

REASONS TO BUILD A STRONGER ALASKA OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY

- More and better jobs for Alaskans
- Builds on Alaska's competitive advantages
- Reasons for businesses, employees, residents to stay in and relocate to AK
- Widespread benefits: for residents, visitors, businesses, communities
- Enticing invitation to healthy lives



Just another nice ride with a Denali view, on the winter trail system north of Petersville Rd in the Mat Su Borough

HOW TO GET THERE? ONE STRATEGY: ALASKA STATEWIDE TRAILS INITIATIVE *More and Better Trails, Stronger Economy*

Alaska has barely tapped our state's outdoor recreation resources.

We want to grow a stronger, more durable Alaska economy. We can do this by opening the door to the best of outdoor Alaska, with more and better trails, trail side huts and cabins, even trail signs!

WHY? TODAY'S ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Outdoor recreation is "the sleeping giant of American economy" providing \$412 Billion/2.2% of total US GDP (US Bureau of Economic Analysis; amounts equal to sectors like broadcasting/ telecommunications, utilities)
- Economic impacts of outdoor recreation in AK: (UAA Center for Econ. Development; excludes equipment purchases)
 - \$3.2 billion in annual spending
 - 38,100 direct, indirect, induced jobs
- "One More Day" – if half of current AK out-of-state visitors spent one more day in Alaska it would generate at least \$63 M in additional annual spending. (UAA Center for Economic Development; calculation based on the 61% of visitors engage in outdoor recreation)



Marketing material in Anchorage and throughout Alaska promises experiences like what's shown above. More could be done to make it easier and safer to have those experiences, to get out and enjoy what makes Alaska unique.

TODAY & TOMMOROW: HOW TO GROW THESE ECONOMIC BENEFITS?

1. LEVERAGED INVESTMENT: Continue to support existing trail programs

The State should **continue to make the investments** – in staff and matching dollars – needed to leverage larger sums from federal trails and highways programs. Examples, listed below, support better trails and better recreation access throughout Alaska.

- Recreational Trails (RTP)
- Pittman Robertson Programs
- Land Water Conservation Funds (access to \$1.5 M with 50% match)
- Maximizing use federal transportation \$

RTP Two Stage Leverage

1. State of AK Division of Parks invests \$106,000 in staff time, gets \$1.5 million of federal funds in return.
2. Trail organizations get grants, and translate this into 1000's of hours of volunteer labor.

Example: in Delta Junction, volunteers have invested 14,000 hours in local trails, worth \$340,000 (at the federal rate of \$24.69 per volunteer hour)



2. FEATURE TRAILS: Focus on High Value Projects with Real Momentum

ANCHORAGE TO SEWARD - IDITAROD TRAIL

Filling a handful of gaps and bridges would create something Alaska very much needs: a well maintained “long trail”, through awe-inspiring terrain, linking communities, businesses and history.

Champions include: Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, USFS, BLM, Chugach State Park, Kenai Mtns Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area, Live/Work/Play, businesses along the route.



TREADWELL DITCH, JUNEAU – A community project in progress for over 35 years. Community and business support, volunteers and trail professionals have made real progress. But larger-scale, public resources are needed to complete the trail. *Champions include: Trail Mix. Inc, Juneau Community Foundation, USFS, City & Borough of Juneau, AK State Parks, a range of local businesses*



SUBSISTENCE ACCESS IN WESTERN ALASKA – Travel to subsistence hunting and harvest areas is getting more difficult. Warming temperatures make sea and river ice increasingly unsafe for travel; lack of winter snow and thawing permafrost creates challenges for snowmachine and four-wheelers. *Champions include: Tribes, regional non-profits, state & federal land management agencies.*



OTHER FEATURE TRAILS PROJECTS WITH STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT, CLEAR CHAMPIONS, BIG ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Mat Su Borough Kesugi Curry Huts
- Sitka Cross Trail
- Fairbanks North Star Borough
- Anchorage “Chugach Connector”
- Denali Borough Bison

3. ONE MORE DAY: Open the Door with More and Better Trails

One Example: New Zealand, like Alaska (but only 1/5 as big) focuses on natural and cultural attractions and is a long-haul destination (13 hours from Seattle).

- Decades of work by government and volunteers has created a vast, diverse set of trails, drawing visitors from all over the world.
- **Relevance in Alaska** – Clear evidence of how providing more ways for active outdoor recreation helps drive phenomenal tourism growth:
 - New Zealand overseas visitation: grew from 2.5 to 3.75 million visitors between 2013-2018
 - Tourism directly contributes US \$10.5 Billion to NZ each year, plus US\$8.0 Billion indirectly.
 - Average length of stay 19.1 days (vs. 9.1 in Alaska)

Statistics from: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/topics/tourism>



Above & Left: Queen Charlotte Track, 70 K walk: sweet, active days; luxury at night



Above: 1000 people/day on the 20K Tongariro Nat'l Park Alpine Crossing

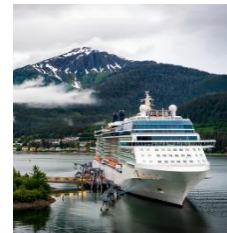
4. ONE MORE DAY: Provide “Missing Middle” Destinations

One example: Yehliu GeoPark, northern Taiwan

- An inviting, active outdoor experience, for folks with limited skill, time, gear, fitness.
- Huge capacity – works for large volume motorcoach tours; smart design also provides attractive options for individuals looking for more solitude.
- **Relevance in Alaska** – Pleases visitors find Alaska intimidating, who like busy places. Concentrating recreation use in one location allows other places to remain quiet.



5. BIG TENT: Engage all kinds of trail users; provide all types of trails



STATEWIDE TRAIL INITIATIVE – SOME DETAILS

- **Who?** Large, growing coalition of trail organizations, businesses, user groups and agencies. For more information see *Alaska Trails/Alaska Trail Stewards* www.alaska-trails.org
- **Trail Initiative Products?**
 - Inventory of promising trail projects around AK.
 - “Feature Trail Projects” - projects with near-term prospects for progress.
 - Statistics and case studies on the economic benefits of trails.
 - Strategies to better fund and sustain Alaska trails.
- **When?** Initial report June 2019. Ongoing project; we’re just getting started
- **Why? More and Better Trails, Stronger Economy**

TAKE HOMES AND NEXT STEPS

- **The Big Goal:** Open the door for Alaska active outdoor recreation.
- **How We Get There?**
 - **Leveraged Investment** – continued State investments in trails and outdoor recreation that leverage larger resources: RTP, Pittman Robertson, Land & Water Conservation, Federal Highways.
 - **Land Management** – smart management of Alaska recreation resources, easier ways to reserve trails on public land
 - **Partnerships and State Leadership** – support the diverse organizations, agencies, user groups already planning, building, maintaining trails.
 - **State Trails Plan** – complete and begin implementation of first iteration – June 2019.



Alaska: “So much beautiful land and water, so little outdoor recreation infrastructure”