

Building a Stronger Alaskan Economy

Alaska Trails Initiative

Alaska Trails Plan Partners



“So much opportunity, so little infrastructure....”

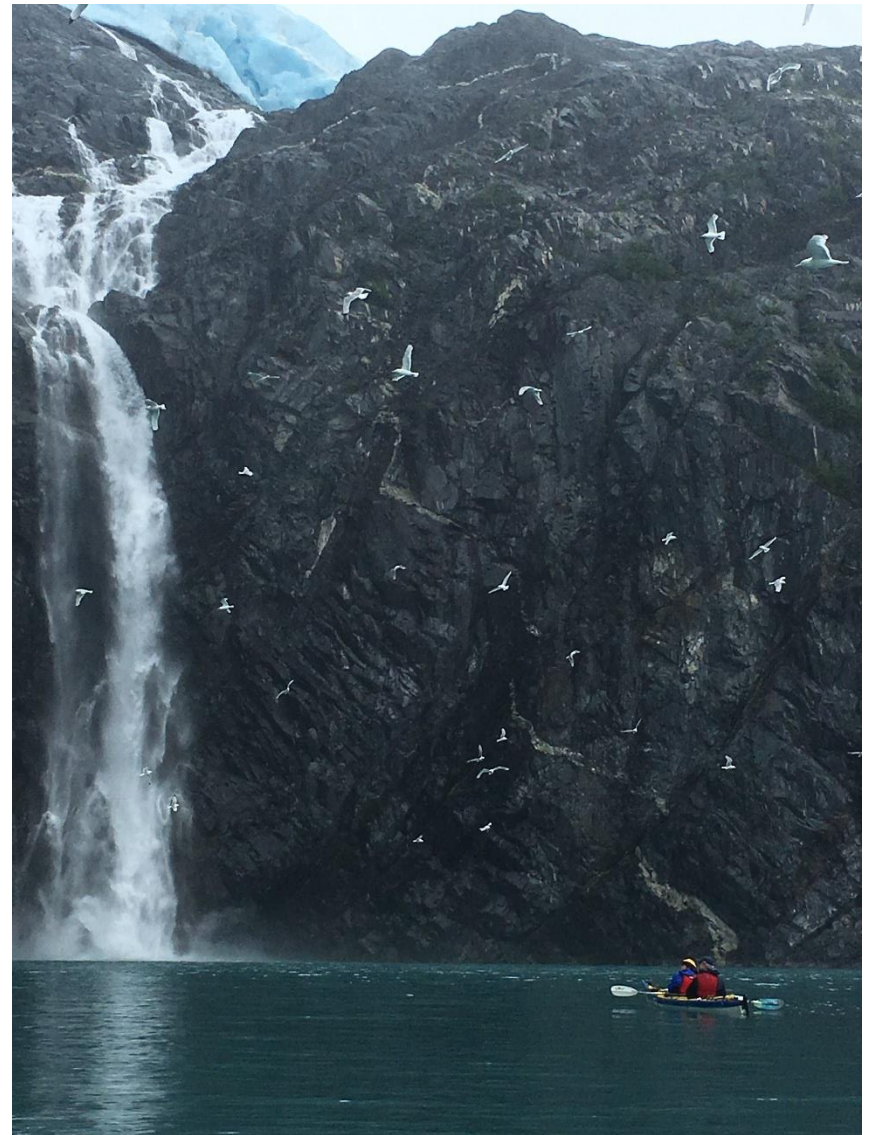


Starting Assertion #1

Alaska has barely tapped our state's outdoor recreation treasure chest.

Starting Assertion #2

Because of this under-investment, we are missing our chance to build a stronger, more durable AK economy



Prince William Sound's astonishing beauty: seen up close by remarkably few people

Trails Plan in a Page

Alaska Trails Initiative

Capitalizing on Alaska's Underdeveloped Outdoor Recreation Resources

WHO? THE 'MISSING MIDDLE'

Residents and travelers looking for active outdoor experiences but who lack the gear, fitness, time or skill for extreme adventure, and want a bed, good food, beer and internet at the end of the day.

WHAT? STATEWIDE INVENTORY + "FEATURE PROJECTS"

Work with partners statewide to identify a broad, open ended list of promising trail projects. Then help advance a subset of "ripe" outdoor recreation investments; a package of projects serving diverse users and with wide support, momentum and big benefits.

WHY? ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Bring forward the right facts, from the right messengers re the benefits of trails and outdoor recreation; use case studies to show specific benefits of targeted trails/outdoor rec. investments.

HOW? THE OUTDOOR REC "BIG TENT"

Build an inclusive, diverse coalition of advocates for outdoor recreation investments: businesses, agencies, users, non-profits, communities...

RESULT?

STRONGER PUBLIC AND POLITICAL **SUPPORT** FOR TRAILS & OUTDOOR RECREATION, AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

EXPANDED, SUSTAINED **FUNDING** FOR OUTDOOR REC. - INFRASTRUCTURE, MAINTENANCE, MARKETING AND INFORMATION

IMPROVED OUTDOOR RECREATION POLICIES & LAND **MANAGEMENT**

Who's Involved? A Growing Band of Partners

Today's Core Team

- Steve Cleary – Alaska Trails
- Stuart Leidner – Mat Su Trails Foundation
- Lynne Brandon – Sitka Trail Works
- Erik Boraas – Juneau Trail Mix
- Lee Hart – Valdez Adventure Alliance/Confluence
- Jessica Szelag – Kenai Mountains Turnagain Arm Nat'l Heritage Area
- Paul Clark – NPS Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance
- Pat Pourchot – AK Long Trails
- Beth Nordlund – Alaska Park Foundation
- Chris Beck – Alaska Trails/Agnew::Beck Consulting

Paid Assistance: Taylor Holshouser – Alaska Fellow/Trails Initiative Fellow

Working with

- Federal, state, local gov'ts
- Major land owners
- Tourism organizations
- Non-profit foundations
- Diverse outdoor recreation user groups
- Economic development organizations
- Health organizations
- And others... (you!)

What Kinds of Users?

“Big Tent” – Non Denominational



Products? What We're Doing

Statewide trails plan deliverables:

1. List of trail/outdoor rec entities
2. Broad trails projects inventory
3. Subset of "feature projects"
4. Economic benefits case studies

What's Your Project?

All this coming from and creating a widening coalition of partners

When will it be done?

- A continuing, open ended process
- But - full product out Spring 2019

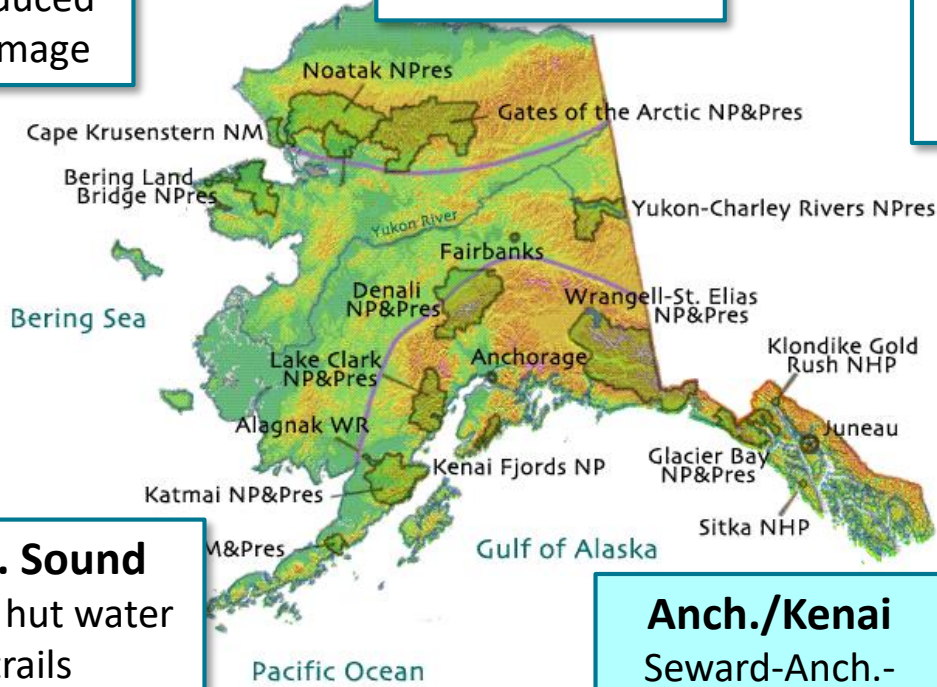


“Feature Projects*” strong economic benefits, a clear champion, bias towards multi-jurisdictional/regional projects, land owner support, broad public support...

YK Delta
Subsistence access, reduced tundra damage

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

Mat Su
Curry-Kesugi Trail; Upgraded snowmachine trail systems



Juneau
Treadwell Ditch trail

P. W. Sound
Hut to hut water trails

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

* preliminary, illustrative

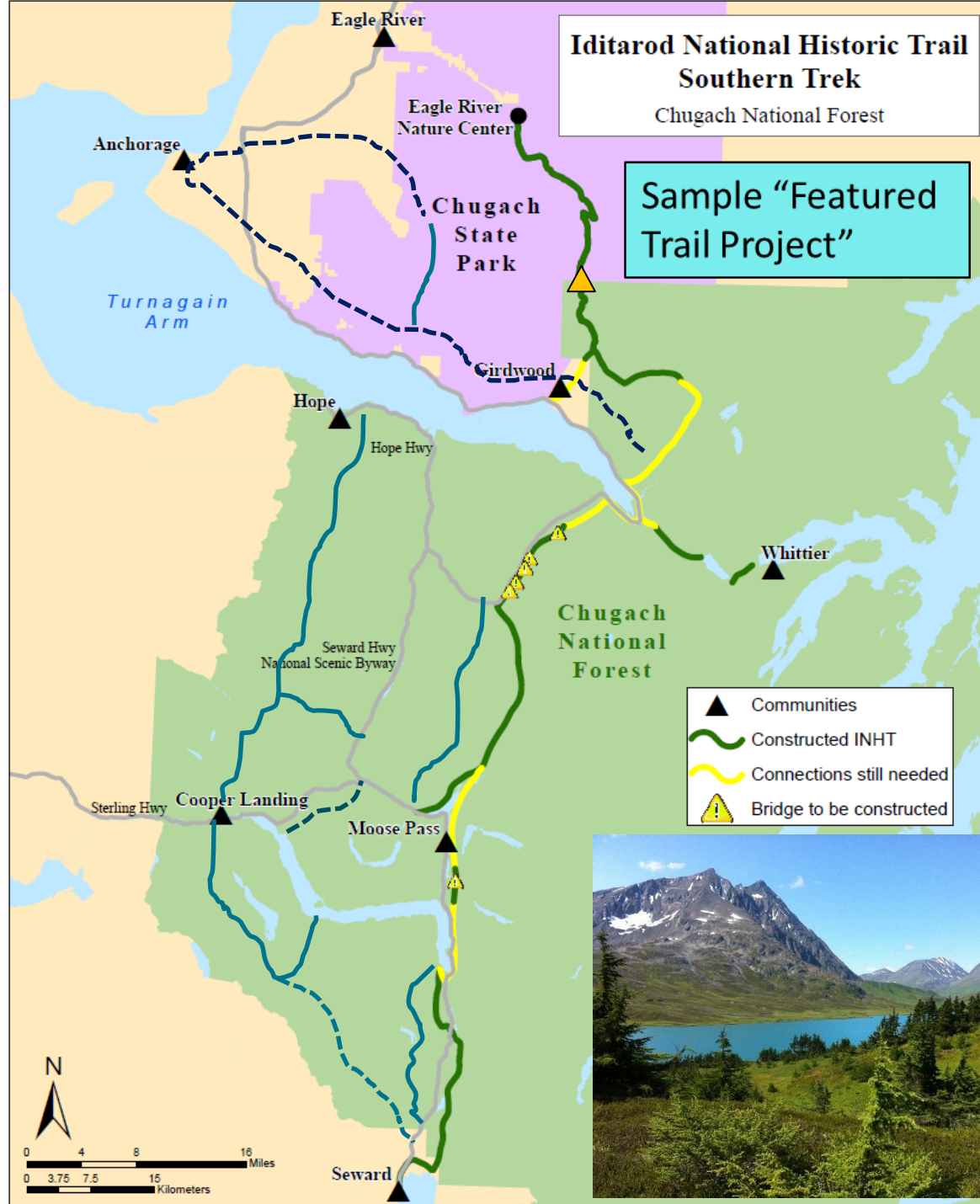


PROJECT WITH MOMENTUM

- A complex of state and federal trails
- INHT Southern Trek: re-connected, 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”



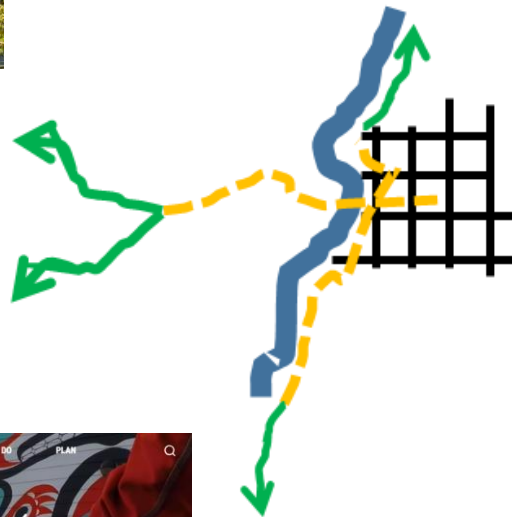
Destination Towns...

Places like Whitehorse Yukon and Bend OR, have consciously built robust year round economies, driven by a simple formula:



1. A concentrated, walkable center with lodging, food, bars, rentals, other services

2. Inviting trails and transit link the core to surrounding recreation places



3. Strong O.R. marketing at state/provincial level promoting active recreation destinations & experiences



4. Great outdoor recreation events, that draw in new users, drive spending



What Kind of Investments?

Trails, huts, cabins... but also

Marketing Better information about outdoor experiences

Information Radical ideas like trail signs

Investments in land management

- “Curating” outdoor recreation resources
- Stewarding our attractions, maintaining what makes Alaska Alaska



Improved Trails



GIRDWOOD/CROW PASS to EAGLE RIVER – two day walk through the heart of the Chugach, in the center of AK population, and a segment of the Iditarod Trail. But... rough trail, no bridge over thigh-deep Eagle River.

Hut-to-Hut Systems



AK HUTS WHISTLESTOP SYSTEM – “shovel ready” hut to hut trail project in Spencer River/Spencer Glacier drainage. Progress, albeit slowly, with AK Railroad, USFS, State of Alaska, Alaska Huts.

Marine Trails/Cabins

Long Trails

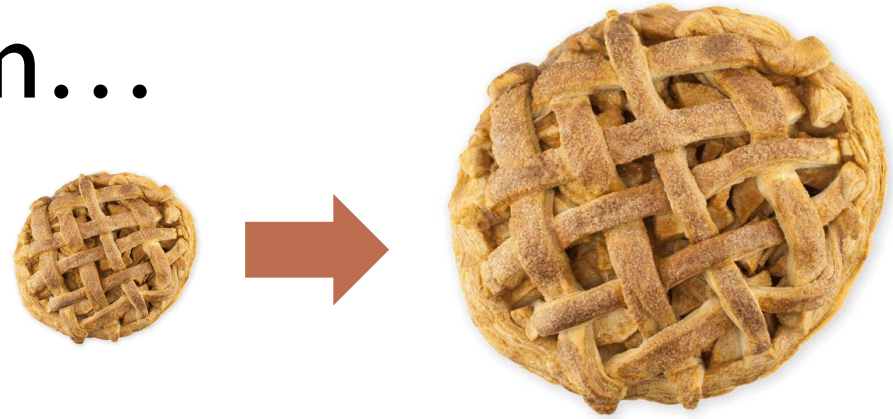
KAYAKS & BOATS CABIN TO CABIN SYSTEM – It's a glorious thing to kayak/boat and camp along Alaska's coasts... until it rains. The lack of cabin-to-cabin water trails holds back the potential for world class draws.

PROPOSED "ALASKA LONG TRAILS"

- A handful of Alaskan long trails: summer & winter, motorized & non motorized.
- Trails and cabins like the Pacific Crest trail, New Zealand's walks. More reasons to fly over the Sierras, the Rockies, the Alps and come to Alaska.
- Examples: Iditarod Trail; Trans Alaska Trail – 800 miles of wild Alaska, following the pipeline from sea to shining sea.



We have a dream...



What if...

- Agency budgets for trails, signs, cabins, huts doubled, tripled?
- Alaska's state tourism marketing budget was no longer 50th in U.S.?
- Our communities were as memorable as our mountains?
- Trail investments drove a "bigger pie", more durable AK economy?
- Alaska's "poverty mentality" evolved to an "investment mentality?"
- Tourism & outdoor recreation interests worked closely together?

...and two specific dreams



THANKS!

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