

Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB)

Meeting Minutes: LWCF

January 14, 2026, 2:00 – 5:00 PM

Location: Microsoft Teams / In-Person (Hybrid)

Alaska State Parks Staff:

Ricky Gease, Director

Joel del Rosario, Administrative Operations Manager, Grants Section Chief

Danette Berkovitz, Administrative Officer, Grants Manager

Rys Miranda, Chief Engineer

Jean Ayers, Grants Administrator

Natalya Fomina, Grants Administrator

Robin Bartlett, Grants Administrator

Present ORTAB Members:

Libby Kugel, *Chair*

Noah Lager

Ron Lurk

Christy Gentemann

Jeff Budd

Glenn Hart

Absent ORTAB Members:

Rod Arno

Andrew Carmichael

Mike Sirofchuk

Public Attendees:

Kimberly Diamond, Fairbanks North Star Borough

Amber Booth, Metlakatla Indian Community

Jennifer Yuhas, Member, Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (DOT&PF)

Melis Coady, Executive Director, Susitna River Coalition

Cameale Johnson, Treasurer, Homer Trails Alliance

Call to Order: Ricky Gease called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. A quorum was present. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

Public Comment: No public comments were offered.

LWCF Grant Applications Review

South Fairbanks Park Phase II (Kimberly Diamond, Fairbanks North Star Borough)

LWCF Assistance Requested: \$103,050.00

Summary: The South Fairbanks Park Phase II project follows a successful 2024 LWCF-funded Phase I. This project's focus is on asphalt resurfacing, basketball court improvements, landscaping, tree buffer, and signage along with an emphasis on accessibility, maintenance efficiency, and neighborhood enhancement. (*ORTAB Ranked 2 of 2*).

Discussion: All members strongly supported this project and praised the proposal for its clarity, visuals, and leveraging prior investment. No questions or concerns raised.

Yellow Hill Park Phase I (Amber Booth, Metlakatla Indian Community)

LWCF Assistance Requested: \$125,000.00

Summary: The Yellow Hill Park Phase I project creates a culturally significant park with lake access, picnic areas, camping platforms, fire pits, and interpretive signage with emphasis on ADA access and inclusion of elders and individuals with mobility limitations. This project highlights youth involvement and Native art integration.

Discussion: This project was praised for its cultural relevance, accessibility, and community engagement. No questions or concerns raised. (*ORTAB Ranked 1 of 2*)

Bird Creek Campground (Rys Miranda, Alaska State Parks)

LWCF Assistance Requested: \$189,533.00

Summary: This project consolidates two partially serviced host sites into one fully serviced site to improve campground host recruitment, campground management, and accessibility.

Discussion: Discussion remained focused on the application's environmental checklist referencing invasive species management. Rys explained this is a standard risk and contractors will be required to specify their soil and seed sourcing within their bids. Board members expressed their strong support and viewed it as practical and necessary. (*ORTAB Ranked 2 of 2*)

Halibut Point State Recreation Site (Rys Miranda, Alaska State Parks)

LWCF Assistance Requested: \$117,064.50

Summary: This project will replace a 30-year-old toilet with a precast vaulted unit. This site is heavily used by locals and visitors, and relocation is required due to updated floodplain mapping.

Discussion: Discussion focused on noting the archeological survey recommended in Section 106 documentation. Rys explained the survey would occur when this project transitions into its Design and Construction phase and acknowledged this is a known culturally sensitive area. The Board expressed strong support and defined this project as essential infrastructure. (*ORTAB Ranked 1 of 2*)

Funding Recommendations

Present ORTAB members reviewed and verified their initial scores and project rankings. Per LWCF requirements, projects were approved with rankings as presented, with state and local projects ranked separately.

Jeff Budd put forth a motion to recommend funding for all four LWCF projects as ranked and requested. Noah Lager seconded this motion. Motion unanimously approved.

Old Business

Next Steps for the Alaska Trail System Discussion: Ricky explained the Alaska Trails System remains valid under existing administrative orders. State Parks is advancing GIS-based trail inventory and "ground-truthing" approximately 900 miles of state park trails with new trail assessment equipment funded through a Wild & Scenic Rivers grant. The end goal is to have a dynamic GIS hub integrated with SCORP updates.

New Business

Scoring Rubric Discussion: Glenn Hart utilized a personally created scoring rubric to review the four LWCF applications intended to improve transparency and consistency. The Board supported aligning rubrics with application questions to reduce subjectivity.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Discussion: Board members expressed concerns regarding the transfer of RTP administration to DOT&PF. Concerns included transparency, timing, impacts on grooming funding, and loss of institutional knowledge. Jennifer Yuhas shared her shared commitment to minimizing disruption and expediting funding where possible.

SCORP Update: SCORP is moving toward a 10-year, GIS-driven, dynamic planning model.

State Parks Updates: Ricky announced the Outer Spatial Program's launch. The social engagement team launched the Alaska State Parks Passport Challenge on social media. This program is part of the America 250 Alaska celebrations. Users download the Outer Spatial app at <https://outerspatial.link/mp2GsYkdxZb> and earn check-in stamps in their digital passport by traveling to 31 Alaska State Parks.

Additionally, the DPOR is hosting a State Park Directors' meeting in May and the annual NASORLO Conference scheduled for Fall.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:02 p.m.