

Approved - Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB)
Annual Meeting Minutes 1/6-7/2016

ORTAB Members Present:

Jeff Budd - Chair - Represents Southeast Alaska / Non-Motorized
Mike Rearden - Represents Western / Southwest Alaska
Ron Lurk - Represents Anchorage / Motorized / Diversified
Mickey Todd - Represents Motorized Trail Users
Seth Adams - Represents Fairbanks Area /Northern Area
Mike Sirofchuck – Represents Kodiak / Southwest/Non-Motorized trail users
Ira Edwards - Represents Trail Users Experiencing Disabilities

DNR, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, (DPOR) Staff Present:

Claire LeClair - DPOR, Deputy Director and Chief of Field Operations
Darcy Harris – DPOR, Alaska State Trails Program Coordinator
Steve Neel – DPOR, Recreational Trails Program Grants Administrator
Jean Ayers – DPOR, Land & Water Conservation Fund Grants Administrator
Justin Wholey – DPOR, Alaska State Trails Program, Natural Resource Specialist
Tiffany Vassar – DPOR, Director’s Office Administrative Assistant
Emily Angel – DPOR, Design and Construction, Interpretation and Education
Nicole Acevedo – DPOR, Design and Construction, Interpretation and Education
Brooks Ludwig – DPOR, Northern Region Superintendent
Jason Oakley – DPOR, Kachemak Bay Chief Ranger

Public Present:

Steve Cleary - Alaska Trails
Bill Holt - Tsalteshi Trails Association
Kim Sollien - Great Land Trust
Geoffrey Orth - Stray Dogs LLC
Anna Shaw – Anchorage Park Foundation
Elizabeth Trowbridge – Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies
Ed Strabel – Mat-Su Ski Club
Kevin Walker – Homer Yacht Club

Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB)

Annual Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 6th and Thursday January 7th 2016

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Discussion with DPOR Staff

Steve Neel announced that a new national five year transportation bill was recently passed in Congress and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) was still included at the funding level from 2009. He said the exact numbers from the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) were not available yet, but his estimates are as noted. Approximately \$1,527,000 is the anticipated allocation from FHWA. The obligation limitation from State of Alaska DOT&PF is \$1,421,884. The Administrative Allowance to manage the Trails Program Office is 7% or \$106,955. The total available to fund trail projects will be approximately \$1,314,929. The 30/30/40 (motorized/non-motorized/diversified) funding percentage ratio is still required, and each state still has a Governor opt-out option.

Darcy Harris and Steve Neel reminded the ORTAB that FHWA now evaluates the RTP under CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 200. This CFR, adopted in December 2014, is strictly enforced by FHWA. Harris and Neel reviewed the changes that will most affect applicants and grantees. They said FHWA will not allow extensions to project end-dates or project modifications after they have been approved, unless the causes are related to extreme weather events or other events out of the grantees' control. Neel said that some applicants have already been affected by FHWA enforcing the fixed end-dates. The Buy America Act requires any steel product purchased with FHWA dollars, that costs more than \$2,500, to be made with 100% American Steel, and if not, a waiver is required. Neel explained that the Trails Program Office applied for seven waivers during the 2015 grant cycle, and all were approved. The process can take up to six months, so DPOR must submit waiver requests as soon as possible to increase the possibility of attaining them by the summer field season. Harris explained that one of the reasons for scheduling the meeting a month earlier was to increase the time for application approval. Neel then said that FHWA now requires the correct match ratio be reported with each reimbursement request. Neel also explained that a "tapered match agreement" would only be allowed with prior FHWA approval, and in general this would only apply for large equipment purchases. He also noted that the new State IRIS accounting system may slow down grant reimbursements temporarily over the following year as staff learns the new system and bugs are worked out.

One ORTAB member asked if it was acceptable for applicants to exceed the required match amount. Darcy Harris explained that some applicants show more match to illustrate that they have more support, but FHWA can see excessive match as a reason to reduce the federal share. Also, once a larger-than-required match ratio is approved, the grantee will be required to continue to show that level of match for the life of the project.

Project Applications from the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR)

(Projects are listed in the order they were discussed, not by a ranking.)

1. Trail Maintenance Equipment Purchase

Applicant: DPOR, Chugach State Park

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$23,141 / \$2,297.05

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chugach State Park

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought that the application seemed like it was done quickly and lacked passion. He also noted that the applicant didn't specify which trails the equipment would be used on. He wondered how long the equipment would last, as well. Another ORTAB member said that it could be used on many motorized and non-motorized trails in the park, but questioned if RTP could pay for "maintenance". Harris and Neel responded by saying that repetitive maintenance activities would not be approved by FHWA, but this purchase would be acceptable because the equipment would be used for clearing brush from the trails to improve safety, accessibility, and visibility.

2. Kachemak Bay State Park Orientation Panels

Applicant: DPOR, Design and Construction, Interpretation and Education

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$12,590 / \$1,394

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Kachemak Bay State Park

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member said the application was clear, concise, and easy to read. Another ORTAB member noted that since the mooring buoys will be on the orientation panels, the orientation panel project may need to be done after the mooring buoy project is done. Another ORTAB member pointed out that it cost \$14,000 for to create an \$800 orientation panel. Emily Angel (from Interpretation and Education) said it was easy and relatively inexpensive to update and install the panel if buoy locations change.

3. Alaska State Park Trail Guide Videos

Applicant: DPOR, Design and Construction, Interpretation and Education

Category: Safety & Education

Funds Requested / Match: \$37,500 / \$3,722.25

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Kachemak Bay State Park

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member asked why DPOR would buy equipment and do this in house, when it could be contracted out. Emily Angel (from Interpretation and Education) explained that there was an employee with video editing experience in-house, and he made a promotional video for Chugach State Park last summer. Another ORTAB member noted that it was a lot of money for equipment, but he expected

future use out of it after the grant. One ORTAB member asked if project success could be evaluated. Emily Angel said that there is an in-office review process and YouTube views can be tracked.

4. Caines Head SRA: Tonsina Section

Applicant: DPOR, Kenai

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$48,309 / \$4,795

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Caines Head State Recreation Area

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member liked the pictures that were included, and another liked the map included on the public notice. Another ORTAB member appreciated the applicant taking the time to get local public comments and awarded more points for this. One ORTAB member thought this was the best among the State Parks applications. Another ORTAB member questioned what PPE was. Darcy Harris explained that it was Personal Protective Equipment which can be protective clothing or gear when performing trail work, but not logoed uniforms.

5. Moose Valley/Poot Peak Trail Restorations

Applicant: DPOR, Kenai

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$49,991 / \$5,044

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Kachemak Bay State Park

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member noted that the Kachemak Bay State Park Advisory Board gave this project priority. Another ORTAB member thought that this project seemed expensive considering the estimated 300 users per year, while another ORTAB member thought that if the trails were improved the user numbers would increase. One ORTAB member was concerned that these trails would not be maintained after the project ended, because there is no maintenance money in the State budget. Another ORTAB member questioned the need of camping gear and tools and wondered if Parks already had this sort of gear. An ORTAB member said that the gear and tools get used hard and needed to be replaced often, and that these grants are the only funding that trail crews receive.

6. Saddle Trail Reroute – Phase II

Applicant: DPOR, Kenai

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$49,994 / \$5,041

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Kachemak Bay State Park

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought that the Alaska Conservation Corps labor was very inexpensive at \$14 per hour. Another ORTAB member didn't see any bids for equipment, food, or transportation costs; Darcy

Harris noted that she received cost estimates via email after it was determined that volunteers couldn't ride in State Parks operated boats.

7. Curry Ridge Trail – Phase II

Applicant: DPOR, Matanuska-Susitna Valley

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$49,918 / \$4,997

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Denali State Park

Project Discussion:

ORTAB members were unsure if the campground and parking lot had been completed, and because of this some scored the project lower. Another ORTAB member didn't think the Denali Visitor Center would be built, and because of this there wouldn't be many trail-users. Claire LeClair later came in and clarified that both the campground and parking lot had been constructed. One ORTAB member noted that there was more information on the visitor center than the trail in the RTP application.

8. Northern Area Training & Assessment

Applicant: DPOR, Northern Region

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$13,313 / \$1,322

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chena River State Recreation Area

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member wondered if the parks already had similar equipment as the kind asked for in the grant.

9. Angel Creek Hillside Bridge Repairs

Applicant: DPOR, Northern Region

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$24,190 / \$2,401

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chena River State Recreation Area

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member asked if equipment owned by State Parks could be used for match, with the value coming from hypothetical rental fees for that equipment. Darcy Harris said this was allowable. Another ORTAB member thought that 150,000 users was likely the number of users in the park yearly, and not just on this trail.

10. Eagle Trail

Applicant: DPOR, Northern Region

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$35,471 / \$3,521

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Eagle Trail State Recreation Site

Project Discussion:

ORTAB members noted typos in the application.

11. Granite Tors Boardwalk Repairs

Applicant: DPOR, Northern Region

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$38,808 / \$3,852

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chena River State Recreation Area

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought that the cost to replace 150 boards seemed expensive. Another ORTAB member questioned the use of untreated lumber instead of treated; Northern Region Superintendent Brooks Ludwig noted that about half the untreated boards from 1982 are still in good shape.

12. Mastodon Trail Construction

Applicant: DPOR, Northern Region

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$50,000 / \$4,963

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chena River State Recreation Area

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought it would be unfortunate not to fund this project since ORTAB has recommended funding for the Mastodon Trail in the past. A few ORTAB members said it was difficult to understand the project due to a confusing project description. Even with the confusing application, one ORTAB member said, he expected the work would be done well.

13. Mastodon Trail Hardening / Clearing

Applicant: DPOR, Northern Region

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$49,572 / \$4,930.65

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chena River State Recreation Area

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought that the project description was confusing.

14. Stiles Extension Construction

Applicant: DPOR, Northern Region

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$50,000 / \$4,963

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chena River State Recreation Area

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member asked if those in the trail crew really highly trained, and if so why do they need training (from the Training & Assessment grant)? Darcy Harris said that after their training they will be highly trained. Steve Neel noted that these grants have been approved by FHWA in the past.

15. Battery Point Trail – Phase II

Applicant: DPOR, Southeast

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$28,676 / \$2,847

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Chilkat State Park

Project Discussion:

An ORTAB member questioned the need for crushed gravel, when they originally used beach gravel. Another ORTAB member explained that the angular crushed gravel compacts much better than the rounded beach gravel. One ORTAB member thought the match seemed to be “reverse-engineered”; Darcy Harris agreed, because applicants are encouraged to submit only the exact amount of required match.

16. Granite Creek Trail Improvement

Applicant: DPOR, Southeast

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$49,993 / \$4,962.44

Land Owner(s): State of Alaska

Project Discussion:

An ORTAB member noted that the same applicant also applied for the Point Bridget project. The same trail crew would be used for both projects.

17. Point Bridget Trail Restoration – Phase II

Applicant: DPOR, Southeast

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$49,982 / \$4,961.35

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Point Bridget State Park

Project Discussion:

An ORTAB member noted that even though Granite Creek and Point Bridget projects would be done by the same trail crew, they didn’t double up on gear in case only one was funded.

Project Applications from Non-State Entities

(Projects are listed in the order they were discussed, not by a ranking.)

1. Tsalteshi Trails Association Single Track

Applicant: Tsalteshi Trails Association

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$50,000 / \$12,500

Land Owner(s): Kenai Peninsula Borough

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member noted that the application was well written and easy to follow. Bill Holt (representing Tsalteshi Trails Association) explained that this project will help keep bikes off of the ski trails in winter. Steve Neel noted that there was an issue last year with a grant from Tsalteshi trails, where the final billing came in after the final end date. Neel also noted that Parks had filed an appeal to FHWA to try and receive this reimbursement. Bill Holt explained that the dealer went out of business in the middle of the purchase prolonging the process. One ORTAB member said he would have given more points if a letter from a youth group had been provided.

2. Mirror Lake Singletrack - Phase 1

Applicant: Alaska Trails, Inc.

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$50,000 / \$12,500

Land Owner(s): Municipality of Anchorage

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member asked how bikes used the trail in the winter. Steve Cleary explained that the trails are packed and groomed for winter use. ORTAB members referenced dragging a tire for winter grooming. Another ORTAB member complemented the application for lack of clutter. One ORTAB member thought that the grant was heavy in administration costs. Another ORTAB member said they would have given more points if there was a letter from a volunteer group pledging support. One ORTAB member questioned if landowner authorization was sufficient. Steve Cleary said he was working with Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, but he could get a more explicit letter from the land owner if necessary.

3. Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails

Applicant: Alaska Trails, Inc.

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$33,000 / \$8,250

Land Owner(s): Municipality of Anchorage

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member liked that the trails would be close to so many schools, and another liked how they would be located in an urban park. Another ORTAB member noted that signs were mentioned in the

application, yet there were no line items in the budget for signs. An ORTAB member also noted that who the volunteers are weren't mentioned in the application. Steve Cleary explained that the signs were part of a vision by the Anchorage Park Foundation and not this project specifically, and that there would be Alaska Trails' volunteers and people from local mountain bike groups. One ORTAB member noted that volunteer training was almost the same amount of time as volunteer work hours in the budget; Cleary said there would actually be much more volunteer labor, but he provided the required match in the budget, and didn't exceed this per DPOR's request. Another ORTAB member noted that he would have given more points if there was a better estimate of user numbers, and not just the estimate of "hundreds."

4. Improvements at Jodhpur Motocross Track

Applicant: Anchorage Park Foundation

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$47,789 / \$11,947

Land Owner(s): Municipality of Anchorage

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member liked the maps and layout. Another ORTAB member thought the bleachers were very expensive and that they would be shipped to Alaska from too far away. A couple ORTAB members noted that they knew found cheaper bleachers and signs online.

5. Rilke Schule Trail Connection to Meadow Park

Applicant: Anchorage Park Foundation

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$33,782 / \$8,445

Land Owner(s): Independent Baptist Church

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member asked what the maintenance plan would be. Anna Shaw (of the Anchorage Park Foundation) said that a parent group helped put this application together and are very involved, and would be involved in maintenance. One ORTAB member questioned if three days was enough time to construct three bridges. Another ORTAB member noted that budget totals differed between page 5 and 9 of the application. One ORTAB member noted that he would have added more points had there been a letter from the youth group with dates. Another ORTAB member said he scored the application lower because there was only five years of public-use authorization (which is the minimum required amount). One ORTAB member noted that there was a 10% contingency, and Darcy Harris clarified that only the authorized amount can be reimbursed; it would not be possible to pay for a contingency on top of that.

6. Bluff Cabin Trail Restoration

Applicant: Delta Junction Trails Association

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$100,000 / \$25,000

Land Owner(s): Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Mining, Land, and Water

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member liked that this trail was in a rural community. A few ORTAB members were concerned that there was no barrier to prevent 4x4 highway vehicles from damaging the trail after the grant project is finished. Geoff Orth (trail consultant hired for the project) noted that he will apply to change the easement to disallow 4x4 highway vehicles, and has been discussing this with DNR in Fairbanks. Another ORTAB member noted that there was no estimate for user numbers; Geoff Orth said that there is heavy use on the trail as evidenced by the trail damage. One ORTAB member asked why Little Davis-Bacon wages are included in the project. Darcy Harris and Geoff Orth clarified that it is required for contractors. Another ORTAB member had trouble figuring out what some acronyms meant in the grant application.

7. Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies Interpretive Trails Improvement

Applicant: Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$16,067 / \$5,335.75

Land Owner(s): Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought that the application was well written. Another ORTAB member thought that the sign was very expensive, and shipped from very far away, and the map was so-so. Beth Trowbridge (from Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies) said she knew the price seemed high, but the cheapest signs didn't seem durable enough, so they chose the middle priced sign. The ORTAB also asked if a user fee was required to use the trails. Trowbridge said that there was a user fee at certain times; Darcy Harris stated that the access has to be little or no cost so this was okay. Several ORTAB members noted there was a discrepancy between the budget and budget-narrative regarding sign art. Trowbridge stated that she forgot to update the budget, but updated the budget narrative to reflect more hours for artist work. Harris said that this part of the budget could be updated later.

8. Eyak River Trail Reconstruction Project

Applicant: U.S. D.A. Forest Service, Cordova Ranger District

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$26,291 / \$6,573

Land Owner(s): U.S. D.A. Forest Service, Cordova Ranger District

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought the narrative was difficult to read, and another ORTAB member noted that there were staff members mentioned in the budget narrative that weren't mentioned in the budget spreadsheet.

9. Fairbanks North Star Borough Trail Systems Enhancement Equipment

Applicant: Fairbanks North Star Borough, Parks and Recreation

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$37,043 / \$9,261

Land Owner(s): Fairbanks North Star Borough

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member commented that the grant was well written. Another ORTAB member thought that three quotes seemed to be from the same place, but another ORTAB member pointed out that they were different locations of the same distributors.

10. North Pole Beaver Springs Trail Upgrade

Applicant: Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$22,244 / \$5,561.30

Land Owner(s): Santa Clause House, Inc. and Fairbanks North Star Borough

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member noted that many documents were sideways in the scan, and another thought \$1500 was expensive for a trash can.

11. Wasilla Creek Wetlands - Refuge Trail

Applicant: Great Land Trust

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$34,718 / \$10,282

Land Owner(s): Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member noted that the applicant was disqualified last year because the scope of their project had changed.

12. Farewell Lake to Salmon River Trail Work

Applicant: Iditarod Trail Committee

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$99,952 / \$24,988

Land Owner(s): State of Alaska and the Bureau of Land Management

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought that this was a lot of money for equipment and flights.

13. Jones Point Recreational Trail Upgrade

Applicant: Takshanuk Watershed Council

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$15,125 / \$8,690

Land Owner(s): Takshanuk Watershed Council

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought that this project offered a lot of “bang for the buck”. Another ORTAB member asked if the value of the land can be used as match (as stated in the application). Darcy Harris explained that if a land purchase is made specifically to build a trail, and an RTP grant application to build this trail is submitted within 18 months of the purchase, the appraisal value can be used as match; she also noted that Takshanuk Watershed Council was in the process of getting an appraisal.

14. Kachemak Nordic Ski Club Trail Grooming Equipment

Applicant: Kachemak Nordic Ski Club

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$16,282 / \$4,071

Land Owner(s): Cook Inlet Region Incorporated and Kenai Peninsula Borough

Project Discussion:

An ORTAB member commented that the application was well written, and another asked how long the equipment is expected to last. The applicant said the one they have now has lasted 5 years with no problems.

15. Kachemak Bay Mooring Buoys

Applicant: Homer Yacht Club

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$64,477 / \$21,534.82

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Kachemak Bay State Park and State of Alaska, DNR, Division of Mining Land and Water

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought it would be nice to have these mooring buoys. Another ORTAB member also thought it would be nice, but pointed out that there were reasons that State parks originally removed them including maintenance and liability; there is also a potential conflict with seiners. One

ORTAB member mentioned that there is a proposed buoy off of an island which is a sensitive historical site; the historical significance was not mentioned in the application; he also noted that without money for deferred maintenance the buoys had to be removed. One ORTAB member thought that support letters were from folks that really didn't want the public to use them. Another ORTAB member thought the project sounded like a motorized water trail, and that it would nice if the buoy locations were specified already instead of having only possible locations identified. Some of the ORTAB members wanted more information about the 30-person Coast Guard crew that was identified in the application to assist with the project; it was only mentioned briefly. There was also no letter from the Coast Guard included. Several ORTAB members were worried about maintenance, and questioned who would own these after they were installed. Darcy Harris said that the State of Alaska would be liable after their installation. One ORTAB member said he'd feel better if fewer buoys were funded, and another asked if only some of the buoys could be funded. Darcy Harris said that would change the scope of the project and would not be possible during this grant cycle. One ORTAB member wanted to hear an opinion from the eventual owner. Another ORTAB member wanted the applicant to resubmit after addressing the board's concerns. One ORTAB member said he could call the applicant to express the board's concerns and encourage resubmittal if the project was not recommended.

ORTAB asked Jason Oakley (DPOR, Kachemak Bay Chief Ranger) if his State Park will maintain the buoys if they are installed. He said that DPOR would be willing to maintain them, although there is no money to do so. Oakley also said an emphasis on maintenance from another organization should be given. ORTAB members also asked if there was a certification needed for divers performing buoy maintenance, and if DPOR could perform any repairs. Oakley said "maybe a small fix," and he wasn't sure about the certification. When asked about seiner concerns, he said people could keep a dialogue open. He also said that it was his understanding that most of the old buoys washed away and were not removed.

Kevin Walker (the applicant's representative) explained that buoys in Washington State are maintained and inspected 2-3 years by a dedicated team. The applicant's plan is to inspect each buoy with a diver just before the grant closes in two years, and if there are any problems, everything except the anchor can be removed and marked with underwater buoy. He said the group could replace buoys with another RTP grant or use another funding source. He said that several groups are interested in keeping the buoys going, including the Homer Yacht Club, the Wooden Boat Society, the Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park, and the Kachemak Bay Water Trail. All of these groups, he said, have "dozens or hundreds of members." With these groups, he said, there "would be enough" volunteers and contributions for maintenance and replacement parts. Walker said that he knew 5 divers that have 2 boats and could do maintenance for the cost of the gas. Also, the Coast Guard, as well as other organizations, "may" be able to help.

Darcy Harris asked about future liability. Walker said if a buoy broke and a boat washed on shore that would "be a problem". He said that "we" needed to make sure larger boats don't tie up to this during a storm and put too much stress on the system, but these systems are over-engineered to prevent this, and "hopefully" this wouldn't happen. Harris said that the project should not rely on Alaska State Parks

being liable. Darcy Harris said she was concerned that this project was not “shovel ready” and there were still a lot of unanswered questions.

Walker also noted that the seiner representative was at the last Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park meeting, and agreed to place buoys in a locations with less conflict with seining. Walker said the seiner representative had buoy waypoints and can work with the Homer Yacht Club on this project. “The buoys could be temporarily removed during seining season which is short”, Walker said.

16. Ski Trail Grooming Equipment

Applicant: Mat-Su Ski Club

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$49,641 / \$12,410

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks and Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member said that the application was well written and had many support letters. Another ORTAB member questioned how difficult it was to get a Buy America waiver. Darcy Harris said that every application for a Buy America waiver sent to FHWA in 2015 had been approved. An ORTAB member also noted that there were specific features of this machine that weren’t available on other machines.

17. Mosquito Cove Trail (Storm Damage) Repair

Applicant: Sitka Trail Works, Inc.

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$39,840 / \$10,103

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks and U.S. Forest Service

Project Discussion:

An ORTAB member liked the foot-by-foot trail documentation. Another ORTAB member noted that this is a popular trail in Sitka with lots of water damage and blow-downs with temporary fixes, and there are no State Parks staff members in Sitka. One ORTAB member thought that this “wasn’t the best grant application.” Another ORTAB Member said that there were many separate files making it difficult to review on a computer, and many attachments were “fuzzy and hard to read”. One ORTAB member noted that information about the project is available, but it is scattered in different parts of the application. One ORTAB member questioned if a helicopter is needed to move gravel, and another explained that the trail is narrow and hilly, so “yes”.

18. Youth Conservation Corps Denali State Park

Applicant: Upper Susitna Soil & Water Conservation District

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested / Match: \$6,851 / \$1,712.80

Land Owner(s): Alaska State Parks, Denali State Park

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member thought this project had an “easy-to-follow budget”. Another ORTAB member said the applicant turned in a much better application than last year. Another ORTAB member wasn’t sure how important the project was, and the organization might just be looking for anything to provide funding.

19. Windsock Trail Upgrade

Applicant: Willow Area Community Organization and Willow Trail Committee

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested / Match: \$14,560 / \$3,640

Land Owner(s): Mat-Su Borough, Matanuska Recreation Co., Todd and Carrie Smolden, Byron Elzig

Project Discussion:

One ORTAB member asked if there was land owner authorization, and another was curious if the survey had been completed. One ORTAB member noted that there were materials mentioned in the project description that weren’t mentioned in the budget, and Darcy Harris said that FHWA wanted the big picture of all materials to be used. One ORTAB member stated that this is definitely a diversified project. Another ORTAB member wanted to hear from the land owners of the project.

Motion:

Mickey Todd moved to accept the budget (as in the RTP spreadsheet) as written. Mike Sirofchuk seconded.

Vote: (7 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

The budget was accepted.

State RTP Projects Recommended for Funding by ORTAB (but not officially approved)

1. Trail Maintenance Equipment Purchase
2. Kachemak Bay State Park Orientation Panels
3. Alaska State Park Trail Guide Videos
4. Caines Head SRA: Tonsina Section
5. Moose Valley/Poot Peak Trail Restorations
6. Saddle Trail Reroute – Phase II
8. Northern Area Training & Assessment
9. Angel Creek Hillside Bridge Repairs

- 594 10. Eagle Trail
- 595 12. Mastodon Trail Construction
- 596 13. Mastodon Trail Hardening / Clearing
- 597 14. Stiles Extension Construction
- 598 15. Battery Point Trail – Phase II
- 599 16. Granite Creek Trail Improvement
- 600 17. Point Bridget Trail Restoration – Phase II

601

602 **Non-State RTP Projects Recommended for Funding by ORTAB (but not officially approved)**

- 603 1. Tsalteshi Trails Association Single Track
- 604 2. Mirror Lake Singletrack - Phase 1
- 605 3. Russian Jack Mountain Bike Trails
- 606 4. Improvements at Jodhpur Motocross Track
- 607 5. Rilke Schule Trail Connection to Meadow Park
- 608 6. Bluff Cabin Trail Restoration
- 609 7. Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies Interpretive Trails Improvement
- 610 8. Eyak River Trail Reconstruction Project
- 611 9. Fairbanks North Star Borough Trail Systems Enhancement Equipment
- 612 11. Wasilla Creek Wetlands - Refuge Trail
- 613 12. Farewell Lake to Salmon River Trail Work
- 614 13. Jones Point Recreational Trail Upgrade
- 615 14. Kachemak Nordic Ski Club Trail Grooming Equipment
- 616 15. Kachemak Bay Mooring Buoys
- 617 16. Ski Trail Grooming Equipment
- 618 17. Mosquito Cove Trail (Storm Damage) Repair
- 619 18. Youth Conservation Corps Denali State Park
- 620 19. Windsock Trail Upgrade

621

622 **Projects Not Recommended by ORTAB for Funding**

- 623 7. Curry Ridge Trail – Phase II
- 624 11. Granite Tors Boardwalk Repairs
- 625 10. North Pole Beaver Springs Trail Upgrade

626

627 **Discussion with Deputy Director and Operations Manager LeClair**

628

629 Deputy Director and Division Operations Manager Claire LeClair offered to answer any questions ORTAB
630 had. A few ORTAB members noted that the State Parks applications were of “lower quality than the non-
631 state applications” and “it seemed like they tried to get through them as quickly as possible;” some had
632 spelling errors. One ORTAB member pointed out that they know State Parks employees are
633 “passionate,” but that doesn’t necessarily come across in the applications. Another ORTAB member
634 thought that the project descriptions for Chena River State Recreation Area needed to improve. A few

ORTAB members also said they wanted to see more than just advisory board letters for public support. One ORTAB member said he'd rather see a superintendent's time spent on things other than grant applications, because he thought the projects would be well implemented. LeClair said it sounded like ORTAB wanted to see better quality applications, although they thought the projects were valuable; she also noted that the applications shouldn't take a long time to decipher and they should be written more clearly.

LeClair explained that she is glad RTP money continues to come into the state, and none of these State Parks projects will happen without this federal funding. She also said that current deferred maintenance in the parks (maintenance that has not been done) would cost 60 million dollars to complete, and there is no funding for this. This deferred maintenance value doesn't include trails.

When LeClair was asked if field staff had warehouses of tools and camping gear, LeClair said she was unsure, but it would be good for the field staff to communicate if they had those items. One ORTAB member thought that if DPOR grant applicants were requesting new tools and camping gear in their applications, that they should disclose if they are trying to replace worn out or unsafe gear. Another ORTAB member thought that DPOR applicants should be on the phone during the annual ORTAB meetings to help answer questions. Another ORTAB member stated that more motorized projects could be funded if more applications were submitted for Motorized projects; Leclair said she would pass this on the superintendents.

Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Discussion with Jean Ayers

Jean Ayers, LWCF Grants Administrator, stated that for the past decade LWCF applications were only accepted every other year, because federal funding for LWCF has been so low. However, next year the program is expecting to receive almost three times the funding of past years. The National Park Service may issue roughly one million dollars to Alaska in the 2016 grant cycle. Half of those funds will be designated for state projects and half for projects sponsored by local communities. She encouraged ORTAB to spread the word in their communities about the upcoming grant cycle which will open late this summer or early fall 2016.

Ayers stated that the U.S. Congress reauthorized the LWCF program for three years, instead of the usual 20 or 25 years, and noted that discussion will continue about possible changes to the LWCF grant program. She explained that the most controversial aspect of the LWCF program rests with the "federal" side of LWCF, with its focus on federal land acquisition. However, most in Congress support the "stateside" assistance LWCF offers for close-to-home recreational projects. Unfortunately, some people get confused about the stateside program versus the federal side. Ayers welcomed support from governmental agencies and grass roots organizations that appreciate the recreational opportunities provided by LWCF.

Ayers said there have been 330 LWCF projects in Alaska since the program's inception in 1965, and we currently have 16 active projects statewide. The maximum grant request per project is currently \$125,000, and the minimum grant request has been lowered from \$100,000 to \$50,000, since the 50% match was difficult for smaller communities to come up with.

When asked what the LWCF grants could be used for, Ayers gave examples of various projects such as skate parks in Bethel and Sitka, tot lots in Anchorage, boat launches at Finger Lake, trails and picnic area at Tanana Lakes in Fairbanks, and the Salomie Creek Rifle Range in Kodiak. She explained that the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) identifies project priorities based on public surveys conducted every 5 years. The most recent survey (which will be incorporated into the SCORP being updated this year) indicated a high priority for maintaining current facilities rather than adding new ones. Ayers noted that the ORTAB will use the priorities delineated in the updated SCORP to help make funding recommendations. Ayers added that most any public outdoor recreation facility can be recommended for funding, (including land acquisition, though not a high priority) as long as it fits a project type identified in the SCORP. Darcy Harris noted that application deadlines can be changed to accommodate the meeting next year in preparation for the extra number of grants anticipated.

Final Discussion

One ORTAB member asked if there could be an official promotion of RTP grants to villages and rural Alaska other than ORTAB just telling friends in their communities. Darcy Harris mentioned that announcements on village radio stations are often free, and wanted to make sure that folks were applying for eligible projects. Another ORTAB member noted that there are time limits on these sorts of announcements. One member said he would write up an announcement, and another ORTAB member advised for an ad to be no more than 30 seconds long.

One ORTAB member thought that "checkered land ownership" is a problem that makes these projects difficult to implement in rural Alaska. Another ORTAB member asked if something like NANA Nordic (a program that teaches kids to ski in rural Alaska) could be funded by RTP. Also, he said, some villages have Nordic ski programs and could use the funds; he said he will talk to Native health corporations to garner interest. One ORTAB member asked why there can't be a focus on building rural safety cabins. Another ORTAB member explained that people travel faster today and use them less often; they also fall into disrepair after a couple years. Another idea discussed by the ORTAB was to get professional grant writers in touch with rural applicants. Steve Neel noted that out of the 400+ grants he's seen while working as a DPOR Grants Administrator, only four have been west of Wasilla. Darcy Harris said she could look into DNR distributing news releases throughout the state to promote the program.

Darcy Harris said that a meeting earlier in the year may increase project approval rates prior to the field season, and asked if January would work for next year's meeting. There were concerns that with both RTP and LWCF grants next year, there wouldn't be enough time for the ORTAB to score the applications. Harris suggested pushing the application period earlier and sending ORTAB the LWCF grants when they

716 become available (as early as possible). One ORTAB member mentioned that September is a busy month
717 in Fairbanks, and an October deadline would interfere with that. Another ORTAB member suggested the
718 application due date should be November 1st instead of November 15th. January 4-5, 2017 are next
719 year's tentative meeting dates. Harris said her goal will be to get applications to the ORTAB by
720 December 1st and send LWCF grants to them as they come in. One ORTAB member also suggested
721 putting the applications online for other ORTAB members to download.

722
723 Darcy Harris reminded those ORTAB members whose terms will expire this year, to send in letters of
724 continued interest if they wish to continue to serve. She still intends to publish a news release
725 advertising the positions. One ORTAB member asked how many ORTAB members there were supposed
726 to be, and noted that if member(s) are added, the number should increase by two for voting purposes.
727 Harris said there is not a required number of members.

728
729 The ORTAB then made suggestions to improve the applications. Suggestions included fixing incorrect
730 page numbers, adding the text "projects should be available at little to no cost to the public," and to
731 encourage applicants to submit better maps. Another idea from the ORTAB was to encourage applicants
732 to score their own grant applications (with score sheets) after compiling their packages. One ORTAB
733 member suggested requiring only two files in the application submittals, the application with
734 attachments and the budget spreadsheet. Another ORTAB member wanted consistent page orientation
735 to be required and worth points.

736
737 The ORTAB wants the language asking for support letters to be more explicit. They thought that
738 language should be added to the application that requires current letters of support from potential
739 project beneficiaries other than the landowners. Some ORTAB members also wanted the youth
740 development question on the application to require a support letter to receive points. One ORTAB
741 member suggested that a completed sample application online would be helpful for applicants.

742
743 Steve Neel asked if the ORTAB was interested in seeing grant progress updates. There was general
744 agreement, especially for pictures of the final projects. The ORTAB also offered to visit RTP projects in
745 their areas and let Darcy Harris and Steve Neel know how they are coming along. The ORTAB asked if
746 any applicants were unable to spend all of their money for their projects. Neel mentioned that the
747 Snomads parking lot from a couple years ago wasn't completed due to inaction by the applicant. He also
748 said that the Friends of the Koponen Homestead couldn't get money in the time they needed for the
749 Koponen Homestead Trail project; Neel said that his jury duty and the new accounting system caused
750 delays.

ORTAB Election

756
757

758 **Motion:**

759 Mike Sirofchuk nominated Jeff Budd to be the ORTAB chair person. Mickey Todd seconded.

760

761 **Vote:** (7 yea, 0 nay) Motion Passed

762

763 Jeff Budd is the ORTAB chairperson for the next two years.

764

765

766

-Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm-