

# TRAIL MANAGEMENT

---

## 1. GOALS

**A. Public Use Opportunities.** Ensure continued opportunities for public use of important recreation, public access and historic trails of regional and statewide significance.

**B. Local Trails.** Assist in establishing local trail systems that provide access to community recreation areas.

**C. Trail Corridors.** Protect or establish trail corridors to meet projected future use requirements as well as protecting current use.

## 2. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

**A. Special Trail Corridors.** These are trails that require unusual widths or management practices because of historical significance or unique values. Management guidelines should be developed for such trails on a case-by-case basis. As a general policy special trails will be protected by publicly-owned corridors. These corridors will generally be wider than the 100 foot minimum trail buffer width established for trails of regional or statewide significance in C below.

**The Iditarod Trail** Those portions of the Iditarod Trail in state and borough ownership will be protected by a public ownership corridor 1000 feet wide (500 feet each side of the centerline). This width allows flexibility to reroute the trails within the corridor, combine motorized and non-motorized uses on separate trails within the corridor, and include a visual and sound buffer between the recreation corridor uses and adjacent uses. To minimize potential land use conflicts or the impact of the trail's existence on adjacent land uses, the corridor width may be expanded or reduced. These width adjustments, as well as rerouting of the trail corridor, may be permitted in specific instances with the consultation of the Alaska Division of Parks. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Trail Committee shall also be consulted if rerouting the trail corridor is proposed. The trail corridor width may be reduced to a minimum total width of 400 feet where the adjacent land use would not adversely affect the trail experience. Such adjacent uses might include farming, grazing, personal use or commercial timber harvesting, habitat enhancement, or similar low intensity uses. A corridor wider than 1000 feet may also be desirable in certain instances to incorporate high quality adjacent land features and scenery or

where adjacent land use such as high density residential, industrial, or commercial uses would adversely affect the trail. No permanent structures or equipment should be placed within the trail corridor if they could adversely affect the trail experience. Where necessary, trail crossings may be permitted to allow access to lands on both sides of the trail. Crossings should be limited to a few discrete areas rather than scattered crossings many places along the trail.

**B. Neighborhood and Community Trails.** Local trails which are not of regional or statewide significance will be identified and protected through management plans or disposal design under guidelines recommended in the Department's subdivision design manual. The following criteria should be used to determine whether a local trail should be protected by easement or public ownership:

1. If the trail is of regional or statewide importance or connects to a public open space system, it will be kept in public ownership.
2. If the trail is to be used almost entirely by residents of a subdivision, but it provides more than just pedestrian access, for example, if it provides a multiple-use greenbelt for jogging, biking, etc., it should be dedicated to the public or local government.
3. If the objective is to provide local pedestrian access that is not part of an integrated neighborhood or community trail system, an easement may be used. This would typically occur when the purpose is to establish access between two lots in order to improve pedestrian circulation within a subdivision where a greenbelt and neighborhood trail system does not provide adequate access or where it is impractical to establish such an integrated trail system.
4. In cases of land disposal projects other than subdivisions — for example land opened to homesteading — either a publicly owned buffer or an easement will be used to protect designated trails. If a trail has the characteristics described in 1 or 2 above, it will be retained in public ownership. If it has the characteristics described in 3, an easement will be reserved.

**C. Standard Trail Corridor of Regional or Statewide Significance.** This category includes the majority of trails on state land that will be identified in area or management plans. These trails generally provide foot, dogsled, horse and sometimes vehicle access for a variety of purposes.

Most have a history of public use and can be expected to see increased use as the state's population increases. The following guidelines are intended to insure consistent management practices on such trails throughout the state while allowing some flexibility to tailor management decisions on site specific conditions.

**Trail Buffer Width.** Trails of regional or statewide significance on state land shall be protected by publicly-owned corridors that have a **minimum** width of 100 feet (50 feet each side of centerline). This buffer should be designed to protect the quality of the experience of the user and to minimize negative effects such as noise or dust from adjacent land uses. Buffer widths may be increased to minimize land use and ownership conflicts, to protect the privacy of adjacent landowners, to separate motorized from non-motorized uses, to allow future siting of public facilities, to allow flexibility for rerouting, or to adopt a trail to specific public uses or aesthetic or environmental concerns. Buffer widths may vary along the length of a trail because of the above considerations. The width of a buffer on any portion of a trail should also be based on the management intent for adjacent public land as expressed through applicable land use plans. However, in no case should the width of the buffer be less than 100 feet. Trail buffers should be designed in consultation with affected divisions of DNR, ADF&G, DOT/PF and local trail committees. Activity areas of 10-40 acres may be identified along trails for camping areas, rest areas, etc.

**D. Identification of Trails.** Prior to lease or disposal of public lands, trails that merit consideration for protection by one of the methods described in 2A through 2C above should be identified. When identifying trails, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough trails plan (*Comprehensive Development Plan — Trails*, Mat-Su Borough, July 1984), the *Susitna Basin Land Use/Recreation Atlas* (DNR/USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1980) and *Alaska's Existing Trail System* (Div. of Technical Services, ADNR, 1984) should be consulted. The Division of Land and Water Management will be the lead agency for identification of trails not included in these documents and will consult with the other divisions of DNR, DOT/PF and ADF&G when identifying trails. In addition, any agency, organization or individual may identify public trails to be considered for protection.

**E. Land Use in Corridors.** To the extent feasible and prudent, land use activities within a trail corridor — for example, permits, leases, timber sales and material sales — will be managed so as to not

adversely affect trail use or the aesthetic character of the trail. This does not preclude trail crossings or rerouting of trails as described below.

**F. Rerouting Trails.** Rerouting of trails for a short distance may be permitted to minimize land use conflicts or to facilitate use of a trail if alternate routes provide opportunities similar to the original. If trails are rerouted, provision should be made for construction of new trail segments if warranted by type of use. Rerouting trails should be done in consultation with affected Divisions of DNR, DOT/PF, ADF&G and local trail committees. Historic trails which follow well-established routes should not be rerouted unless necessary to maintain trail use.

**G. Trail Crossings.** When it is necessary for powerlines, pipelines or roads to cross trail corridors, crossings should be at 90 angles when feasible. An exception is when a trail corridor is deliberately combined with a public utility or transportation corridor. Where feasible, vegetative screening should be preserved when a utility crosses a trail corridor.

**H. Other Guidelines Affecting Trail Management.** A number of other guidelines may affect trail management. For details of these guidelines, see the following sections of this chapter:

- Agriculture
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Forestry
- Recreation
- Settlement
- Subsurface Resources and Materials
- Transportation
- Lakeshore Management
- Public Access
- Stream Corridors
- Wetlands Management