$72,859.00 / \$8,095.00 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$80,954.00 / \$80,954.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 86.00 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Joe Hall described the location of the trail. The hope is to replace all the signs. Signs will be replaced based on the cost of replacement and available funding. Seth commented on the budget item of \$1,000 for small tools. Discussion occurred that scoring reflects supplies, equipment, material, et cetera, and are specified as individual costs and not aggregated. Joe noted previous budgets with the same description have not experienced problems with funding reimbursement. Tara indicated the description would warrant questioning further along in the process.

Mike Rearden expressed appreciation that all attachments were contained within one file. Meghan McClain commented her preference is each attachment is separate. Samantha noted the applicant is able to choose which way to electronically present the material. Mike S. indicated additional discussion on the subject can occur at tomorrow's meeting. Seth discussed project application contained no long-term maintenance plan and was docked points.

ORTAB members discussed lowering scores. Ricky asked if the brushing funds include the areas between the two parking lots. Joe noted the budget does not currently include brushing for that area. He believes it would cost an additional \$10,000 to include the brushing. Mike S. explained the consideration for additional funding for applications will occur after all applications are reviewed.

**Suggestion:** Provide additional details in the application, specifically regarding the number of signs to be replaced.

**3. Project Title:** Bird to Gird Trail

**Applying Organization:** Alaska Trails

**Project Category:** Diversified

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$42,339.00 / \$4,815.00 / \$440.00 / 89.79%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$47,154.00 / \$47,594.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 88.80 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Libby Kugel advised she has a potential conflict of interest because she is an Alaska Trails Board member. She was not involved in any way in the preparation of the application.

*Mike Rearden moved to remove Libby Kugel from the scoring of the application of the Bird to Gird Trail and Meghan McClain seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 6 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

Ricky advised conflicts of interest are the Chair's sole responsibility, and not the responsibility of the full Board.

*Chair Mike S. ruled that Libby Kugel's score will be removed from consideration in the Bird to Gird Trail application. She may participate in the discussion as a member of the public.*

Mike R. expressed support for the ADA conformance portion of the application. Joe explained the user groups of the projects include walkers, bikers, and wheelchair accessibility users. No motorized groups were intended. Steve Neel commented, as a member of the public, that the diversified project category means different groups use the trail in different seasons. The different groups do not have to include both motorized and non-motorized to be considered diversified. Meghan noted the category is non-motorized on the application and the category is diversified on the budget. Melissa Richie explained the balancing process that was used to determine the category designations. She stated the application category could be changed. Joe indicated the 13-mile trail is parallel to the highway. Department of Transportation (DOT) manages the avalanche closures along the trail during the winter. Meghan described her trail use and experience on the trail volunteering with Girdwood Fire Department. She noted one instance of a bicycle accident fatality due to the trail being overgrown. Members expressed support for this project. Scores were revised.

**Suggestion:** Provide photos.

**4. Project Title: Girdwood Lower Iditarod National Historic Trail, Phase II**

**Applying Organization:** Girdwood Trails Committee / Girdwood Inc.

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$74,685.00 / \$8,299.00 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$82,984.00 / \$82,984.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 89.33 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Kyle Kelley explained the trail link described in the application is the Lower Iditarod Trail connected to old town Girdwood. This is the Phase II of a mile corridor improvement to connect to the Crow Creek Trail. The section is dense and will open the line of site. Brown bears have been present in this area. Seth commented it would be valuable to have photos submitted. Sally inquired as to the Heritage Landbank relationship. Kyle discussed the Municipality of Anchorage has a landbank and Heritage Landbank manages about 5,000 acres in Girdwood. This portion of the trail is within the Landbank. The trail has to be constructed, finished, and then will be approved for easement by the Landbank.

Kyle gave a brief review of Phase III of the project. The goal is to create a non-road-sharing trail up-valley. Margaret Tyler explained the Municipality is not allowed to have motorized use, except for specific purposes. The project category was listed as non-motorized because of the interpretation of this year's application instructions. This could also be categorized as diversified, as long as the diversified use does not include motorized use. The users will include hiking, biking, and skiing during summer and winter seasons. Kyle noted gravel costs are included in the lump sum contractor fees. Ricky informed gravel pits and operators need to have a cultural resources certificate of survey.

**Suggestion:** Provide photos.

**5. Project Title:** Settlers Bay Coastal Park Interpretive Trail Signage

**Applying Organization:** Matanuska-Susitna Borough

**Project Category:** Safety & Education

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ /**

**Federal %:** \$28,800.00 / \$3,200.00 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$32,000.00 / \$32,000.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 80.67 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Libby advised she works for Greatland Trust, who holds a conservation easement on Settlers Bay Coastal Park.

*Chair Mike S. ruled Libby Kugel does not have a conflict of interest.*

Mike S. expressed concerns with the project. He did not have a clear understanding if the project contains a plan or if the costs outlined were reasonable. He scored it low. Meghan noted there were no examples of the signage that would be provided. Ricky explained on behalf of the applicant that the Mat-Su Borough has been proactive in preparing site plans and interpretive plans. Seth discussed the time consuming nature of graphic design. He believes the project is worthwhile, but not adventurous.

Mike R. expressed concern with the current low usage and questioned the expected increase in usage due to additional signage. Libby stated the park was newly created

two years ago. It has good access and is within a coastal area with approximately 300 acres. It is near a populated subdivision and has potential for additional trail construction. Sally expressed concern regarding the language of the budget only containing one task. Members revised scores.

Seth commented on DPOR's availability for contracting, as DPOR's Interp & Education section would be the vendor doing most of the work described in the application. Ricky provided an overview of the process. He discussed State Parks has invested in a new OuterSpatial application developed with the assistance of the Mat-Su Trails Foundation. The app contains GIS data for State trails for safety and education. Work is ongoing with Recreation.gov to include and integrate federal lands trails. The long-term master plan is to incorporate interpretive information on a digital platform.

**Suggestion:** Provide examples of signage and explain this is a newly created park.

**6. Project Title:** Eska Strip Mine Trail

**Applying Organization:** Matanuska-Susitna Borough

**Project Category:** Diversified

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$61,180.00 / \$6,798.00 / \$13,876.00 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$67,978.00 / \$81,854.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 84.67 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Seth commented the name is not pretty. Members agreed photos would have been useful in scoring this application. Seth suggested the possibility of encouraging the inclusion of photos in the instructions. He understands it could be logistically difficult if photos need to be taken during the summer and the project is developed in the fall and reviewed in the winter. Libby stated she visited the trail this summer. She believes the project is needed and additional signage is necessary. Mike R. expressed support for the project, but frustration with the presentation of the application.

**Suggestion:** Provide photos. Provide clearer markings and nomenclature on maps. Provide better timeline.

**7. Project Title:** Turnagain Pass Trail

**Applying Organization:** United State Forest Service, Chugach National Forest

**Project Category:** Diversified

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$74,512.50 / \$8,279.50 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$82,792.00 / \$82,792.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 92.50 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Mike R. expressed support for the project and noted the application was presented very well. Seth expressed support for the project. Libby expressed support for the project. Mike S. expressed support for the project.

**8. Project Title:** Shoup Bay Trail, Phase I

**Applying Organization:** Valdez Adventure Alliance

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$48,247.50 / \$5,360.50 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$53,608.00 / \$53,608.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 82.00 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Seth informed he has previously submitted this application. He did not, however, submit the application this year. Seth noted he gave all of his documents to Valdez Adventure Alliance. He does not believe he has a conflict of interest, but some of the information within the application was provided by him. Seth indicated he would not benefit in any way from the approval of this application. Seth expressed support for the project.

*Chair Mike S. ruled Seth Adams does not have a conflict of interest.*

Mike R. expressed concern the project cannot guarantee a reimbursable. He asked if the project can move forward with funding without the reimbursable guarantee. Steve Neel commented, as a member of the public, that Federal Highways will not generally approve the project unless there is a guarantee of funding. Page 14 indicates the applicant is confident the money is projected to be set aside between January and May. Mike R. expressed concern the application was not signed. Seth expressed disappointment the project covers only 1,500 feet of trail. Ricky then expressed support for the project. He has been to the site and informed the City of Valdez is supportive of the project. He believes the matched funding will materialize. Discussion continued regarding the funding amount inconsistencies between the current funding of \$80,000 from the City of Valdez and total project cost of \$53,000 and other financials listed on the application.

**Suggestion:** Provide photos. Provide reimbursable guarantee. Provide signature on application. Staff is to determine if the reimbursable funding is available before the project is sent to Federal Highways.

Discussion occurred to break for lunch.

**Break for lunch - 11:40 am - 1:00 pm**

The ORTAB meeting reconvened after lunch.

**9. Project Title:** Chena River State Recreation Area Motorized Trails

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Northern

**Project Category:** Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$99,800.00 / \$11,084.00 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$110,884.00 / \$110,884.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 86.00 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Seth noted the application does not include individual trail work priorities or timelines in the narrative. The contractor is well-known and well-respected. Meghan discussed the specific per mile rate was \$2,248 for 44 miles. Mike S. agreed the detail in the timeline was lacking. He expressed support for the project. Mike R. agreed the contractor is reliable. Sally expressed support for the project. Mike R. expressed support for the project. He appreciated the good maps. Tara highlighted two areas on the worksheet where a typographical numeric error may have occurred. She will seek clarification. Members agreed the discrepancy is a housekeeping issue.

**Suggestion:** Provide the timeline for each trail action and percentage of budget each trail action consumed.

*Brad Garasky, Preston Kroes and Ben Shryock joined the meeting telephonically.*

Mike S. informed he is a former member of the Kodiak State Parks Citizens Advisory Board. His tenure ended last year. Mike S. advised his wife is currently on the Kodiak State Parks Citizens Advisory Board. He does not believe that is a conflict of interest. Chair Mike S. yielded the discussion to the Vice-Chair Mike R. Mike S. had no involvement with the preparation of the applications.

*Vice-Chair Mike Rearden ruled Chair Mike Sirofchuck does not have a conflict of interest and yielded back the Chair.*

**10. Project Title:** West Shuyak Island State Park Trails

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Kodiak

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$23,794.00 / \$2,645.00 / \$22,004.00 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$26,439.00 / \$48,443.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 84.33 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Ben Shryock discussed the project is to repair trail structures, specifically boardwalks and puncheons, which are 20 to 30 years old. The trails receive heavy public use from homeland visitors, out of state visitors, Homer visitors, and Kodiak residents. The trails are accessible by floatplane and boat. The project is complicated due to the logistics of working in a remote park. One of the benefits of the Shuyak location is the onsite remote ranger station. The major costs of the project are materials and

hiring an experienced crew leader. The replacement material will be all-weather wood. Mike S. indicated the trails are heavily used.

Seth inquired as to why crews are anticipated to only complete replacement of two puncheons a week. Ben explained the length of the individual puncheons and the locations on the trail were the factors considered for the timeline estimate. The completion of individual puncheons will vary from one day to one week depending on their varying considerations. There will be no motorized access during the repair. Members expressed support for the project's low cost.

**11. Project Title:** Lake Gertrude Loop Trail

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Kodiak

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$37,691.00 / \$4,205.00 / \$0 / 89.96%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$41,896.00 / \$41,896.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 81.33 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Ben advised the trail is located in Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park, which was recently identified as the most popularly used recreation site in Kodiak. The goal of the project is to expand user accessibility and to match the map's reflection of the trail grades to actual trail conditions. The project requires the creation of a technical personnel position. The project includes brushing, scraping, washing, sanding, and staining a very large and important staircase trail structure. Preston Kroes indicated the staircase is comprised of treated lumber. Ben explained the project includes installation of six necessary trail signs and a map on the west side of lake. Mike S. noted the heavy use includes hikers from cruise ship.

**Suggestion:** Provide photos.

**12. Project Title:** Afognak Trail and Public Use Cabins

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Kodiak

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$22,839.00 / \$2,551.00 / \$1,360.00 / 89.95%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$25,390.00 / \$26,750.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 82.33 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Ben discussed Afognak Island is the second largest of the islands in the Kodiak Island archipelago. A substantial portion of the island is State Park lands. There are three public use cabins, which essentially serve as trailheads and the major access points to the park. The main goal of the project is to allow two of the cabins to have improved accessibility by replacing the porches with ramps. At this point, 100% ADA accessibility is unavailable for the cabins. The exterior of the two oldest cabins will

be reconditioned. The third cabin will undergo improved access and reconditioning. Logistical challenges include access by floatplane and the need for paid workers, other than volunteers.

Seth noted RTP funds are not allowed to be used for maintenance. He feels this project pushes the maintenance definition. Steve Neel, as a member of the public, explained his understanding of the differences between maintenance and repair. He feels this project falls well within the repair parameters and eligibility. Seth indicated this is his least favorite project and feels this work should be maintained every few years.

Ricky discussed part of the Park's mission for the public use cabins is to increase the number of visitors who are likely to use a trail. Ricky noted projects conducted on a yearly basis are considered maintenance. Projects with a 10 to 20-year cycle are not considered maintenance. It is viewed similar to brushing. Seth feels trail brushing could be recognized as maintenance. Ricky believes admissible projects should include work that can be completed to facilitate and expand the capacity for outside recreational use. Seth agreed and now supports the project. Mike S. indicated he has stayed in both cabins. Ben noted Pillar Lake gets substantial use.

**13. Project Title:** Halibut Point State Recreation Area Site Trail

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Southeast

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$20,000.00 / \$2,229.00 / \$0 / 89.97%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$22,229.00 / \$22,229.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 84.67 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Brad Garasky described Halibut Point State Recreation Area Site is located in the community of Sitka, which went into passive management from 2015 to 2019. The trail is popular and the park has four picnic shelters available for reservations during the summer. The park is a walk-in park only. The project will upgrade the three access points to safety standards and replace missing and damaged signs. The project does not include new construction or new trails. The existing trails will be cleared and resurfaced in some areas.

Mike S. asked if the road the care-taker's residence is on is ADA accessible. Brad G. agreed. He noted the road is gated, but a wheelchair can fit through the walk-around area. The road is hard-packed gravel. The bridge that crosses the creek in the park is designed to meet ADA standards. Both the south shelter and the main picnic pavilion shelter are ADA accessible. Mike S. commented he was impressed there was only three hours of grant administration.

Seth commented on his impression this project seems like campground maintenance, but agrees the project needs repairs after neglect. Brad G. informed infrastructure,

including staircases and pavilions, at Halibut Point will need to be addressed in the future. This project focuses strictly on making the trail useable.

Preston noted the grant may appear to be normal maintenance, but is necessary to provide access to the trails. The work is not technical and highly skilled operators are not needed. The intent was to keep the costs as low as possible and provide the most benefit to the park. Members revised scores.

**14. Project Title:** Point Bridget State Park Trails

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Southeast

**Project Category:** Diversified

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$53,472.50 / \$6,186.50 / \$0 / 89.63%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$59,659.00 / \$59,659.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 79.33 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Brad G. discussed Point Bridget State Park is accessible from the road system in Juneau. Most of the park is undeveloped. There is a 7.5 mile trail system through the park providing access to three public use cabins. The cabins are the only development in the park. The cabins are highly used. They are walk-in accessible only and are functional for families with children. Users include recreationalists, hikers, photographers, wildlife watchers, berry pickers, and fishermen. The trail system is comprised of primarily boardwalk style planking through the wet areas. The planks are both treated and non-treated wood and are in disrepair. The plan is to keep the same footprint of the trail and replace the planks with hard-packed gravel to create a safer walking environment. The new trail surface is expected to produce less maintenance than the planks. Most of the bridges and stair structures on the trail are in good condition.

Preston noted Point Bridget Trail has received trail grants in the past. He stated additional work will be completed by staff time that was not included in the application. The intent is in keeping with the State Park practice of doing a lot with very little. Brad G. explained the sections of the trail addressed by previous grants are in good condition and will not need attention from this grant. The plan is to utilize a locally known trail contractor who has a quality trained crew and is available to conduct the work next season. The contractor has a relationship with State Parks in the area and is a turnkey operation.

Seth expressed support for the project. Sally inquired about experiences with trail contractors. Steve Neel, as a member of the public, commented the experience varies. He expressed his opinion, based on past experience as an RTP Grant Administrator, that certain regions have developed their own staff who are more efficient than outside contractors, while other regions have trail contractors who specialize and are more effective. Ricky informed he walked the trail and chose to turn around, rather than cross the trail areas that were in disrepair. Members then revised scores.

**Suggestion:** Provide photos.

*A break was taken at 2:03 pm*

**15. Project Title:** Grewingk Valley and China Poot Lake Area Trails

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Kenai

**Project Category:** Diversified

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$75,000.00 / \$8,333.00 / \$14,428.00 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$83,333.00 / \$97,761.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 90.00 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Jason Okuly described the project will open trail corridors that have fallen into disrepair with thick brush and downed trees in the most heavily utilized areas of the park. Some of the trails this grant will repair are currently categorized as “Do Not Hike” trails. Search and rescue issues have occurred on one of the open trails last year. Typically, if people get lost, they end up at the lake and a random boater can assist and provide transportation. There are two public use cabins available. Accessing the lake by floatplane is popular for day trips. The park has seen an increase in users who pack in rafts to float out.

Mike R. expressed support for the project and commended the application. He is familiar with the trails and the work needed. He noted previous project work has been excellent. A member expressed support for the project and praised the application. Seth felt the narratives were unreadable. Libby commented the narratives were perhaps too specific. She appreciated the maps and has stayed at the cabin in Halibut Cove. One of the trails she tried to hike was impassible. Seth asked if this is a project that could be seen again in five years because the brushing will grow back if maintenance is not conducted.

Ricky explained this area is experiencing warmer winters, wetter soils, and stronger winds that cause downed dead-fall trees. These events are typically unusual, but the environmental phenomenon is occurring throughout the southern peninsula. The ground is not frozen, and it would normally be frozen this time of year. Mike S. expressed support for the project and was pleased with the 20-plus miles of trails. He commented the narrative was difficult to read because of the level of details. Members revised scores.

ORTAB members briefly discussed the projects presented during the meeting. Follow-up information and friendly amendments to projects could be requested from:

- Settlers Bay Coastal Park Interpretive Trail Signage
- Eska Strip Mine Trail
- Ptarmigan Valley Trail
- Cripple Creek ATV Trail

Seth asked if it would be beneficial to know the categories of the six applications that have been postponed. Melissa indicated it is unknown which of those six applicants are going to resubmit a compliant application. The revised application for Tanana Lakes Recreation Area is the only one that has been received. Four of the potential revised applications are non-motorized, one is motorized, and Tanana Lakes is diversified. Discussion continued regarding when to conduct a final review of the projects assessed today compared to the timeline of assessing the postponed applications. The ORTAB decided to review the emailed Tanana Lakes application tonight for discussion at tomorrow's meeting with the applicant on the phone at 9:30 am. Seth indicated the possibility of reviewing the non-finalized Crow Pass application during tomorrow's meeting. Melissa informed the applicant requested to resubmit the application by the Friday deadline.

Ricky requested additional information on the waiver process for the Buy America policy. Steve Neel, speaking as a past grants administrator, noted the Federal Highways for RTP previously utilized waivers for the Buy America policy because of the low dollar amounts. The waiver process allowed submittal for reasons including specific items were not made with American steel and the cost of the item was 25% higher in the U.S. The recent Executive Order disallows all waivers. The steel needs a certificate of origin indicating the steel was rolled and made in America. Steve Neel indicated, based on his past experience as an RTP grants administrator, that the absence of waivers has posed difficulty because of the lack of items completely manufactured with only American steel such as ATVs, sleds, nuts, bolts, bridge supports, chainsaws, and steel brush-cutters.

ORTAB members discussed current budget availability. Tara outlined the distribution of funding based on the applications, including the six applicants who may resubmit. The current distribution is motorized at 21%, non-motorized at 37%, and diversified at 39%. Follow-up information and additional requests will be sought from applicants and will be discussed at tomorrow's meeting for further consideration. Seth noted Cripple Creek ATV Trail has a motorized project ready for submittal that was not funded last year. Ricky suggested that Seth submit the application today so it could be considered with the revised six applications that had the Buy America issues.

Melissa informed everyone during today's meeting, that she has received two additional revised applications. The applicants were directed to amend their budget and budget narrative after receiving clarification on Buy America as it pertained to their current year applications. The new budget documents will not match the application document. Seth requested a brief sentence is included during the review describing what was removed. Melissa agreed. There are two applicants who have not responded to the request to adjust their budget and budget narrative. It is possible a teleconference will be necessary to continue review of the revised applications. Members were asked to provide feedback tomorrow regarding a possible date.

Ricky explained one of the items under New Business tomorrow is to address functional solutions to the issues faced by the Buy America policy. He decided one possibility is to undergo a Tier 1 grant process through perhaps the Rasmuson Foundation to purchase \$25,000 worth of chainsaws. Another possibility is for the Board to determine equipment

rental companies who will purchase a list of needed equipment that projects can rent. Ricky expressed the importance of developing creative solutions because the issue is likely to persist in the future.

Ricky advised discussion will occur tomorrow regarding the new scoring process. He expressed appreciation to Steve Neel and staff for their work. Seth expressed appreciation to staff and Ricky for the smooth transition. Mike S. expressed appreciation to Steve Neel for his efforts. Ricky informed the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan will come up for renewal in the near future. He requested members provide feedback regarding the process and any specific integrated requests to be incorporated on a regional basis.

*Seth Adams moved to end for the day. Meghan McClain seconded it.*  
Motion called to vote: Six yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

### **January 23, 2020/ Day Two**

#### **ORTAB Members Present:**

Mike Rearden: Represents Western / Southwest Alaska / Diversified Trail Users  
Meghan McClain: Represents Anchorage / Motorized Trail Users  
Seth Adams: Represents Fairbanks Area / Northern Area / Diversified Trail Users  
Mike Sirofchuck: Represents Kodiak / Southwest / Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Libby Kugel: Represents Anchorage / Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Sally Andersen: Represents Haines / Diversified Trail Users

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

Ricky Gease: DPOR, Director  
Samantha Hudson: DPOR, Administrative Officer II  
Melissa Richie: DPOR, Admin Operations Manager II  
Tara Epperson: DPOR, Grants Administrator II  
Jean Ayers: DPOR, Grants Administrator II  
Lydia Harvey: Travel Coordinator

#### **Public Present:**

Betty Caudle from Accu-Type Depositions  
Stuart Leidner from Mat-Su Region Alaska State Parks  
Sunny Morrison from Accu-Type Depositions  
Steve Neel

#### **On the Phone:**

Brad Charleston from Fairbanks North Star Borough

*Meeting called to order 9:07 am*

Mike Sirofchuck called the meeting order. No participants were on teleconference. Mike S. requested cell phones be silenced. He noted the transcriber is taking minutes and requested the participants to state their name before they speak.

Jean Ayers, Grants Administrator for the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), introduced herself and provided a brief update and forward projection. The LWCF is a federal grant program and the National Park Service is the funding agent. Jean informed ORTAB members would normally review LWCF applications at this time of year. However, LWCF was unable to hold a competitive grant round.

Jean gave an overview of the State's receipt authority and apportionment process for LWCF projects. The current apportionment can be rolled forward for two years. Additional receipt authority has been requested from the State for the FY21 budget. The hope is to hold a grant round in the fall to be reviewed by ORTAB next year. A member asked if it would be appropriate to contact legislators to request support for the additional receipt authority in the budget. Jean responded in the affirmative and expressed appreciation for the advocacy for the programs and the Board. Jean announced her planned retirement in April. Members expressed congratulations.

*Stuart Leidner joined the meeting.*

Mike S. reviewed the house rules. Public comments during the grant scoring period are only allowed if the applicant is asked a direct question by a Board member. ORTAB members may change original scores during the meeting. Mike S. requested members declare any conflicts of interest regarding applications.

Members revised scores.

Mike S. welcomed Lydia Harvey to present on travel rules and requirements. Lydia requested members submit all travel receipts to her. She provided her email address and answered members' questions.

Discussion occurred regarding the consideration of last year's Cripple Creek ATV Trail application. Samantha Hudson expressed concern that, given the changes to the State Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and application process, the applicant did not use the same application as others had to use this year, did not meet the same deadlines that others had to meet this year, and did not post public notice for the projects this year. Seth Adams explained his two projects were pre-included to this year's competitive round without the requirement to resubmit and reapply per Ricky Gease's directive. Ricky Gease confirmed that he and Seth had a private discussion about this issue. This directive was not shared with the grant administration team, was not advised upon by State RTP staff, and the State RTP processes were not followed. Libby Kugel informed the board that a similar protocol was followed for two other projects in last year's grant round. Sally Andersen indicated that could set the precedent for practice this year.

**16. Project Title:** Gold Mint Trail

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Mat-Su

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$55,397.00 / \$6,998.00 / \$1,615.00 / 88.78%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$62,395.00 / \$64,010.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 85.83 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Stuart Leidner from Mat-Su Region Alaska State Parks discussed the Gold Mint Trail is one of the region's most popular year-round trails. It is particularly dense with alders, moose, and bear. The project will focus on six miles of flat, non-motorized trail to clear the path for better line-of-sight. Stuart indicated the change to the application was a misunderstanding regarding the rules and regulations regarding the U.S. steel content. The project has pared to one new chainsaw and one new brush-cutter. Parts from other machines will be assembled to create necessary tools. Renting chainsaws is probably inefficient because the amount of usage would likely damage the saw beyond repair and the project would end up paying for saw.

**17. Project Title:** East Red Shirt Lake and Chicken Lake Cross Park Trails

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Mat-Su

**Project Category:** Diversified

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$43,967.00 / \$25,237.00 / \$778.00 / 63.53%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$69,204.00 / \$69,982.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 85.67 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Stuart explained these trails have nuances due to the volume of homeowners within the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area. The trails have not been thoroughly brushed in six years. Trees need to be cut down due to the challenging effect of the spruce bark beetle. Seth inquired about the match from the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation outlined in the budget narrative. Tara Epperson commented the match decreases the federal share percentage rate to 63%. This requires the grantee to report approximately 38% with each billing. Stuart expressed his understanding of the process and explained to members the efficient plan to meet the requirements.

Seth asked if the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation budget can be used to purchase additional chainsaws. Stuart disagreed, and noted the source of the funds has no bearing on the policy. Samantha explained the whole project has to comply with the Buy America policies. Stuart indicated he may request chainsaws this season from other nonprofit friends to fulfill additional need.

Discussion occurred regarding recent work to harvest trees affected from the spruce bark beetle epidemic. The scope of the impact is beyond the effects of what occurred a couple decades ago. The focus is twofold; cutting trees around current infrastructure

to increase safety and removing windblown trees. Ricky noted one of the steps the ORTAB members can take is to write letters of support for continued field mitigation grants. Ricky commented funding projects to keep trails open is beyond the scope and capacity of the ORTAB.

*Joe Hall joined the meeting.*

**18. Project Title:** Iditarod National Historic Trail (Crow Pass), Phase II

**Applying Organization:** DNR DPOR Chugach

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ /**

**Federal %:**

\$51,659.50 / \$5,739.50 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$57,399.00 / \$57,399.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 86.33 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Joe Hall discussed the primary purpose of the project is to address the most urgent and challenging brush issue in the high complaint and search and rescue response areas. Resurfacing of the trail will also occur. Crow Pass is part of the Iditarod National Historic Trail traveling 24 miles from Girdwood to Eagle River. He believes it is the most popular backcountry trail in Alaska. A Phase I grant was funded two years ago. This grant continues the needed work. Improving the trail to acceptable public standards will take years. The project scope is intensive. All of the work is backcountry. All of the equipment will be flown in or hiked in.

Seth asked if it would be more efficient to request a larger amount of money in order to perform more work. Joe believes the best situation would be to receive \$300,000 to conduct a five-year project, which would provide an increased opportunity for efficient staff time management and project planning. The current work will be completed over approximately eight weeks.

*Brad Charleston joined the meeting telephonically.*

**19. Project Title:** Tanana Lakes Recreation Area

**Applying Organization:** Fairbanks North Star Borough

**Project Category:** Diversified

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ /**

**Federal %:**

\$68,949.00 / \$7,661.00 / \$0 / 90.00%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$76,610.00 / \$76,610.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 88.50 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Brad Charleston advised he assisted in writing the application and is standing in for Brian Wright, who is out of town. Brad C. gave a background of the Tanana Lakes Recreation Area. There are over 200,000 visitors who utilize the site year-round. The trail system goes all the way around the lake with many satellite trails throughout the

park. Additional funding is scheduled for improvements to the park, including a new access road into the park. This is expected to increase usage. The trail system is lacking adequate signage. The project will install three trailheads at main access points.

Libby inquired as to the content of the signs. Brad C. explained this is the first effort in standardizing trailhead design and trailhead kiosks in the Borough. The specific information and language has not been crafted, but will include rules, trail etiquette, and a high quality map. Graphic design will be completed internally, and is not included in the grant budget. Members revised scores. Brad C. expressed appreciation to members for their volunteer work.

**20. Project Title:** Cripple Creek ATV Trail

**Applying Organization:** Interior Alaska Land Trust

**Project Category:** Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$70,000.00 / \$7,137.00 / \$0 / 90.75%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$77,137.00 / \$77,137.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 86.60 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

Seth advised he submitted his conflict of interest acknowledgement and is on the Board of the Interior Alaska Land Trust. Seth informed he wrote the grant application, but claims he was not paid to write it. He did not vote on the application last year. Sally advised she worked for the Interior Alaska Land Trust previously, but had no involvement with this application.

*Chair Mike S. ruled that Seth Adams has a conflict of interest and his score will be removed from consideration in the Cripple Creek ATV Trail application.*

Seth informed the application includes an environmental review. The project is a rebuild of an existing trail with minor realignment to the current trail boundaries. Seth described one area of the trail that goes off the property. The project will include moving the trail onto the property. Discussion continued and it was noted that the project does not qualify for STIP 1 and this year's grant round was limited to STIP 1 applications.

Seth noted the project dates can be updated by a full year.

Tara noted the environmental form does not include agency contact information for each category. Further research and more updates would be needed to make this application viable. Melissa noted it may be possible to send the application to FHWA for review. The board decided to review the budget and files from last year's application. Seth indicated he spoke with the contractor and the labor costs have increased from \$65,000 to \$70,000. Seth noted Interior Alaska Land Trust could

make arrangements to provide assistance if the increase in labor costs proves to be an obstacle.

*A break was taken at 10:01 am*

Discussion continued regarding Seth's Cripple Creek application. Meghan McClain reminded members there are still two potential outstanding applications waiting for Buy America revisions that may be submitted before the deadline. Discussion occurred regarding scoring this project competitively since it was approved last year by ORTAB. Ricky was told by Seth that the decision last year was that the application would be considered by ORTAB this year without a resubmittal of the application. This was prior to the decision to only accept STIP 1 projects this year. Ricky believes the application could be updated to include the dates and accurate budget and cost estimates. Seth agreed to comply by tomorrow.

Members revised scores and the spreadsheet was updated. Mike S. discussed the total amount for all of the projects, including the two that may resubmit, is still within the funding cap. There is enough money to fund all the projects. Tara reviewed the spreadsheet and answered members' questions. Further discussion occurred regarding changes to project categories and additional budget adjustments.

Seth suggested the ORTAB could approve two contingencies; one contingency would include the approval and funding of the two applications expected to be resubmitted and another contingency would include the applications reviewed today. Samantha emphasized the importance of members reviewing the applications that may possibly be resubmitted before they are approved. Steve Neel, as a member of the public, explained one of those applications is the Alaska Trails application focused on preparing groups to perform brushing in the Southcentral area. There was no specific trail mentioned. Steve does not believe the project would pass approval by Federal Highways. Steve conveyed the project has to identify the trails and work that is being completed. Melissa conveyed the application also had a Buy America issues with their tools. She noted that Ricky had requested that projects with Buy America issues be allowed to resubmit an application with additional information. Libby informed the representative for the Alaska Trails application is currently out of town.

Steve Neel, based on his past experience as an RTP Grants Administrator, discussed the Sea Lion Cove application that may possibly resubmit has come before the ORTAB several times. One of the challenges has been remote access. The current application focused on replacement of the boardwalk with a perforated metal grate. The problem is the steel does not meet the Buy America policy. The project did not yet have an alternative American steel source. Steve indicated he searched for an alternative American steel source and did not find one.

*Sally Anderson moved to approve the current Recreational Trails Program FFY 2020 scenario and applications submitted thus far and Mike Rearden seconded it.*

Seth commented he is in favor of the motion, but additional adjustments are needed. Mike S. indicated Seth's concerns will be addressed in a different discussion.

*Seth Adams moved to close discussion on the motion and Libby Kugel seconded it.*  
There was no objection to approve the motion to close discussion.

Motion called to vote to approve the current Recreational Trails Program FFY 2020 scenario and applications submitted thus far: 6 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

Seth commented the budget that was just approved in the previous motion still needs modifications because \$100,000 is left unbudgeted. Samantha inquired if the board would be comfortable allowing the approved budget to be contingent on the next meeting's decisions. Seth agreed. Discussion occurred on next steps. The approved budget will be modified when the ORTAB meets again. At that point, either one or both of the applications outstanding will be reviewed. Additionally, any budget monies remaining could be allocated to existing projects based on recommendations and further consideration. Mike R. does not believe members can assume projects will be able to accept additional funding without active discussion with applicants.

Samantha suggested members refrain from approving the budget until the deadline has been reached, all the information has been received, and the entire process is concluded. Discussion continued regarding wording a motion to clarify the previous motion.

*Meghan McClain moved to clarify the budget approved today is a recommendation that could be adjusted at a future date and Seth Adams seconded it.*  
Motion called to vote: 6 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

Discussion occurred regarding the goal for the remainder of the meeting and how to minimize the discussion needed at the next meeting by outlining contingencies and possible scenarios pertaining to the two potential application and distribution of remaining available funds. It was agreed the members will support Director Gease's recommendation on distribution of any remaining funds after all of the applications have been received. The request was made for Ricky to consider the ranking of the projects as a factor in the decision of distributing all additional funds. Ricky agreed.

Ricky requested discussion occur today with Joe Hall regarding his applications and ability to accept additional funding. Joe indicated each of the submitted applications have the ability to support a match for additional funding and would strongly benefit from additional labor time. Joe noted he will reformat the budget in any way that is needed.

*A break was taken at 10:53 am*

Members discussed and conducted a general review of the initial applications of the two projects that may resubmit an amended application before tomorrow's deadline. One of the projects lists Girdwood, Anchorage, and U.S. Forest Service as the landowners. There were no structures identified in the application. Members commented the idea of the project is good, but cannot be financed with RTP funds because it does not meet criteria of identifying definitive trails that will be addressed.

Steve Neel, member of the public, explained there were floating trail crews in the State parks about 10 to 12 years ago. The idea was sound and allowed the superintendent to assess trails early in the spring and task crews to conduct repairs. Federal Highways disapproved of the practice and wanted each individual trail per district to have isolated assessment and specific funding.

Concerns were expressed regarding funds being used for crew training. Steve Neel explained grant funds have been used previously for training purposes with good results. He does not believe Miles Brookes has utilized crew training in the last few years. Ricky advised the State of Alaska is currently addressing an issue with risk management. The State no longer wants to authorize the use of chainsaws by volunteers and the State no longer wants to authorize work with organizations that allow volunteers to use chainsaws. Ricky explained the argument to the issue is the risk of using chainsaws is the same whether or not the person using the chainsaw is a volunteer or paid staff. A State decision has not been finalized.

Melissa indicated that this project has a Buy America issue in the budget with the purchase of chainsaws, brush-cutters, and other listed tools. Samantha requested to review the public notice requirement submitted. The project does not meet minimum qualifications for public notice. Public notice must be posted on each specific property location in which work will be conducted.

Members agreed the application does not meet the required criteria to move forward, even if the Buy Alaska issues were completely resolved. The application was removed from consideration. Members agreed to provide feedback to the applicant regarding specific ways to meet the criteria for next year's application submittal process.

Members reviewed the initial application submitted for Sea Lion Cove State Marine Park Trail. Steve Neel explained this project was similarly submitted the prior two years and did not get approval because of the remoteness of the area. Public access is low because access to the area is boat-only. There is one commercial boating outfitter who will benefit from this project. The outfitter ferries cruise ship passengers to the area during the summer at approximately 236 hikes per year. The area does not get much usage the remainder of the year. The application is contingent on compliance with the Buy America steel requirement.

Ricky provided a general perspective for consideration of applications and the demographics of Alaska. He noted 80% of the population lives on the road system and 20% of the population lives in rural areas. Historically, almost 100% of the funding will have gone to the trails on the road system. Rural trail projects may be more expensive to accomplish. He asked members to consider if their approach to overall funding is equitable to the state of Alaska if rural projects are not funded. This same conversation occurs on many different levels of government in Alaska. Ricky states that he is not directing the decision process. He does want members to have the overall perspective. Members continued to review the budget and application.

*A break was taken at 11:57 am*

Mike S. reconvened the meeting and indicated the Sitka Trail Works Sea Lion Cove State Marine Park Trail application had been resubmitted and final review will commence.

**21. Project Title:** Sea Lion Cove State Marine Park Trail

**Applying Organization:** Sitka Trail Works

**Project Category:** Non-Motorized

**Federal Funds Requested \$ / Match Requirement \$ / Non-Participating Costs \$ / Federal %:**

\$34,570.50 / \$3,896.50 / \$0 / 89.87%

**Total Participating \$ / Total Project Cost \$:** \$38,467.00 / \$38,467.00

**Final ORTAB Score:** 75.50 / 100

**Project Discussion:**

The galvanized planking was replaced with pressure treated planks. The number of duckbill anchors was reduced. Members provided revised scores and believe the application can be conditionally approved, subject to satisfying the Buy America requirement. The gasoline-powered auger is the item causing the budget to be outside the Buy America threshold.

*Seth Adams moved to approve Sea Lion Cove State Marine Park Trail application and Meghan McClain seconded it.*

Discussion occurred to appropriately word the motion.

*Libby Kugle moved to recommend to the Director of State Parks the funding of Sea Lion Cove State Marine Park Trail application, contingent upon the applicant providing corrected information by 5:00 pm Friday, January 24, 2020. In the event the deadline is not met, the excess budget amount will be distributed to specific applicants as determined by the Director. Meghan McClain seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 6 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

There were no items under Old Business to discuss.

Mike S. opened the discussion regarding items under New Business. Seth requested the project name is included on the application. Samantha agreed. Libby requested the synopsis of the project is placed at the top of the application. Samantha agreed. Mike S. noted the public benefit numbers on the score sheet do not match the public benefit numbers on the application. Sam agreed to review the concern as she is unfamiliar with the score sheet the members use. Sally informed the community support section indicates there are 14 points possible, but there are actually only nine points possible. She requested question one, regarding the overall application, is placed at the end of the document. Samantha agreed.

Members requested staff specify in the instructions that photographs of the project area are highly recommended to assist in the scoring process. The photographs are helpful to members during review of the application. Samantha agreed. Mike S. requested the spreadsheet is included on the thumb drive. Samantha agreed.

Sally discussed a scoring change regarding letters of support. The suggestion was to either require additional letters of support for Parks or reduce the number of points for fewer letters of support. Sally feels she did not get a great overall context for some of the projects. Steve Neel explained the decision was made several years ago to allow only one letter of support on State lands by the Superintendent and advisory boards. He noted another previous issue regarded nonprofits creating a form letter and obtaining signatures from as many people as possible. This became a mass marketing endeavor and did not have substantial relevance. Ricky described another difference between State land processes and other land processes are the Citizen Advisory Board public testimony. The Boards have received public comment when they write the letters of support.

Members agreed it is helpful for projects to have representatives in attendance or on the phone to answer questions and provide insight. Representation is advantageous, but not required. Members discussed applicants will continue to be allowed to submit applications electronically, either as one file or as multiple files. Sally requested discussion from members regarding ways to assess budgeted items that seem questionably expensive. The scoring sheet allows 10 points pertaining to the budget. The member can score those points based on the sensibility of the budget. The member can also ask the applicants specific questions on items.

Mike S. inquired if staff is planning to conduct workshops for next year's applicants. Samantha indicated the process is being considered. Members requested an update on the backlog of State Parks refurbish and repair of trails. Ricky explained approximately 20% of the \$3.5 million worth of projects listed were conducted last spring; two projects per region.

The State Parks field operations budget is approximately \$7 million. The deferred maintenance budget in the field areas is \$60 million. The Legislature has chosen not to fund Parks deferred maintenance budget. The funds from Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) have been used to assist maintenance in Kenai and Kodiak. Some of the deferred maintenance is emergency repairs, which can utilize FEMA funds. Ricky discussed the importance of identifying sources of funding beyond the State government. Mat-Su Trails Foundation provides a positive example of building a successful sustainable funding source. He reviewed the process of utilizing bonds for projects.

Seth requested an update on the accumulated amount of the de-obligated funds. Steve Neel discussed Alaska has approximately \$3 million accumulation of unused and unavailable obligation as of his retirement from the State of Alaska in December 2019. All states have this problem. He does not believe the issue can be solved at this level. Steve explained the process of rescission and requesting additional spending authority and requirements outlined by State DOT to grant a higher obligation limit, which reduces DOT's authorized budget dollar-for-dollar. He noted there are no administrative funds for any of the de-obligated funds. Steve expressed the political change and DOT change necessary to move forward with obtaining a higher obligation limit would be extremely challenging based on his experience. It has been accomplished once in his 12 years of service and was arduous.

Seth suggested additional large project applications are presented next year in order to show DOT and the Legislature the readiness to move forward if an increased obligation limit was authorized. Ricky agreed to confer with superintendents regarding upcoming projects and project planning over the next three years. His experience is DOT poses significant challenges in moving forward. Ricky provided anecdotal examples of his experience with DOT. He believes it would be a wiser course of action and a greater benefit to outdoor recreation in Alaska to direct energy to partnering with foundations and corporations, such as the Rasmuson Foundation, ConocoPhillips, Exxon, Hillcorp, health foundations, and tribal authorities.

Steve Neel informed that RTP was included in the FAST Act as a standalone program. The funds were federally given to the State. If RTP is not included in the next Federal Highway bill, the remaining funds will be available for a couple of years, even if the program is no longer active. Ricky discussed DOT operates the Alaska Transportation Alternatives Program, a non-motorized program. It has \$5 million to \$10 million allocated per year. Ricky believes that RTP-style grants that are non-motorized are eligible through that program.

Members and staff expressed appreciation for the well-organized meeting. Comments were made thanking staff for their dedication and efforts. Members of ORTAB think it was helpful to have the Director in attendance to provide additional information and direction.

*Mike Reardon moved to adjourn and Seth Adams seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 6 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.