

Outdoor Recreation Trails Advisory Board

DPOR Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Project Review

DATE	Thursday, October 8, 2026
TIME	Approximately 1:00–2:11 p.m., Alaska Time
FORMAT	Hybrid: Microsoft Teams and in-person conference room
PRESIDING	Libby Kugel, ORTAB Chair

Meeting Overview

The Board reviewed and discussed four Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) LWCF project applications. After Board scores were reviewed and the remaining score was entered, Cottonwood Eastland Trailhead ranked first, while the other three projects were tied. No formal funding award decisions or approval motions were recorded.

Attendance

ORTAB members participating: Libby Kugel (Chair), Ron Lurk, Mike Sirofchuck, Christy Gentemann, Noah Lager, Rod Arno, and Glenn Hart. Andrew Carmichael was absent.

DPOR/DNR staff: Robin Bartlett (LWCF Grants Administrator), Danette Berkovitz (Administrative Officer/Grants Supervisor), Joel Del Rosario (Administrative Operations Manager), Rys Miranda (Chief Engineer), and Shawna Popovici (Interpretation and Education Unit Manager). DPOR Director Ricky Gease was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.

Guests / public participants: Cameale (Camille) Johnson (Homer Cycling Club) and Sean Sexton.

Opening and Procedures

- Robin Bartlett reviewed meeting protocols, the recording notice, procedures for public input during scoring, and members' conflict-of-interest obligations under AS 39.52.220 and ORTAB operating procedures.
- No conflict-of-interest declarations were communicated. A quorum was confirmed during the meeting.
- Chair Kugel invited opening public comment; none was offered at that time. In response to a funding question, DPOR staff noted that federal LWCF authority was available, while matching-fund options and applicant match requirements remained under review.

Project Reviews and Discussion

1. Eagle Rock Upper Parking Improvements — Kenai Peninsula

Presenter: Rys Miranda, DPOR Chief Engineer

- The proposal would increase parking capacity at the Eagle Rock boat launch area between Kenai and Soldotna with 72 boat/trailer stalls and 30 passenger-vehicle stalls. Improvements include a new access point from the Kenai Spur Highway, a paved connection to the boat launch, pedestrian trail and elevated stairs, vaulted toilets, kiosk/orientation signage, and related amenities.
- The preliminary project estimate is approximately \$4.5 million. DPOR reported that the project match had been secured. The adjacent land acquisition and related conservation easement were supported through the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Trustee Council.
- Members supported the proposal as a response to longstanding congestion. Questions addressed whether the existing double boat ramp could accommodate added users, itemization of proposed vaulted toilets in the cost estimate, and clear highway signage directing visitors away from neighborhood roads.
- Mr. Miranda indicated that the boat launch was expected to handle the increased use; separate, non-grant work would improve striping and staging at the launch. He agreed to recheck the vaulted toilet cost estimate. A new facility entrance sign is planned, with highway-signage coordination ongoing with DOT&PF.

- In response to public questions, staff reported DEC approval for the vaulted toilets, a conservation easement generally protecting a 100-foot vegetated parcel buffer with access exceptions, and construction permit requirements addressing erosion, sediment control, and stabilization. Public outreach included EVOS Trustee Council review and the Kenai River Special Management Area Citizens Advisory Board. A project-funded resident engineer will oversee construction and quality inspections.

2. Cottonwood Eastland Trailhead Vaulted Toilet — Homer Area

Presenter: Rys Miranda, DPOR

- The proposal would add a permanent concrete vaulted toilet and a short gravel walkway connecting it to the Cottonwood Eastland trailhead parking area along East End Road near Homer. The trailhead serves a hiking and cycling network developed with the Homer Cycling Club, including approximately 3.5 miles of completed Phase I trails and an approximately 11-mile overall trail concept.
- Mr. Miranda described increasing trail demand, the need for sanitary facilities, and the toilet as a remaining improvement to an established trailhead with parking, picnic facilities, and a kiosk. DPOR anticipates managing this project's design primarily in-house.
- Board members expressed support. Questions centered on the restroom's potential year-round availability and minimizing the loss of parking spaces during construction. Mr. Miranda said year-round operation required confirmation with operations staff. The Homer Cycling Club anticipates future winter activities, including cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and fat biking.
- DPOR will develop practical measures to reduce construction-related parking disruption after a contractor is selected. In response to a separate question about trail work outside this application, the Homer Cycling Club described environmental review, erosion controls, and revegetation practices.

3. Nancy Lake Public Use Cabins — Nancy Lake State Recreation Area

Presenter: Rys Miranda, DPOR Chief Engineer

- The project proposes two public-use cabins: one additional cabin to expand overnight capacity and replacement of the aging Nancy Lake Cabin No. 4 with a new group-use cabin. Mr. Miranda noted strong summer bookings and varying conditions among the four existing cabins.
- The new cabin, identified in the plan as Cabin No. 5, would be served by a small-capacity vaulted toilet rather than DPOR's standard larger concrete facility; the preliminary tank capacity discussed was less than 100 gallons.
- Board members expressed support for replacing older facilities and improving cabin access near population centers.

4. Chena River SRA Safety and Education Improvements

Presenter: Shawna Popovici, DPOR Interpretation and Education Unit Manager

- The project would update safety, wayfinding, regulatory, educational, and interpretive information throughout the Chena River State Recreation Area corridor along Chena Hot Springs Road, approximately mileposts 26.6 to 50.5. Existing signs have been installed over decades and do not consistently reflect current trails, river access, recreation opportunities, or rules.
- Proposed materials include coordinated trailhead maps, current boating and backcountry safety information, winter travel guidance, ATV/snowmachine and e-bike regulatory messages, accessible features such as Braille where appropriate, and Native place names and cultural/stewardship information where appropriate.
- Most work would refurbish and reuse existing kiosks and sign locations; some new information boards and limited kiosks would be installed, and older kiosk roofing may be replaced with more durable metal roofs. Northern Region maintenance staff would carry out much of the work over a proposed three-year period to accommodate staffing and remote-site access.
- The presenter reported support from Northern Region staff and the Citizens Advisory Board (CAB), which provided a letter of support and was scheduled to revisit the proposal in October before final LWCF submission. Members supported the coordinated, area-wide approach, emphasizing visitor safety, clear interpretation, accessibility, and cultural recognition.

Scoring and Results

- Robin Bartlett displayed the previously submitted scoring spreadsheet and invited members to confirm or change their scores. Christy Gentemann stated she had no changes; no additional numerical revisions were reported in the transcript. Rod Arno supplied his scores during the meeting, and those scores were entered into the spreadsheet for averaging.

- **Ranking outcome:** Cottonwood Eastland Trailhead ranked first. Eagle Rock Upper Parking Improvements, Nancy Lake Public Use Cabins, and Chena River SRA Safety and Education Improvements were tied in the remaining ranking.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

- The next ORTAB meeting was announced for Thursday, January 14, 2027, 1:00–3:00 p.m. Alaska Time, to review and score non-state parks LWCF applications.
- Members were asked to notify Robin Bartlett of any scheduling conflicts. No old or new business requiring action was raised.
- The meeting concluded with thanks to participants.

ORTAB DPOR Projects FY2027 Scoresheet:

Division of Parks & Outdoor Rec Applications	Project Name	Project Amount	LWCF Funds Requested	Christy G.	Glenn H.	Jeff B.	Noah L.	Ron L.	Libby K.	Mike S.	Rod A.	ORTAB Average	Rank
DPOR	Bookey Landing at Eagle Rock	\$ 4,459,600.00	\$ 2,229,800.00	89	98	69	100	97	92	95	100	93	
DPOR	Cottonwood-Eastland Trailhead	\$ 312,172.00	\$ 156,086.00	91	97	82	100	97	96	100	100	95	1
DPOR	Nancy Lake SRA PUCs	\$ 713,536.00	\$ 356,768.00	87	95	74	100	97	87	100	100	93	
DPOR	Chena River SRA Safety & Educ. Improv.	\$ 418,087.50	\$ 208,409.25	91	98	83	100	94	89	90	100	93	
	Total	\$ 5,903,395.50	\$ 2,951,063.25										
Andrew Carmichael did not submit a score and was removed from the score averaging.													