

# **Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB)**

## **2019 Annual Meeting Minutes**

### **January 22, 2019/Day One**

#### **ORTAB Members Present:**

Jeff Budd, Chair: Represents Southeast Alaska / Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Mike Rearden: Represents Western / Southwest Alaska, Diversified Trail Users  
Meghan McClain: Represents Anchorage / Motorized Trail Users  
Mickey Todd: Represents Kenia Area/ Represents Motorized Trail Users  
Seth Adams: Represents Fairbanks Area /Northern Area, Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Mike Sirofchuck: Represents Kodiak / Southwest/Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Libby Kugel: Represents Anchorage/ Non-Motorized Trail Users

#### **ORTAB Member Not Present:**

Sally Andersen: Represents Diversified Trail Users

#### **Present for Presentation:**

Brenda Hewitt: Division of Community and Regional Affairs

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

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  
Elise Johnston: DPOR, Chugach Administrative Assistant taking Minutes  
Ethan Tyler: DPOR, Director  
Samantha Hudson: DPOR, Administrative Assistant I  
Melissa Richie: DPOR, Admin Operations Manager II

#### **Present for questions on related DPOR grant request:**

Joe Hall: DPOR, Chugach State Park

#### **Public Present:**

Lee Hart from Valdez Adventure Alliance  
Meg Pritchett from Alaska Trails Alliance  
Mike Sturm from Homer Wilderness Leaders

#### **On the Phone:**

Lynn Brandon from Sitka Trail Works  
Bill Holt from Tsalteshi Trails

Kyle Kelly from Girdwood Trails Committee  
Joel Cooper from Kachemak Heritage Land Trust  
Cody Johnson from VMBaH  
Geoff Orth from Stray Dog Inc.  
Ben Shryock from DPOR, Kodiak State Park  
Rys Miranda from DPOR, Design and Construction  
Karl Ashenfelter from the Native Village of White Mountain  
Brian Charlton from Fairbanks North Star Borough

*Meeting called to order 8:59am*

Darcy Harris facilitated introductions and thanked everyone for coming and participating in the discussion of the projects. She asked if cell phones could be put on vibrate for the meeting. Introduced Elise Johnston who was taking minutes and letting everyone know there's a tape recorder. Darcy introduced Jean Ayers who provided the Safety Minute, informing those present of exits and procedures in case of fire or earthquake, including where to muster in the parking lot. Darcy added other information about parking and building logistics.

Jean then introduced Brenda Hewitt, a Local Government Specialist from the Division of Community & Regional Affairs, who would conduct an informative presentation applicable to government boards. ORTAB members, DPOR staff and the public who were present introduced themselves to Brenda Hewitt.

Brenda gave a presentation on topics including ethics for government-appointed boards, improper gifts, ex-parte contact, conflicts of interest, the Open Meetings Act, executive sessions, role of the chair, Parliamentary Procedure and types of motions.

After Q & A, everyone thanked Brenda, and Darcy called for a board election. Jeff Budd had served as the Board's Chair but is done with his term.

*Mike Rearden moved that Mike Sirofchuck become the new Chair; Seth Adams second it. Motion was called for vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.*

*Mike Sirofchuck moved that Mike Rearden become the new Co-Chair; Mickey Todd second it. Motion was called for vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.*

As the new Chair, Mike Sirofchuck stated that public comments are allowed when discussing specific grants but only when ORTAB members asked a direct question. Also, the ORTAB members may change their scoring based on discussion. Mike also stated

that if anyone on the board feels they have a conflict of interest to please let the board members know.

Jean Ayers then presented background about the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act and grant program. Jean let the board members know that this year there is enough money to fund each application as requested with \$1.5 million available, but only \$937,106 in requests. ORTAB members asked what happens to the “leftover” money and Jean let them know it will be rolled forward into a future grant round that will open later this year when she has an approximation of 2019 LWCF apportionment. Jean stated it’s hard to allocate all the available money because the grant program requires a 50/50 match which is hard for smaller communities to come up with.

Below are ORTAB’s recommendations in ranked order (for the locals). The State of Alaska project was also recommended for funding at its requested amount, but it does not compete against local projects:

Municipality of Anchorage: Lyons Parks \$168,640

City & Borough of Wrangell: Angerman Park \$71,000

Haines Borough: Tlingit Park Upgrade & Harbor Connection \$216,312

Ketchikan Gateway Borough: Dudley Field: Restrooms & Storage \$136,000

Metlakatla Indian Community: Cedars 3: Scout Lake Connector Trail \$136,000

Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation: 6 Public Use Cabins \$230,000

*Jeff Budd moved to approve the LWCF budget as written and Mickey Todd seconded it.*

Discussion: ORTAB members wondered whether some of the non-profit RTP applicants could apply for LWCF, but worried about the high match ratio. Or, whether some of the non-profit projects could be sponsored by a municipality to be eligible to apply. ORTAB members reiterated that once a piece of land becomes LWCF it is protected for public outdoor recreation forever. Jean agreed and stated that the sponsor (typically a city or borough) still retains ownership of that land but also takes on responsibility to maintain compliance of the federal requirements. One member noted that some of the applications lacked detail of the project and Jean let the ORTAB members know she will pass that on to the applicants.

Motion was called to vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed

*A break was taken at 10:03am*

Steve Neel gave a financial overview for available FY 2019 RTP project funding. He let the ORTAB members know that the Federal government shutdown does not affect this office of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). They are not furloughed but

can't approve budgets and allow crews to work past the shutdown date. Steve stated that the Fixing America's Surface Transportation or "FAST Act" supplied \$1.5 million for FY19. That is the same amount that has been allocated since 2009 and will be through FY20. State Department of Transportation (DOT&PF) gave a spending obligation limitation of roughly \$1.3 million dollars. Steve told the ORTAB members that he looked in the federal system to see how much money the State of Alaska has unobligated and there is over \$3.5 million unspent. This is due to projects not spending their total amounts or projects getting rescinded or de-obligated. ORTAB members inquired how to get authority to spend this unobligated amount. Steve stated that the authority to spend over the \$1.3 million obligated amount up to \$1.5 million comes from state DOT and then to spend over the \$1.5 million must be in the Governor's budget and get legislative authority.

Steve noted that 2 projects from FY 18 that were approved by FHWA are coming out of the FY 19 funds. Steve stated that the FHWA individual he has been working with since 2007 has retired and they don't have that position filled yet. Also since the Fast Act ends next year Steve is not sure if RTP will exist after 2020 but haven't heard anything about it from Congress.

An ORTAB member asked about where RTP stands with the Buy-America Act. The Buy America Act was discussed in more detail for the new ORTAB members. The Act has been in place since 1982 to protect the steel industry and requires the U.S. government to only buy U.S. made steel. There had been a waiver program to allow items over \$2,500 with steel parts from different countries to be purchased for a variety of reasons. RTP had a couple of those waivers in the past but with the current administration the waiver program ended in 2016. Discussion continued about obtaining a certificate from companies stating the steel is all-American to be able to buy certain items for RTP projects such as snowmobiles, graters, ATVs, etc.

Steve clarified that there is a federally required ratio of funding of 30% motorized project, 30% non-motorized projects and 40% diversified projects. Steve said that all RTP projects through FY15 are completed, only one from FY16 is still open, most of FY17 is completed and most of FY18 is done. The Russian Jack single track project from last year was rescinded because FHWA believed it was not ready to be funded and that's the first time that has happened. Those funds go back into the unobligated pool that isn't immediately accessible because it ultimately needs to be approved by the legislature. Darcy stated that they were able to spend over the DOT&PF limit of \$1.3 million up to the legislative limit of \$1.5 million last year because they presented DOT with projects that were vetted, and DOT&PF approved them. ORTAB members asked if there was a possibility of that happening again this year. Darcy stated that they were going to try but DOT&PF has a new director along with the State Parks having a new director, so they

must wait and see. Also, if they are approved to get more than the \$1.3 million, that takes money from somewhere else, so DOT&PF might not be able to do that again this year.

ORTAB members discussed how the board should view or consider applicants that have had projects rescinded. Steve answered that most projects leave a little grant money unspent, but if there is an applicant that leaves a big chunk of money or has a history of spending outside of the scope that is something to look at. Darcy commented that FHWA and the Trails Program are required to do risk assessments on applicants, which includes past performance.

*Joe Hall joined the meeting*

Darcy Harris gave a PowerPoint presentation including pictures of trail projects that had been developed from the Recreational Trails Program all over Alaska in past years.

*A break was taken at 11:17am*

ORTAB members confirmed that they will talk about some projects before lunch and that they can change their scores at any point of the process. They started with projects for Chugach State Park, and the one affiliated with Joe Hall since he was present in the room at that time.

*Projects were discussed in order of people present in the room, on the phone and then moving down the spreadsheet from DPOR to non-state projects.*

#### **1.) Eklutna Lakeside Trail Improvements**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Chugach

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$56,251.00/\$6,299.00

**Final Score:** 84/100

#### **Project Discussion:**

There was a question about the application not having an ACC letter of approval and Joe Hall clarified that since the ACC program is run by the Chugach State Park office, it's like giving themselves approval. There was discussion about how this project would help decrease vandalism, which they believe with cabin repairs and adding of boardwalks to muddy parts of the trail that it would hopefully prevent people from being enticed to write on the walls in the cabin and using different man-made paths around the muddy parts. There was a question about needing 37.5 hours to hire a crew when in other DPOR projects they needed far less. Joe Hall stated his answer was conservative: it usually takes over a week to

pick people, interview them and go through the hiring process. There was discussion about the renting of an ATV and whether the state parks had any. Joe Hall affirmed they didn't, and that one had just been recently stolen. Also, an ATV can't be bought due to the Buy-America Act so the most practical route would be to rent one.

## **2.) Hillside Trail Network Improvements**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Chugach

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$53,572.00/\$6,008.00

**Final Score:** 87/100

### **Project Discussion:**

Libby Kugel stated that she might have a conflict of interest since she is on the board for Alaska Trails and this application involves a contract with them. The other ORTAB members asked if Libby will get a direct financial benefit from that contract and she stated she would not. All board members agreed that since she doesn't get any financial gain and can be objective that Libby can vote. The board appreciated that the application was in one complete package instead of having to flip back and forth. Darcy stated that they made it part of the application process a couple years ago. There was an observation about the DPOR applications not being as descriptive as the non-profit applications and wanting to see more budget narrative. Members discussed how the past grants that Joe worked on have gone. Steve Neel let the board members know that one project from FY18 had an accounting issue at the federal level but didn't have anything to do with Joe or the current admin of that office.

**Suggestion:** For State Parks, it would be good to invest in trail counters because they can provide great information. The ORTAB members like to see definite numbers rather than estimates.

## **3.) South Fork Rim Trail**

**Applicant:** Alaska Trails

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$59,175.00/\$6,650.00

**Final Score:** 89/100

### **Project Discussion:**

Libby Kugel stated again that she may have a conflict of interest. All ORTAB members agreed that it was already addressed, and they don't believe she has a conflict of interest. ORTAB members commented that they like to see a partnership between the state and non-profits and asked if the one between

Chugach State Park and Alaska Trails will become more frequent. Joe Hall commented that he would like it to be more frequent so they can get more work done and makes operations run more smoothly. ORTAB members asked about budget issues with Alaska Trails in the past. Steve Neel commented that their last project was Mirror Lake and was completed to the penny and they have gotten much better with timeliness.

*Mickey Todd moved to adjourn for lunch and Meghan McClain seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

### **Break for lunch- 12:00pm- 1:00pm**

The ORTAB meeting reconvened after lunch by thanking Jeff Budd for all his work as Chair in the past years. Ethan Tyler joined the meeting and introduced himself as the DPOR Director and thanked the board for all their hard work. Ethan stated that the new administration's priorities are the same ones that he has which is moving the Division of Parks into a more self-sustainable model. He described that this is done by making fee adjustments around the state and introducing fee stations in places they weren't before. The public hasn't had a negative response and understands that this helps maintain the parks. Ethan stated that the other step that he has been working towards is revenue-generating infrastructure. DPOR received \$300,000 in capital appropriation last year which is being utilized as match or supplement in the RTP grant applications to build Public Use Cabins (PUC). Ethan believed that PUCs are great investments because the payoff time is 3-5 years. DPOR also got a \$300,000 capital appropriation for electronic fee stations which can increase revenue at a given spot by 30-50%. This also helps with staff safety issues of dealing with cash rather than credit cards. Ethan let the board members know that he is stepping out of his position as the Director as of mid-February and the new Director will be Ricky Gease. Ethan stated that his intent in the upcoming weeks is to sign off on the recommendations the ORTAB members make and adjust as needed. Ethan and the ORTAB members noted there are a lot of PUC applications and though Ethan is economically driven with business development, he also wants to make sure there are more easily accessible trails which he believes the PUCs help with. Ethan stated that he hoped these electronic fee stations and PUCs would help DPOR become self-sustaining in 3 + years so we wouldn't need the state's general funds.

*Ethan Tyler leaves the meeting*

Mike Sirofchuck opened the floor for public comments and went over the rules: that this time is just for general comments and not about specific projects.

Lee Hart with Valdez Adventure Alliance (who attended the meeting in person) commented that she is working on going to different communities around the state to talk about outdoor recreation being an economic driver. She stated she would like some feedback about current applications for projects that are under the wing of Valdez Adventure Alliance.

Lynn Brandon from Sitka Trail Works (present via phone) thanked the ORTAB members for providing feedback about last year's application. She also asked if the ORTAB members could get to her project before the end of the day because she had to leave for a scheduled emergency.

#### **4.) Shoup Bay to Gold Creek Rebuild**

**Applicant:** Levitation 49

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$69,548.00/\$7,728.00

**Final Score:** 76/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB member Seth Adams stated that he prepared this grant and has a conflict of interest, so he did not score the project and it will be averaged by 7 instead of 8. Mike Sirofchuck stated that Seth can only comment on the project when asked a direct question like the other applicants. Lee Hart, who was present, stated that this is their third RTP grant they have applied for. They had one a couple years ago that they learned a lot from and learned from the mistakes made. ORTAB members asked Steve Neel if he had any comments. Steve stated that the grant that was funded in FY17 had bad reporting, came in two days before the cutoff date, had items charged that weren't on the budget, a lot of issues with payroll and they left \$11,000 on the grant when it closed. That said, this grant isn't like that one. They have a contractor which would alleviate the problems they had with the first grant and there are not multiple parts. Discussion occurred about needing three bids but decided they didn't since they have a contractor. There was no environmental information, which is required due to a stipulation in the programmatic agreement between State of Alaska and FHWA. An environmental review can be added if the board recommends the project.

#### **5.) Sea Lion Cover Trail Repair**

**Applicant:** Sitka Trail Works

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$34,484.00/\$3,834.00

**Final Score:** 68/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB members asked for an estimate of local people using the trail, and Lynn Brandon (via phone) estimated about 426 people. They don't have a counter and it is dependent on the weather but think they could get about 20 people per day because it's an easy flat hike. ORTAB questioned about budgeting two Executive Director lines from Sitka Trail Works and Trail Mix. Lynn stated that Trail Mix has their Executive Director working any time they are part of a project, and then Lynn, who is an Executive Director for Sitka Trail Works, will also be there. Lynn asserted that only 10% of her time is in the budget; the rest will be charged in membership since they are not government funded. Concerns were aired about only having 10 contingency days for weather. ORTAB concurred that they like the partnership between non-profit, state and local boat company, but also worried that this project financially benefits the commercial operator of the boat.

#### **6.) HOWL Trail Days**

**Applicants:** Homer Wilderness Leaders (HOWL)

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$34,412.00/\$3,823.00

**Final Score:** 93/100

#### **Projects Discussion:**

ORTAB lauded the detailed application and liked that it involved kids. The board thought the budget narrative was thorough and asked how HOWL prioritized the trails to work on. Mike Sturm (present in the room) replied that he worked with the State Park Rangers located in Homer and talked about what trails needed the most work along with which ones the youth of HOWL can help with. Darcy commented that Mike worked a lot with her and Steve on the application which she and the ORTAB members appreciated. Commended Mike for working with youth on getting their fire arms certificate and taking them on a small game hunt.

**Suggestion:** Send application as one complete file instead of many different files.

*A break was taken at 2:06pm*

#### **7.) White Mountain Trail**

**Applicant:** Native Village of White Mountain

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$100,000.00/\$11,111.00

**Final Score:** 76/100

#### **Project Discussion:**

ORTAB members thought it was a good project and the trails are well used. The budget of the application was not in the format required by FHWA and would

need significant work. Karl did reach out to Darcy and Steve for help with the application which ORTAB members liked to hear and thought the application had good photos. ORTAB had concerns about technology issues and how that would work with accounting and billings since detail is needed for such a high amount. ORTAB was also concerned with the amount of money for only a 1.1-mile trail with 200 people in the village. Discussion included the reimbursement process and making sure money is reimbursed to the state, especially with a new FHWA person.

**Suggestion:** Budget needs to be in format required and more description on the use of limestone.

#### **8.) Trail Lighting Extension**

**Applicant:** Tsalteshi Trails

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$61,798.00/\$6,867.00

**Final Score:** 97/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB discussed not seeing an Environmental Review Checklist (ERC) in the application packet and that an ERC is needed if the project is recommended due to a stipulation in the programmatic agreement. Bill Holt (via phone) wasn't aware of it and didn't see it when looking at the agreement. Darcy let Bill know that lighting is in stipulation 2.9 and anything in stipulations 2 or 3 needs an environmental review. ORTAB members thought the application was very well done and like multiple aspects of it. They thanked Bill for continuing to write excellent applications and believe he will provide an ERC if the project is recommended for funding.

#### **9.) Iditarod Trail Phase 1 Section 2**

**Applicant:** Girdwood Trail Committee

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$74,871.00/\$8,833.00

**Final Score:** 95/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB inquired about not having a letter from a youth group, but applicant stated a youth group works with them. Kyle Kelly (via phone) said they have a yearly contract with the Student Conservation Association to do projects all over the valley. ORTAB member told Kyle to make sure he has a letter from them in the application. Also asked for clarification if this was being paid through the RTP grant or if that was a part of the project paid separately. Kyle replied that

they are funding that separately through the Local Service Tax Fund and use most of the RTP grant to fund towards the contractor to provide gravel. Would like to have seen a map of the whole Iditarod National Historic Trail. Steve Neel commented that they finished their FY18 grant and are very thorough and efficient.

#### **10.) Poopdeck Platt Community Trail**

**Applicant:** Kachemak Heritage Land Trust

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$51,372.00/\$5,708.00

**Final Score:** 92/100

**Project Discussion:**

Questions arose about the ADA accessible trail from Pioneer Street to Poopdeck Street, since ORTAB couldn't distinguish it on the map. Joel Cooper (via phone) explained that between their property and the city's property there is a .31-mile trail that is not ADA accessible. However, it connects with ADA accessible parts, and they want to make it all ADA accessible. ORTAB questioned whether this project has "bang for the buck" since it's only .31 but liked that it was ADA accessible and would allow people to get to different parts of the town. Also commented that a lot of people (visitors and residents) struggle with mobility issues and could benefit from the project. ORTAB liked that it was connecting to other pieces of trails, even though this would be a short trail.

#### **11.) GPRA Phase III Downhill Trail**

**Applicant:** Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers (VMBaH)

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$29,192.00/\$3,244.00

**Final Score:** 88/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB members debated whether they had an application last year from this applicant and believed they had one a couple years ago. ORTAB liked the project and that it helps alleviate collisions and traffic. Also appreciated that VMBaH had a letter from the Student Conservation Association (SCA). Thought the Mat-Su is a good example of what can happen when you focus on developing outdoor recreation including GPRA which has become increasingly popular over the last couple of years.

**Suggestion:** Next time put the application in one single document which helps the ORTAB members review it.

## **12.) Woody Island Trails Cabin**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Kodiak

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$87,945.00/\$10,260.000

**Final Score:** 77/100

### **Project Discussion:**

Mike Sirofchuck stated that he's on the State Parks Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) for Kodiak. Other ORTAB members decided that since Mike would have no financial gain, he would not have a conflict of interest. The Board asked whether Kodiak has a personal watercraft ban like Kachemak Bay does, since the application mentioned motorized boats. Ben Shryock (via phone) answered that there is not a ban in the general state waters of Kodiak, and the waters are open to personal watercraft which can be used to access this site. ORTAB discussed 3 different DPOR cabin projects from 3 different parts of the state? which had the same template and if staff had worked together on them. Ben stated that he didn't know details about the other projects, just heard about them and since they are such a small office and not familiar with doing big contracting jobs such as cabins they would be using the help of DPOR Design & Construction (D&C). Rys Miranda, who was present on the phone, was asked how D&C came up with the estimate and why there is 91 hours of pre-construction. Rys replied that they drew estimates from historical data of past project and past bids. Estimates change based on location and any specific or unique elements. Since Kodiak has no road access, crew must access the site by boat. The 91 hours of preconstruction includes environmental work, and though the contractor may design the cabin, D&C does everything else. Rys explained that although the cabin kits come from same company, the Fairbanks cabin project costs less than the others, and the projects can't really be compared due to different circumstances. ORTAB questioned why one of the tasks had 170 hours of construction but had a contractor. Rys replied that during construction his staff has oversight of the project and those are the hours for his staff to ensure things are built correctly. Discussion ensued on the difference between cabins that are contracted out and ones that are built by force account labor. Rys replied that there is oversight with contractors, but no oversight needed on force account projects since it's already built in.

## **13.) Shuyak Trail Improvements**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Kodiak

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$11,764.00/\$1,322.00

**Final Score:** 91/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB member from Kodiak commented that he has hiked the trail and it is very easy to get turned around, and the trails aren't really constructed. ORTAB members asked when the PUC was built and Ben answered that it was built in the 1980's and needs improvements. ORTAB inquired about needing a volunteer for a month which is a big commitment, and asked Ben if he has found anyone. Ben answered that he's not worried about finding a volunteer because they have one already committed and one that is a maybe but also have other applications. He believes it's a project that attracts people who want to volunteer. He dismissed the worry about needing a boat or plane to access the trail. It isn't a problem since a lot of people come from Homer. Also, this trail has a wide variety of users going out kayaking, fishing, and hunting.

*A break was taken at 3:42pm*

**14.) Isberg East-West Multi-Use Trail**

**Applicant:** Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB)

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$99,356.00/\$11,039.00

**Final Score:** 92/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB couldn't tell whether the applicant had obtained wetlands and fish habitat permission. Brian Charlton (via phone) stated they don't because they usually don't request permission until after the project is awarded. FNSB has informed Fish and Game that they will need a permit and their design meets specification. FNSB also checked with USACE, and since the site is less than an acre it meets nationwide permit. If that all passes, Brian stated that they are shovel ready. ORTAB noted that this was the best detailed timeline they have seen and FNSB did a good job on the application. ORTAB worried about the amount of money for a 1.5-mile trail but one member who lives in Fairbanks says it's an upland trail that as of now just ends, and this project will connect it to other trail heads. Steve Neel mentioned that FNSB needs to work on not coming up on the inactive list with FHWA and to have a billing ready in 8-9 months from when FHWA approves the project. Steve warned that new FHWA people were coming down on the inactive list and if projects become inactive, they will de-obligate the money and not give a second chance.

ORTAB members briefly discussed other projects but decided to wait until the following day to ask applicants questions.

*Mickey Todd moved to end for the day. Seth Adams seconded it.  
Motion called to vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.*

## **January 23, 2019/Day Two**

### **ORTAB Members Present:**

Jeff Budd: Represents Southeast Alaska / Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Mike Rearden Co-Chair: Represents Western / Southwest Alaska, Diversified Trail Users  
Meghan McClain: Represents Anchorage / Motorized Trail Users  
Mickey Todd: Represents Kenia Area/ Represents Motorized Trail Users  
Seth Adams: Represents Fairbanks Area /Northern Area, Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Mike Sirofchuck, Chair: Represents Kodiak / Southwest/Non-Motorized Trail Users  
Libby Kugel: Represents Anchorage/ Non-Motorized Trail Users

### **ORTAB Member Not Present:**

Sally Andersen: Represents Haines/ Diversified Trail Users

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

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  
Elise Johnston: DPOR, Chugach Administrative Assistant taking Minutes  
Samantha Hudson: DPOR, Administrative Assistant I  
Rys Miranda: Chief/Engineer/Architect IV for Design and Construction  
Robert (Mat) Stephens: Publication Specialist I  
Shawna Popovici: Natural Resource Manager II

### **On the phone:**

Alison Eskelin: DPOR, Wood-Tikchik Park Ranger I  
Meredith Pochardt: Takshanuk Watershed Council  
Karl Ashenfelter: Native Village of White Mountain

*Meeting called to order at 8:03am*

Darcy Harris welcomed everyone to the meeting and facilitated introductions between Lydia Harvey and the ORTAB members since Lydia handled travel arrangements. Darcy asked the members to turn in their travel receipts. Mike Sirofchuck reminded everyone to silence their phones, that scores can be changed at any time, and to declare any conflict of interest.

*Projects were discussed in order of people present in person, on the phone and then moving down the spreadsheet from DPOR to non-state projects.*

**15.) 2019 Chugach State Park Video Trail Guides**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Interpretation and Education

**Category:** Safety and Education

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$36,112.35/\$4,109.40

**Final Score:** 86/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB noted that it is an option to fund Safety and Education projects. Members asked why the last grant, from 2017, still has a balance of \$31,000, and if awarded funds again this year would it be spent wisely. Rys Miranda replied that in the past year they have had personnel and staffing issues. The Natural Resource Manager and Specialist positions became vacant. D&C wasn't able to fill the Manager position until recently and the other position is still vacant. That shifted their resources to higher priority projects but now with being more fully staffed they can work at full capacity again. FY17 grant projects have been filmed; they just haven't been edited and put together. ORTAB wondered if D&C could spend all the money from the last grant. Mat and Rys answered that they probably won't be able to exhaust all of it since there was a reduction in staff. Asked if last grant is completed this summer when would the current grant be completed. Mat answered that he would work on these grants full time and get this grant completed by the end of this year since it is located in Anchorage. Darcy and Steve let Mat know that all Safety and Education projects must be completed at the end of the federal fiscal year, which is September. Steve explained that their last grant didn't have to be completed in that fiscal year because the now-retired FHWA person didn't enforce Safety and Education projects completion dates, whereas the current staff are. Rys stated that Mat has been relieved of his other duties and this grant wouldn't be filmed until June so from February until June he can work on the past grant and then from June to September can work solely on this grant. Asked if they have all the equipment needed, Mat replied that they still have a camera from the last grant along with using a drone from Mining Land and Water. Asked where the cost is accrued from on this project, Mat answered that most of the cost comes from editing to include narration rather than just a video of the trail. ORTAB believed it would be a good resource to promote not only the trails but safety on the trails.

**16.) Lynx Creek PUC**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Wood-Tikchik

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$88,808.00/\$10,513.00

**Final Score:** 56/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB members noted that the grant wasn't very competitive with the other grants. Alison Eskelin (via phone) apologized for inexperience with grant writing and said she was out of the office the weeks prior to the deadline. ORTAB members were concerned about vandalism and maintaining the cabin because many had seen remote cabins that have been wrecked. Alison replied that she's the only staff person in the area but she has multiple watercraft and a plane that she can use to maintain the cabin along with volunteers and a weeklong visit from a maintenance worker every year. Also, she believed that vandalism is always a concern but the community is very excited by this project and think "people would police people" and take good care of it. The board was concerned about how much access there really is by boat and how many people would realistically be able to get to the cabin. Alison replied that it's a 45-minute to an hour boat ride and doesn't believe access is too big of an issue because it's a popular area to fish and hunt. She thinks it would be used every weekend because there is a structure that can be utilized which would draw more people where right now there is only tent camping. Asked why it would take two weeks to design the cabin if it comes from a kit, Rys Miranda replied that though it is a kit cabin they're not stamp sealed drawings, there is a process the kit contractor has to go through with a consultant and the state which takes about 2 weeks. Asked if there is winter use expected for this cabin and if so how would it be heated, Alison answered she would expect winter use since there is a lot of snowmobile use and she could maintain it in the winter since she has a snowmobile herself. Also, she wouldn't know exactly what would be used to heat the cabin but guessing a wood or drip stove that has been used in other PUCs. ORTAB members like the project idea of a network of cabins out in Wood-Tikchik.

**17.) China Poot Trail**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Kenai

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$75,000.00/\$8,333.00

**Final Score:** 89/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB determined trail location and route was from China Poot to Jewel Lake. Members thought it was a very thorough proposal, photos were great, well-documented and one of the best applications they have seen from the state. ORTAB noted that Kenai DPOR had three grants approved last year and thought they were going to see another phase from one of those projects. Figured out that

it was still open and that's why there isn't an application for it this year. Wasn't clear about new stream channel forming from the lake that floods the trail but didn't describe how they were going to plan for the trail not to wash out. Gussed this project was meaning to reroute the trail away from that section.

**18.) Sawmill Bay PUC**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Kenai

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$79,257.00/\$9,900.00

**Final Score:** 61/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB raised the same issues they had with the other DPOR Public Use Cabin applications. Identified the location of this project in Valdez, which is a part of Kenai DPOR. Felt the budget wasn't descriptive and was high. Already two cabins there but hard to access so this project would be in the next Bay over and be easily accessed by motorized boats. Not sure who would benefit from the revenue since the State Parks don't manage the area, it's just on state land.

**19.) Take in the Sights- Recreational Enhancement of Jones Point, Haines, Alaska**

**Applicant:** Takshanuk Watershed Council

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$33,960.00/\$7,430.00

**Final Score:** 86/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB observed that applicant had an FY 16 grant and that they have high administrative costs but didn't have any problems with timeline and finished the grant. Members discussed having an environmental review and noted there was one in the application. ORTAB would like a bigger locator map to see exactly where the project is, as some members didn't know where Jones Point is in Haines. Thought at first it was just a picnic area but after further discussion, ORTAB realized it's a launching point for a network of trails. Agreed it was a good project.

**20.) Reed Lakes**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Mat-Su

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,000.00/\$11,819.00

**Final Score:** 88/100

**Project Discussion:**

Members noted that this application is Phase III and wondered how Phase I and II went but didn't see it on the list for the past two years. Since they didn't see phase I or II mentioned in the application, ORTAB guessed a new person had written the grant this year and wasn't aware of past projects. ORTAB liked that this application considered either moving the boulder field or rerouting the trail around it because it can be dangerous. ORTAB appreciated that DPOR would designate camp areas because people camp in the middle of the trail since there is not much flat area. Well thought-out project with a well-written, concise application.

### **21.) Rhein Lake Loop**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Mat-Su

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$49,977.00/\$5,555.00

**Final Score:** 83/100

#### **Project Discussion:**

ORTAB couldn't tell where this project was because they couldn't read the maps -- perhaps due to the field offices needing updated software. ORTAB questioned why DPOR needed 6 weeks of preparation time and didn't think the start date of February 1<sup>st</sup> was reasonable. Commented that this area gets a lot of use and is easily accessible since it's centrally located in between Anchorage and Talkeetna. When asked why a Park Specialist would be paid for by the grant and not by the state, Darcy answered that the position could be seasonal, and project based. ORTAB liked the project idea but didn't think the application was well written.

*A break was taken at 9:44am*

### **22.) Olnes Pond ATV Trail**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Northern

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$50,261.00/\$5,585.00

**Final Score:** 95/100

#### **Project Discussion:**

ORTAB concurred that this is a great ATV trail, even for beginner riders and children. Applicant completed their big grant from FY17 for \$140,000 with good grant reporting. Discussion ensued about this project being Phase III to finish up some infrastructure. Members noted that this trail has great access, which helps people get out who otherwise couldn't.

**23.) Mastodon Trail Cabin**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Northern

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$48,411.00/\$5,377.00

**Final Score:** 95/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB liked that this project would be built by the Folk School which is a small non-profit that teaches people how to build a cabin. Discussed that the cabin would be built in Pioneer Park and people would sled out to the destination. ORTAB members thought this was a great project with a cool opportunity by using the Folk School but didn't see a letter of support from them. They noted that the budget was descriptive, down to the penny, and that this project correlates with the other Mastodon Trail projects. The final phase will be finished by this spring.

**24.) Compeau Trail Cabin**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Northern

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$59,655.00/\$6,628.00

**Final Score:** 89/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB noted that this project is in the motorized category since it's only two miles from the road and non-motorized people will use it too, but Compeau Trail is motorized. The board wondered what the heating source would be in this small cabin. Discussion ensued that it is a smaller grant amount compared to the other cabin grants and that it is being built by force account labor by Parks rather than a contractor.

**25.) Granite Tors Boardwalk Trail Phase II**

**Applicant:** DPOR/ Northern

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$55,906.00/\$6,211.00

**Final Score:** 89/100

**Project Discussion:**

Applicant had a FY17 grant for Phase I and it is completed. ORTAB member who lives in Fairbanks said that he ran the boardwalk and the boards are warped and even come up. Believed this was due to the use of all-weathered wood being spread too far apart and the use of a certain type of screw. ORTAB talked to the Superintendent about it and he let them know that this current grant would help with the problems of the boardwalk by adding supports.

**26.) Setters Cove PUC ADA Access Improvements**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Southeast

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$46,227.00/\$5,119.00

**Final Score:** 94/100

**Project Discussion:**

Applicant has an FY18 grant open but it is not PUC-related. ORTAB realized that the project would increase ADA accessibility but wondered how many people this project will serve since it's in Ketchikan. The board assumed there is a need if they wrote a grant application for it and Ketchikan has a lot of tourism activity in the area. ORTAB appreciated the number of pictures in the application.

**27.) Eagle Beach Loop Trail**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Southeast

**Category:** Non-Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$18,000.00/\$2,000.00

**Final Score:** 74/100

**Project Discussion:**

This is a popular trail, and since it's a little way out of town it is colder and gets more snow. Darcy read a note the Superintendent wrote stating that they believe about 200 visitors used the groomed trails during the last holiday season and many people want events on those trails more frequently. ORTAB noted that this trail isn't the only one for Nordic skiing in Juneau but didn't think the application was very detailed and didn't like that the numbers in the budget were rounded up; they prefer to see exact. They need an Environmental Review and didn't submit one.

**28.) Channel Island Water Trail**

**Applicant:** DPOR/Southeast

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$27,750.00/\$3,000.00

**Final Score:** 66/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB debated the project being in the diversified category since it would mostly be used by motorized boats which not everyone has access to. They determined that the project is in Juneau. ORTAB liked the idea of a water trail but felt the application may have been done close to the deadline since it did not have much detail in the budget or a map showing the trail.

### **29.) Chinook Conservation Park**

**Applicant:** Interior Alaska Land Trust

**Category:** Motorized

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$65,000.00/\$7,137.00

**Final Score:** 79/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB member Seth Adams stated that he prepared this grant and has a conflict of interest, so he didn't score the project and it will be averaged by 7 instead of 8. Mike Sirofchuck stated that Seth can only comment on the project when asked a direct question like the other applicants. Members didn't see any real numbers of users in the application and wondered why it's starting with an ATV trail instead of a trail to preserve the location. Seth stated that the idea is to develop a motorized trail so that there is not a conflict with motorized users on non-motorized trails. Application mentioned a master plan having non-motorized trails and ORTAB wondered if that will be another phase of this project. Seth answered that as of now there are informal trails and they will do the work themselves to develop them into non-motorized trails. The board didn't think the budget was descriptive enough.

### **30.) ERNC Trail Signs**

**Applicant:** Eagle River Nature Center

**Category:** Safety and Education

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$16,800.00/\$1,680.00

**Final Score:** 89/100

**Project Discussion:**

ORTAB noted how inexpensive the signs are and believe that it may be because the applicant already has the design for the signs. Members mentioned that there are many different channels at the beginning of the trail where you can easily get lost. Someone commented that ERNC only applies for an RTP grant when they really need it and did fine on the last grant they had.

### **31.) Upper Winner Creek Trail Improvements**

**Applicant:** Glacier Ranger District

**Category:** Diversified

**Funds Requested/Match:** \$74,710.00/\$8,397.00

**Final Score:** 82/100

**Project Discussion:**

There were concerns raised about budget issues with past grants they have worked on with USDA. All the paperwork goes to New Mexico for billing and then they send the state a bill with no back up which comes from the rangers. This back and

forth caused a time lag where the applicant has been put on the inactive list. This trail connects to the Iditarod trail and extends that trail system. Noted that applicant completed the cultural survey which has held up other projects in the past. ORTAB appreciated that this upper extension would help ease the congestion of the popular trail and create more area for advanced hikers. The board noted that money from this grant would go mostly towards labor; applicant has the material and people.

*Mickey Todd moved to adjourn for lunch. Libby Kugel seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 7-yes and 0-no. Motion passed.

### **Break for lunch from 11:37am -12:45pm**

ORTAB members came back from lunch and the Chair Mike Sirofchuck stated that they had finished scoring individual applications and moved to prioritizing and making sure the projects are in the right category.

The board worked on changing the scoring to include the 3 points given for attending pre-application training. An ORTAB member stated he didn't believe it was fair to give points because not all people can make the training. ORTAB recalled that they agreed at last year's meeting that they would give incentive to attend training to help with preparing the application since very few people had showed up in the past.

There is \$1,512,643.00 allocated from FHWA, Obligation limitation from DOT is \$1,332,654.00 and after 7% of admin allowance of \$106,955.00, the total allocated for projects comes to \$1,225,699.00.

ORTAB recognized that two projects from FY18 which were approved by FHWA but didn't have cultural resource surveys done until after the deadline will be funded from FY19 money. The board acknowledged that projects need to have all paperwork done before submitting to FHWA, but it was hard to find money to pay for cultural resource survey without the grant.

*Mike Rearden moved that the two projects from FY18 come out of the total amount allocated and have \$1,158,302.00 for the FY19 projects to be funded. Mickey Todd seconded.*

Discussion: The 30% non-motorized, 30% motorized and 40% diversified split is required by FHWA but where does the 50/50 split between state and non-state projects

come from? DPOR's practice for about 20 years has split funding between state and non-state projects at about 50/50. The board agreed it's fair to continue this split.

Motion called to vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

ORTAB decided to look at the top ranked motorized projects first and then move onto the other categories and include the Bluff Cabin project from FY18 in the motorized category.

*Libby Kugel moved to place the Eklutna project into the diversified category. Mickey Todd seconded.*

Motion called to vote: 7 yes 0 no. Motion passed.

ORTAB considered projects that could be moved to diversified from non-motorized.

*Matt Wedeking, DPOR Operations Manager, and Rys Miranda, Chief of DPOR Design and Construction, joined the meeting at 1:57pm.*

Discussion continued about the difference in pricing between the different public use cabin projects hiring a contractor versus force-account labor. Matt Wedeking commented that it's hard to get approval to hire a lot of ACCs to work on force-account labor projects so DPOR is moving more toward hiring contractors. Discussion ensued about maybe raising the state project dollar limit to help get projects done all at once rather than in phases. Although the board liked the PUC project idea, they noted high admin overhead for small projects, which might be because of the project limit. ORTAB recommended that DPOR compile better applications by starting earlier, having more description in general and having people who have done applications before, help new people.

*Matt Wedeking leaves meeting.*

*ORTAB discussed the Sawmill Bay PUC project further. The discussion is summarized in the project discussion above.*

*Rys Miranda leaves meeting.*

Discussion continued about projects that can be moved to diversified from non-motorized, as there are not enough projects yet in diversified.

*A break was taken at 2:22pm.*

ORTAB and staff figured out the 30% non-motorized, 30% motorized and 40% diversified distribution of the top ranked projects. Decided to include the Safety and Education projects for funding. ORTAB members highlighted the top projects in each category until they reached the limit of the total amount available to spend.

*Seth Adams moved to submit the proposed spreadsheet with highlighted projects in each category for recommendation to the Director for FFY19 approval. Mickey Todd seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

ORTAB considered projects in each category that were next in line to be funded in case DOT raised the obligated limit to the Legislative limit of \$1.5 million again this year.

*Libby Kugel moved to authorize RTP staff on behalf of the ORTAB to make recommendations for other projects to be funded if additional funding becomes available by DOT. Mickey Todd seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 7 yes and 0 no. Motion passed.

*Jeff Budd moved to recommend the State be able to, at most, submit 1 project that allows them to exceed the \$100,000 limit if wanted to allow greater economy of scale. Mickey Todd seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 7 yes 0 no. Motion passed.

*Jeff Budd moved that the ORTAB recognize the hard work of the RTP staff and thank them. Mickey Todd seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 7 yes 0 no. Motion passed.

ORTAB considered allotting more points for projects that included ADA features, but agreed to keep the scoring as is.

Staff mentioned that the Fast Act has one more year with the same dollar amount as previous years. Staff noted board terms being over, and if being renewed, a member could have 3, 3-year terms. There was also some discussion about the application process and how hard it can be to complete for various reasons.

*Mickey Todd moved to adjourn the meeting. Meghan McClain seconded it.*

Motion called to vote: 7 yes 0 no. Motion passed.