Board of Forestry Presentation
April 3, 2019    Chris Beck

“Working Landscapes”
Integrating Outdoor Recreation with Resource Development

1. Context: Quick Overview of Statewide Trails Initiative
2. Working Landscapes Case Studies
3. Discussion: Relevance and Implications for Alaska, and for Alaska forest-designated lands
Building a Stronger Alaskan Economy

Alaska Trails Initiative

“So much opportunity, so little infrastructure....”
Alaska has barely tapped our state’s remarkable outdoor resources.

Because of this chronic under-investment, we are missing our chance to build a stronger, more durable AK economy.
How to get there…
Statewide Trails Initiative

Actions and Products
• Economic impact: today, future
• Coalition: users and user groups, agencies, businesses, organizations
• Trail projects inventory
• Feature projects
• Land and resource management strategies

When will it be done?
• A continuing, open ended process
• But, initial draft product April 2019
  • New Kesugi Ken campground and Curry Ridge Trail;
  • Denali State Park – “Build It and They Came”
  • Snowmachine couch with a view
What Kinds of Users?
“Big Tent” – Non Denominational
Who’s Involved? A Growing Band of Partners

Today’s Core Team
• Steve Cleary – Alaska Trails
• Erik Boraas – Juneau Trail Mix
• Erin Kirkland – author, industry rep
• Wes Hoskins – Mat Su Trails Foundation
• Lee Hart – Confluence/Valdez Adventure Alliance
• Jessica Szalag – Kenai Mountains Turnagain Arm Nat’l Heritage Area
• Paul Clark – NPS Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance
• Meredith Gutierrez; Beth Nordlund – Alaska Park Foundation
• Chris Beck – Alaska Trails/Agnew::Beck Consulting

Paid Assistance: Meg Pritchard – Alaska Fellow/Trails Initiative Fellow

Working with
• Federal, state, local gov’ts
• Major land owners
• Native Corporations, Tribes
• Tourism organizations
• Non-profit foundations
• Diverse outdoor recreation user groups
• Economic development organizations
• Health organizations
• And others... (you!)
What New Policies & Investments are Needed?

Trails, huts, cabins/comfort
- “Missing middle” accessible adventure
- Handful of long trails

Marketing More robust, more helpful descriptions of AK trail opportunities

Information Radical ideas like trail signs

Land management
- “Curating” outdoor recreation resources
- Support for “working landscapes”
- Stewarding our attractions, maintaining what makes Alaska Alaska
ECONOMIC BENEFITS

“The outdoor recreation industry is the sleeping giant of the US economy*”

*Outdoor Industry Association
**What Makes up the Outdoor Recreation Industry?**

**Remarkably Diverse**
- *Activities*: tours, food, lodging
- *Manufacturing*: (in AK) fat tire bikes, pack rafts, clothes..
- *Equipment*: sales of snow machines, bikes, hiking boots
- *Support services*: equipment repair, fuel sales, construction

**Why “Sleeping”?**
- Fragmented, diffuse
- Not well documented (NAICS codes recently amended)
- Dismissed in AK as poorly paid, seasonal, too “green”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Camping</strong></td>
<td>RV campsite, tent campsite, rustic lodge</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Off-Roading</strong></td>
<td>ATV, ROV, dune buggy, 4x4 and Jeep</td>
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<td><strong>Wheel Sports</strong></td>
<td>Bicycling, paved road, bicycling, off-road,</td>
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<td>skateboarding</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Water Sports</strong></td>
<td>Kayaking, rafting, canoeing, surfing, scuba</td>
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<td>diving, sailing, stand-up paddling, boating</td>
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<td>(cruising, sightseeing, wakeboarding, tubing,</td>
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<td>kneeboarding, waterskiing)</td>
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<td><strong>Snow Sports</strong></td>
<td>Cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, Nordic</td>
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<td>skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, snowshoeing</td>
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<td>Telemark skiing</td>
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<td><strong>Hunting</strong></td>
<td>Shotgun, rifle, bow</td>
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<td><strong>Motorcycling</strong></td>
<td>On-road, off-road</td>
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<td><strong>Trail Sports</strong></td>
<td>Day hiking on trail, backpacking, rock or ice</td>
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<td>climbing, running 3+ miles, horseback riding,</td>
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<td>mountaineering</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wildlife Viewing</strong></td>
<td>Horseback riding, Mountaineering</td>
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National Impact: $412 Billion of US GDP
Equaling/exceeding other better known sectors

Outdoor Recreation Economy as Percent of Nominal GDP
Compared to Selected NAICS Industry Codes, 2016

Note: Hatcher Pass, McCarthy, the Iditarod Trail and other Alaskan outdoor recreation favorites exist only because of mining. This chart doesn’t say no to mining, it just gives more reasons to say yes to outdoor recreation.

US Bureau of Economic Analysis
Alaska Impact: Large (but not well documented)

Economic impacts of outdoor recreation in AK:
Source: UAA Center for Economic Development, March 2019. Note: this excludes equipment purchases, and excludes travel less than 20 miles.

• $3.2 billion in annual participant spending
• 38,100 direct, indirect and induced jobs

Fiscal impacts of out of state visitors to Alaska
Source: Alaska DCCED, 2014.

• $187.8 million in State & Local gov’t revenue
What could expanded, smarter investments in outdoor recreation do for the AK economy?

One More Day: “OMD”

Average length of stay for visitors to New Zealand – 19 days
...for out of state visitors to Alaska – 9.1 days

What if smart AK outdoor recreation investments lead to “OMD”?  
• Total 2017 out-of-state visitor spending – $2.5 billion  
• $2.5 billion divided by 9.1 days = $275 million/day

• Say we can only convince half... adds an extra $137 million in spending in Alaska

Sources: Economic Impact of Alaska's Visitor Industry, 2017 - Nov 2018
https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/ded/dev/tourismdevelopment/tourismresearch.aspx
What could expanded, smarter investments in outdoor recreation do for the AK economy?

How much do walking and hiking tourists spend on their trip in New Zealand?

Walking and hiking travellers spend significantly more than a typical visitor during their trip to New Zealand.

On average international tourists that participate in walking and hiking spend $3,600 compared to the $2,800 average spend of all holiday visitors. There is a significant high value segment in the walking and hiking sector with over 20% of international tourists saying they spend over $5,000 on their visit to New Zealand.

Trail Users Spend More, Stay Longer
TRAIL INITIATIVE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

• Sustain and grow funding:
  o Leverage state/federal $
  o Solutions to the “Alaska fiscal disconnect”

• Improved public land management
  o Working landscape partnerships
  o Regulatory reform – better ways to reserve trails
  o Resource stewardship

• Maximize “bang for the buck spending”
  o Feature trails & “missing middle” opportunities
  o Marketing and Information
  o Destination towns

• Stronger State of AK Outdoor Recreation leadership
Working Landscapes:
A path to greater value from State Lands, State Forests?
Example: Trail Systems in Nelson, New Zealand
Working Landscapes: New Zealand
Rotura – North Island’s world Renown Mtn Bike Mecca
Trail Users Spend More, Stay Longer

Working Landscapes – Opportunities to Extract more value from State Lands, State Forests

Mountain Bike Track Types

Choose a track that matches your skills, fitness and the experience you've after. Most tracks are more difficult when wet. Avoid riding in the mud and rain.

Grade 1. Beginner Fairly flat, wide, smooth track or gravel road.

Grade 2. Easy Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.

Grade 3. Intermediate Steep slopes and /or avoidable obstacles possibly on narrow track and /or with poor traction. There may be exposure at the tracks outside edge.

Grade 4. Advanced A mixture of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and difficult obstacles to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the track outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.

Grade 5. Expert Technically challenging. Giant climbs, narrow track and numerous hazards including dangerous drop-offs, sharp corners and difficult obstacles. Expect walking and possibly bike carrying.

Grade 6. Extreme Downhill /free ride specific tracks. Extremely steep sections with large drop-offs and other unavoidable obstacles. May include man-made structures and jumps.

E-Bikes - Pedal assist electric bikes (not exceeding 300W) are permitted in the forest. E-bike use is on dedicated mountain bike tracks and forestry roads unless otherwise signposted.

Forest Care Code

The Whakarewarewa Forest is primarily a productive plantation forest where all facets of the forestry management cycle can be seen from time to time. However the forest is also a place where people can enjoy and explore the forest environment through various recreational activities. So that everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience, please respect the code below:

- Keep to signposted tracks for mountain biking only, walking only or horse riding only.
- Share with care is permitted on roads, multi-use or dual-use signposted trails.
- Beware of forestry vehicles using roads.
- Obey all forestry, workplace and event safety signage.
- Tracks and roads may be closed at any time for safety reasons.
- Keep dogs on lead or under control at all times. Check Redwoods website for on lead areas.
- Unauthorised track building/alterations is not permitted.
- Keep the forest clean – remove rubbish.
- Respect our cultural heritage.
- Smoking is NOT permitted. NEVER light fires.
Working Landscapes: New Zealand
Queen Charlotte Track – 75 K, Hotel to Hotel, 5 days
Walk Description

Welcome to the Pit Rim Walkway. The path will lead you around the Martha open pit, past historic mine buildings and through groves of young kauri.
“Feature Projects*” strong economic benefits, a clear champion, bias towards multi-jurisdictional/regional projects, land owner support, broad public support…

**YK Delta**
Subsistence access, reduced tundra damage

**Denali Boro.**
“Frontcountry” options, like Mt Healy trail

**Mat Su**
Curry-Kesugi Trail; Upgraded snowmachine trail systems

**P. W. Sound**
Hut to hut water trails

**Anch./Kenai**
Seward-Anch.-Iditarod trail systems

**Juneau**
Treadwell Ditch trail

* preliminary, illustrative
PROJECT WITH MOMENTUM

- A complex of state and federal trails
- INHT Southern Trek: reconnected, 180-200 mile Long Trail
- The most accessible, populous and visited part of Alaska

RIPE MOMENT

- A few bridges and planned segments are all that is left to reconnect the INHT
- In 2018, the INHT was recognized by the USFS as one of only 15 “trail maintenance priority areas in the US”
We have a dream…

What if…

• Alaska offered more inviting, easy, affordable ways to enjoy outdoor recreation experiences – more of what we feature in our marketing material?

• Alaska’s “poverty mentality” evolved to an “investment mentality”? 
We have a dream...

What if...

• Local government and agency budgets for trails, signs, cabins, huts and effective land management doubled, tripled?

• A broad coalition worked together to maximize Alaska’s outdoor recreation potential – tourism and outdoor recreation advocates, public land managers, development and conservation interests?

We’re confident these actions would help build a bigger pie; a much stronger, more durable Alaskan economy.
Your thoughts?

- Could we do more to align outdoor recreation and forestry interests in Alaska?
- Good examples today?
- Strategies & management policies for the future?
  - Specific promising locations and/or trails projects
  - Easier options to reserve trails
  - New approaches to include recreation and trails into timber harvest plans
  - Pioneer timber roads that double as snowmachine tracks
- How best to integrate rec/forestry goals and partners?
We would like to get your views, ideas and participation!

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Another example of trails making it inviting to be active outside, connecting neighborhoods and connecting people.