



Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board

2021 Meeting Minutes [Meeting #2]

Tuesday, June 22, 2021



09:00am – 04:30pm

Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) Members Present:

Motorized Trail Representatives	Non-Motorized Trail Representatives	Diversified Trail Representatives
❖ Bryant Wright	❖ Christy Gentemann ❖ Libby Kugel ❖ Mike Sirofchuck, <i>ORTAB Chair</i> ❖ Lang Van Dommelen	❖ Sally Andersen ❖ Jeff Budd

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR)

Director's Office Staff Present:

- ❖ Tara L. Epperson, *Grants Administrator II, Recreational Trails Program*

The meeting was called to order at 09:00am by *DPOR Tara Epperson*. Roll call was taken, and meeting protocols discussed. This meeting was conducted using Cisco WebEx, connecting via webcam, audio, and chat features. Meeting was recorded using Cisco WebEx recording features, including audio, video, and chat features. Minutes recorded to be drafted and typed, after the meeting concludes.

DPOR staff and ORTAB Members introduced themselves, provided brief introductions, the locations and project categories they represent, and other affiliations, if any.

DPOR Tara Epperson provided a brief overview of the RTP and awarding processes. New updates with the RTP application: public notice instructions and new Structure Template Form; Public Benefit #6, Page 16, added question "new recreational opportunities," to better align with the ORTAB Scoresheet; maximum individual grant award amounts increased for Round #2: \$150,000 for Non-Motorized and Diversified projects, \$300,000 for Motorized projects; Safety & Education projects were not eligible in Round #2 as funds must be awarded and expended by September 30, 2021 and there is not adequate time before this deadline. RTP Application Completion Assessments are new forms, implemented in Round #1, and were shared with ORTAB for Round #2 to have transparency with the Alaska Grants Administration's pre-screening process for ensuring applications are complete and ready for ORTAB review. Application Completion Assessments are utilized to determine if applicant met all application requirements, and to determine if proposed projects met the requirements for RTP funding. Applicants were provided a copy of the assessment, offered a 30-minute meeting with the Alaska Grants Administration to address questions, and applicants were allowed one (1) week to submit items outlined in the assessment. The Alaska Grants Administration would appreciate recommendations and feedback from ORTAB on how to continue improvements and suggestions to assist ORTAB in scoring projects.

ORTAB Chairperson Mike Sirofchuck discussed opportunity for public comment during today's meeting. Applicants will have an opportunity to speak when it is time to discuss your application, to provide a 1-minute summary of their projects, so are encouraged to speak at that time. ORTAB Members may choose to update their scores during discussion at any time; scores will be finalized near the conclusion of meeting when final recommendations are provided to *DPOR Director Ricky Gease*. ORTAB Members are responsible for declaring



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any conflicts of interest for project before discussion begins and must notate on their ORTAB Scoresheets. [In accordance with AS 39.52.220]. Mike expresses that he will do the best to allow everyone an opportunity to speak. He will be calling upon ORTAB Members in different orders to ensure everyone speaks and change order to allow ORTAB Members to speak at different times. ORTAB Members may also state that he/she has “no comments,” certainly acceptable when discussing the project applications.

Public Comments session began, per ORTAB Chairperson’s discretion. Each person was allowed two (2) minutes to speak. Mike asked if any applicants on the phone would like to speak.

- Steve Cleary with Alaska Trails asking for status update on applications submitted from Round #1, and when the projects will be awarded.
DPOR Tara Epperson provided a status update – several applications are still pending, based on extensive review of the Environmental Review Checklists, and involving multiple agencies. There is no status update currently.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) applications discussion and scoring began.

[Ranked as follows, in order as discussed during meeting, not by ORTAB Score]

1. Project Title: Mirror Lake Multi-Use Trail Realignment and Rehabilitation

Organization Name: Chugach Mountain Bike Riders

Project Category: Non-Motorized

Federal Funds Requested	\$27,551.60	Non-Participating Costs	\$0
Match Requirement	\$3,061.29		
Total Participating Cost	\$30,612.89	Total Project Cost	\$30,612.89

Final Average ORTAB Score: 84.50/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:

- ORTAB general feedback, a good project and great application. Good to see this project move forward with improving the area, finishing improvements to an area previously funding by RTP.
- *Bryant Wright* and *Libby Kugel* recommend in future to highlight or indicate on maps where the project area is located to clarify project location better.
- *Jeff Budd*, *Mike Sirofchuck*, and *Land Van Dommelen* also recommend better labeling photos and locations on maps to better understand the project area.
- *Sally Andersen* asks for further clarification on local governing body letter of support. Applicant clarified.

2. Project Title: Karen Hornaday Park Pedestrian Entrance Trail

Organization Name: City of Homer

Project Category: Diversified

Federal Funds Requested	\$148,049.32	Non-Participating Costs	\$0
Match Requirement	\$16,449.92		
Total Participating Cost	\$164,499.24	Total Project Cost	\$164,499.24

Final Average ORTAB Score: 88.75/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:



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- ORTAB general feedback, excellent and well-organized application. Really appreciated the attention to detail, explanation of project in the narrative, and table of contents.
- *Lang Van Dommelen* stated very good photographs that assisted with showing the project scope.
- *Sally Andersen* asks for further clarification on Buy America Act steel certification. Applicant clarified, no steel with interpretive signs. *DPOR Tara Epperson* explained Buy America Act requirements if steel was involved in any project.

3. **Project Title:** Isberg East-West Multi-Use Trail, Phase II

Organization Name: Fairbanks North Star Borough

Project Category: Motorized

Federal Funds Requested \$129,825.38 (Total w/R1 \$229,193.73)

Match Requirement \$14,425.04 (Total w/R1 \$25,465.97)

Total Participating Cost \$144,250.42 (Total w/R1 \$254,659.70)

Non-Participating Costs \$0

Total Project Cost \$144,250.42 (Total w/R1 \$254,659.70)

Final Average ORTAB Score: 91.29/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:

- *Bryant Wright* declared a conflict of interest, as he is the applicant.
- ORTAB general feedback, a great application and project. Project was rated highly.
- *Libby Kugel* asks how Phase I went. Applicant clarified that Phase I is complete. *DPOR Tara Epperson* further explained that Final Assessments for completed projects will be shared with ORTAB this round and moving forward to allow ORTAB to review how applicants have performed in past projects.

4. **Project Title:** Trail Upgrades for Birch Hill Recreation and Adjacent Areas

Organization Name: Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks

Project Category: Diversified

Federal Funds Requested \$148,240.00 Non-Participating Costs \$3,261.59

Match Requirement \$16,471.11

Total Participating Cost \$164,711.11 Total Project Cost \$167,972.70

Final Average ORTAB Score: 89.43/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:

- *Bryant Wright* declared a conflict of interest, as he works with Fairbanks North Star Borough and Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks is a working partner with the borough.
- ORTAB general feedback, a good application and project. Very clear project description and narrative, and very thorough.
- *Jeff Budd* asked for clarification on Page 4 of the Environmental Review Checklist, if there is impact on any public or private drinking water. Applicant clarified that they had worked with BLM environmental contact and had not received notice that there was any impact with drinking water.

5. **Project Title:** Skyview Trailhead Improvements

Organization Name: Tsalteshi Trails Association



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Project Category: Diversified

Federal Funds Requested	\$147,618.15	Non-Participating Costs	\$0
Match Requirement	\$16,403.25		
Total Participating Cost	\$164,021.40	Total Project Cost	\$164,021.40

Final Average ORTAB Score: 83.63/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:

- ORTAB general feedback, great details in the budget and application. A good project to ensure trail facilities are meeting trail-user needs.
- *Bryant Wright* asked verification if lumber costs are current, and prices are up to date. Applicant verified that costs are up to date.
- *Christy Gentemann* really appreciated the photographs, and felt they gave great perspective to the project scope.
- *Mike Sirofchuck* stated is a good project. Overall, moving a shed may be a lower priority compared to trail projects, however, understands the benefits of moving shed to benefit activities in the location.

6. **Project Title:** Berry Trail

Organization Name: Valdez Adventure Alliance

Project Category: Non-Motorized

Federal Funds Requested	\$16,920.00	Non-Participating Costs	\$0
Match Requirement	\$2,114.25		
Total Participating Cost	\$19,034.25	Total Project Cost	\$19,034.25

Final Average ORTAB Score: 92.13/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:

- ORTAB general feedback, a great project and the application was well written. Great photos to support project scope.
- *Bryant Wright* recommended adding more funding in the indirect portion to assist with grant management. Asks for further clarification on future improvements. Applicant explains current goals versus future goals to continue to make improvements to this location.
- *Lang Van Dommelen* really liked this project. As a climber, felt that this project will help multiple user groups. Applicant clarified that the current areas where climbers can access are not official trails, are not permitted, and are not safe. Applicant says it is important for climbers to have access to trails from the bottom areas to improve safety.
- *Mike Sirofchuck* recommends, now that *DPOR Director Gease* has raised the maximum award limits, for applicant to consider applying for more funding to complete more work at one time. Would prevent having to apply for future phases of a project and will allow applicant to complete more work at one time. Applicant explained their organization has another application from Round #1 and did not want to overextend their organization for this year and will consider this recommendation for future.

7. **Project Title:** Tracks for Trails

Organization Name: Willow Area Community Organization

Project Category: Motorized

Federal Funds Requested	\$23,177.70	Non-Participating Costs	\$0
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Match Requirement	\$2,575.00		
Total Participating Cost	\$25,752.70	Total Project Cost	\$25,752.70

Final Average ORTAB Score: 88.25/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:

- Applicant was not present for meeting and was not available to address any questions or concerns from ORTAB.
- ORTAB general feedback, a good application and investment for grooming.
- *Jeff Budd* recommended that this type of project include a second set of equipment, if there was funding available. Felt it was a good application and good use of funding.
- *Christy Gentemann* expressed concerns with one of the letters of support from Lyons Club dated from 2013 and could not tell if support letter was specifically for this project. Also, asked for clarification on the different quotes the applicant provided.
- *Mike Sirofchuck* liked that a rural area applied and liked to see that funds are given to different areas across the state.
- *Lang Van Dommelen* expressed concerns over the long-term reliability. Warranties may be a good solution but just noted that some only have one- or two-years coverage.

8. **Project Title:** Danger Point Trail Reconstruction Project

Organization Name: City of Angoon

Project Category: Non-Motorized

Federal Funds Requested	\$150,000.00	Non-Participating Costs	\$202,947.00
Match Requirement	\$16,667.00		
Total Participating Cost	\$166,667.00	Total Project Cost	\$369,614.00

Final Average ORTAB Score: 84.25/100

ORTAB Discussion/Questions or Comments:

- Applicant was not present for meeting and was not available to address any questions or concerns from ORTAB.
- ORTAB general feedback, application was well done.
- *Bryant Wright* expressed concern of Right-of-Way and determining if appropriate authorization of Right-of-Way had been obtained. Concerns with the amount of project planning involved for the project and would have like to see that more project planning was done prior to applying for the construction project.
- *Christy Gentemann* thought this was a good project and that public benefit was explained very well. Expressed concerns with archeological determination summary that stated project could have indirect adverse effects to the Danger Point location.
- *Libby Kugel* noted that there was no official land management plan and was concerned if this project was a higher priority than other local projects. Would have liked more information and clarification.
- *Mike Sirofchuck* liked that a rural area applied and liked to see that funds are given to different areas across the state. Noted that this may benefit tourism in the area, allowing visitors to explore the area by trail access. Also expressed concerns of archeological findings, as this could stop a project in its tracks. This may be a project that includes phases moving forward, either beginning now or moving forward.



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- *Sally Andersen* would have liked to see more long-term assurance for the maintenance, planning, and long-term use of this trail. Asks if this trail would be made road-accessible in future and questioned how this trail would remain recreational. Would have liked more information and detailed quotes, such as information for interpretive panels.
- *Jeff Budd* also liked that a rural area applied and liked to see that funds are given to different areas across the state. Noted that this may benefit tourism in the area, allowing visitors to explore the area by trail access.

ORTAB has concluded discussion of RTP applications and final scoring. DPOR Tara Epperson provided an overview of the scoring and funding calculations spreadsheet. Totals from Round #1 applications are still factored into overall funding for FY2021 and must be included when discussing applications from Round #2.

ORTAB reviews the current project categories for each project to determine if the projects have been classified correctly, and make changes as needed (Motorized, Non-Motorized, Diversified).

Break for Lunch, 12:00pm – 1:00pm

ORTAB continues review of current project categories and ranking. ORTAB completed the review of current project categories for each project.

ORTAB has concluded discussion of RTP applications and final scoring. Motion passed for ORTAB to approve or deny the current final scores and project rankings. ORTAB Chairperson Mike Sirofchuck conducts a roll call motion to approve or deny the final scores and project rankings:

Project Title	Organization Name	Average Application Scores
Berry Trail	Valdez Adventure Alliance	92.13
Isberg East-West Multi-Use Trail, Phase II	Fairbanks North Star Borough	91.29
Trail Upgrades for Birch Hill Recreation & Adjacent Areas	Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks	89.43
Karen Hornaday Park Pedestrian Entrance Trail	City of Homer	88.75
Tracks for Trails	Willow Area Community Organization	88.25
Mirror Lake Multi-Use Trail Realignment and Rehabilitation	Chugach Mountain Bike Riders	84.50
Danger Point Trail Reconstruction Project	City of Angoon	84.25
Skyview Trailhead Improvements	Tsalteshi Trails Association	83.63

ORTAB has unanimously approved of the RTP Application – Funding Calculations Spreadsheet, approving of final score and project ranking.

DPOR Tara Epperson discussed options for ORTAB to submit final scoresheets to DPOR Director's Office:

Email: Parks.RTPGrantApp@alaska.gov

Mail: Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation



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ATTN: Recreational Trails Program
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1380
Anchorage, AK 99501

All scoresheets must be submitted to DPOR Director's Office no later than Friday, June 25, 2021.

DPOR Tara Epperson stated that the final scores will be forwarded to DPOR Director Ricky Gease for consideration and approval. Brief update that emails will be sent later this week or early next, discussing plans for retiring ORTAB Members *Mike Rearden* and *Meghan McClain*. *Libby Kugel* and *Sally Andersen* had expressed interest in applying for second terms with ORTAB; letters will be sent to the Commissioner's Office in July or early August to appoint new terms. There will be two (2) vacancies to fill for ORTAB, one (1) motorized representative and one (1) diversified representative. Ideally, both vacancies will be filled with motorized representatives to ensure that federal regulations are met for each meeting, where a minimum of one (1) motorized and one (1) non-motorized representative must attend to conduct an ORTAB Meeting. Moving forward, it is requested next ORTAB Meeting is held in November/December to allow more time for agencies to process RTP applications and allow a better opportunity for projects to begin sooner. ORTAB agreed to tentative schedule. *Mike Sirofchuck* appreciated DPOR's time with reviewing the applications and working with applicants prior to their review; felt the review made it much easier for ORTAB Members to review. Future meetings are proposed to continue to be held telephonically; the majority of ORTAB Members preferred telephonic meeting.

ORTAB Members requested an overview of the eleven (11) applications that were assessed as INCOMPLETE/INELIGIBLE and review why these applications were not forwarded to ORTAB. DPOR Tara Epperson presented each application's Application Completion Assessment, as well as the final letters sent to applications explaining in detail why the application was assessed as INCOMPLETE/INELIGIBLE. During review, ORTAB Members had opportunity to ask questions or request further clarification, allowing for open discussion for these applications.

ORTAB Members each provide feedback on scoring, the review process, processes in general:

- *Sally Andersen* appreciated the overview for the applications that were not forwarded to ORTAB. Recommended updates to the current ORTAB Scoresheet to allow for a more sensitive scoring rubric. Recommended removing scoring for the landowner authorization and the public notice requirements, as DPOR Grants Administration is already doing so. Also recommended to remove the category, if applicant is applying for an amount under the maximum award limit, as DPOR Grants Administration is also reviewing this item. Agreed with *Christy Gentemann* about repositioning project scope sooner in the application. Would like clarification on ORTAB's role of helping applicants during the application process. [DPOR Tara Epperson explained below.] Thanked everyone!
- *Mike Sirofchuck* agreed with *Sally Andersen*. If there are any items that are disqualifying factors, does not seem necessary for ORTAB to score those areas. Recommended having the ORTAB Scoresheet available to applicants to reference while applying with RTP. Supports mitigating conflicts of interest. Thanked everyone for their hard work, to include DPOR and ORTAB!
- *Jeff Budd* also agrees. Liked the last items in last section where more points are awarded based on each ORTAB Member's opinion of the project. Thanked everyone!



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- *Bryant Wright* recommended updates to the ORTAB Scoresheet and application. Agreed with having more range in the scoresheet to allow for more diverse and subjective scoring. Recommended revising the budget information scoring section; liked to group scoring together to allow for a more subjective scoring. It is difficult to give lower scores when there is not enough range available to score subjectively. For the application, recommended adding more information and being clearer in the timeline section about the grant reporting requirements to allow applicants a better understanding with planning the timeline with the projects. Recommended clarifying match requirement and adding information to the application so that applicants understand how their match must be planned to meet the grant reporting requirements. Thanked everyone!
- *Christy Gentemann* thanked *DPOR Tara Epperson* for sending all the information, and providing the assessments, very helpful to reference during the ORTAB review scoring process. Appreciated the scoresheets printed with this round. Thanked *Mike Sirofchuck* for leading today's meeting. Thanked everyone for providing recommendations, very helpful. Recommended repositioning the project scope sooner in the application to help with the scoring review process, allow for better organization to reference the project scope in each application.
- *Libby Kugel* liked everyone's recommendations and is in favor of those. Thanked everyone!
- *Lang Van Dommelen* appreciated good discussion and the recommendations from everyone. Thanked everyone, and excited for the next round!
- *DPOR Tara Epperson* thanked all ORTAB for their hard work and their time to review and recommend RTP projects! *Mike Sirofchuck* has done a wonderful job leading the meetings. Thanked ORTAB for providing feedback and recommendations. Thanked DPOR Management staff for their support: *DPOR Grants Manager Samantha Hudson* for assisting with a major role with this program and advising on grant requirement processes, *DPOR Administrative Operations Manager Melissa Richie* for assisting with finalizing awards, *DPOR Division Operations Manager Matt Wedeking* assisting with DPOR field offices RTP projects, and *DPOR Director Ricky Gease* providing feedback and considering ORTAB's recommendations to approve RTP projects.

ORTAB Members requested if ORTAB Members were allowed to assist applicants with applying. *DPOR Tara Epperson* stated **ORTAB Members must not assist applicants with applying.** ORTAB Members would be giving applicants an "unfair advantage" that other applicants would not have, not an ethical practice for the role of ORTAB Members. If applicants ask ORTAB questions, ORTAB should direct applicants to the RTP Alaska Grants Administration for guidance. DPOR hopes to provide more training and for training material to be available to applicants at the soonest opportunity. If applicants have questions regarding RTP processes, applicants must ask the RTP Alaska Grants Administration.

DPOR Tara Epperson will draft minutes and have available on the RTP website within next few weeks.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30pm.