

**Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB)
2018 Annual Meeting Minutes**

January 16, 2018

ORTAB Members Present:

Jeff Budd - Chair - Represents Non-Motorized trail users
Mike Rearden - Represents Diversified trail users
Ron Lurk - Represents Motorized trail users
Mickey Todd – Represents Motorized trail users
Seth Adams - Represents Diversified trail users
Mike Sirofchuck – Represents Non-Motorized trail users

ORTAB Member Not Present:

Ira Edwards- Represents Trail Users Experiencing Disabilities

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
Elise Johnston- Directors Office, Minutes
Ethan Tyler -DPOR Director

Present for questions on related DPOR grant request:

Joe Hall-DPOR, Chugach State Park, Park Specialist

Public Present in the morning:

Dann Starr and Nick Georgelos from Girdwood Mountain Bike Alliance
Steve Gerlek from Federation of Community Councils, Government Hill
Steve Cleary from Alaska Trails, Inc.
Bill Holt from Tsalteshi Trails

On the Phone:

Kyle Kelly from Girdwood Trails Committee
Brian Charlton from Fairbanks Northstar Borough
Jeff Ward from Delta Junction Trails Association
Geoff Orth from StrayDogs Inc. representing Delta Junction Trails Association

Meeting called to order 9:01am

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. She then let the ORTAB members introduce themselves and let them know if they had any questions about travel to ask Elise and give her any receipts before leaving.

Jeff Budd stated that public comments during the scoring period was only allowed if a person was asked a direct question by the ORTAB members and they may change their scores based on the discussion. They will make their decisions at the end of the two-day meeting and then it goes to the Director of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Jeff Budd then introduces the temporary agenda.

Darcy Harris gave a PowerPoint presentation including pictures of trail projects that had been developed from the Recreational Trail Program all over Alaska. ORTAB members agreed they would like to see more project photos in the future.

Director of DPOR, Ethan Tyler joined the meeting

Darcy Harris introduced Ethan Tyler as the Director of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and then had everyone in the room introduce themselves. The Director started by thanking everyone for the work they do for ORTAB and continued by sharing his background and how that influences his work for the Alaska State Parks. He stated that his door is always open and thanked Darcy Harris and Steve Neel for providing all the information that is needed to make these decisions.

The Director discussed the challenges the RTP faces with the Buy America Act. His philosophy is that the funds are better on the ground rather than back in the federal coffers.

There was discussion about Juneau politics, and the DPOR budget. The Director wants no additional staff reduction this year. He believes DPOR can show the legislature that they can bring in more revenue. Also in the governor's budget, there is a capital request for 20 electronic fee stations that will raise revenue from 20-50%. Another request in the governor's budget is funding 5 public use cabins. These pay for themselves within 4 years and then become a revenue stream.

Everyone thanked the Director for coming and he left the meeting.

break at 9:39am

Steve Neel gave a financial overview, stating that the Fixing America's Surface Transportation or "FAST Act" supplied \$1.5 million dollars for FY18. That is the same amount that has been allocated since 2009 and will be through FY20 unless Congress or the Administration changes. Of that \$1.5 million allocated to Alaska the DPOR has an obligation limitation of approximately 1.3 million. After taking out the 7% administrative allowance, the amount that can be spent on grants is approximately \$1.2 million dollars. This is then broken up into a federally required ratio of 30% motorized projects which is \$367,709.70, 30% non-motorized projects which is \$367,709.70 and 40% diversified projects which is \$490,279.60. If Safety and Education projects were to be funded they would have to take 5%, which is \$75,632.15, out of the total amount given but it is not required.

Steve then told the ORTAB that there are ~2 million dollars that haven't been spent. Most projects leave a little money which is then de-obligated. Occasionally a project is cancelled or not approved. For example, two of RTP projects last year ended up not approved because of the Buy America Act. All states have these problems and there is no easy way to access this money. Accessing this "leftover" money is something Darcy and Steve are considering. This money contains no administrative allowance.

The Buy America Act was discussed in more detail. 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. RTP had been exempt from this act until about 4 years ago, and then issued waivers. In April 2017 an executive order was passed to enforce the Act. The Buy America Act makes buying machinery for motorized projects difficult.

This year there were \$1.85 million in requests, mostly in *non-motorized*. Some of these projects can be moved into *diversified* to fulfill the 40% requirement, but some non-motorized projects won't be funded.

Darcy discussed that the RTP is minimally affected by a government shutdown because it is funded by a trust fund. However, if the federal government shuts down the people who process the payments and project authorizations may not be working, and this could cause problems.

Steve stated that all projects are closed through FY15 and not many are open for FY16. The balance returning to FHWA is ~\$133,000. There was discussion that future application scores, could include past grantee performance. Darcy agreed that this goes in hand with the 2 CFR 200 regulation that was put into place in 2014 to complete a risk assessment for all applicants. Darcy and FHWA are working on identifying criteria for risk assessment.

ORTAB members submitted remaining scores for projects.

An ORTAB member brought up that the application funding limit for projects should be increased so that projects don't have to do multiple phases and can execute the bigger projects. ORTAB members agree to discuss this at the end of the meeting.

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, not by score.

1.) Girdwood Mountain Bike Park Phase 1

Applicant: Girdwood Mountain Bike Alliance

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$49,995.00/\$5,555.00

Final Score: 81/100

Project Discussion:

The narrative wasn't clear. It stated that there were no mountain bike trails in Girdwood. Dann Starr who was present, clarified by stating that there were no *free* mountain bike trails just one that Alyeska Resort offers but is expensive because you must ride the tram and rent equipment through them. Are there established public use trails that the mountain bike users could use? Dan Starr: bikers and walkers sharing trails is a safety issue. Nick Georgelos who is part of the Girdwood Mountain Bike Alliance, and present, said that he owns Geo Contracting, an excavating company in Girdwood and will be the contractor on the project. Dann Starr replied that the landowner, Heritage Land Bank, legally required them to get their own 501(c)3. They let the ORTAB members know that they have made themselves very present in the Girdwood community by fundraising with local businesses, they have been featured in the newspaper, have a good volunteer base and have been at the community meetings. They ensure that they are dedicated to this project and aren't going anywhere because the whole board lives in Girdwood and owns homes and businesses there. Dan Starr said the schedule for the contracting will be a month. They will use volunteers to help fine-tune the trail after the trail is built. Proceeds from fundraising will make up the match requirement.

Suggestions: They should allow at least 52 weeks for schedule contingency. Darcy added that they will soon make this a requirement for all projects with contractors. ORTAB suggested using volunteer hours as part of their match because if FHWA sees the applicants have money, they'll wonder why they're asking for funding. FHWA doesn't like seeing more match than the percentage needed.

Other Discussion: member notes that they should take out "estimated" in project start and end dates so people aren't confused.

Bill Holt and Joe Hall enter the meeting and are given a review of the ORTAB rules.

2.) Government Hill West Bluff Trail Connection

Applicant: FCC/Government Hill

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$26,000.00/2,899.00

Final Score: 84/100

Project Discussion:

Application discusses using a youth program but provides no letters of commitment. Steve Gerlek, representing the project, was in the room, replied that they work with the Youth Employment in Parks, through the Municipality, which employs youth in parks and recruits high school students across the city in the summer. The map wasn't clear and no indication that the trails connect. Steve Gerlek stated that area is probably in the most urban area in Alaska and showed on the map that there are 100s of years of networked trails that allow people to go downtown, to the port or the railroad and their purposed trail would stitch all those together. Steve also added that those are not all existing trails on the map because some are just traces at this point. The budget narrative wasn't

thorough and there was no Excel budget sheet. Steve Gerlek didn't put the application together, he was on the steering committee. Darcy commented that the Excel budget is required by FHWA. ORTAB asked if some of the existing trails are historic social trails. Steve Gerlek replied that they are, that the Government Hill neighborhood is over a hundred years old and was the first neighborhood of Anchorage. People who worked at the port and the railroad started a social club half way down the hill where a trail leads. This trail and other working trails nearby became the first example of a transportation corridor in Anchorage. There are still remnants in the area

Suggestions: ORTAB suggested making the PDF editable for simplification. The application needs a more complete project narrative. The ORTAB liked the project but gave a lower score because of the budget.

3.) **Mirror Lake Phase II**

Applicant: Alaska Trails, Inc.

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 79/100

Project Discussion:

Application discusses using a youth program but provides no letters of commitment. There are youth volunteers and they have a letter in the application from a youth cycling program. There was a race there on December 30th with about 60-80 attendees. ORTAB asked how the first phase of the project was progressing. Steve Cleary: Well. How long is the first phase of the trail? Just under 2 miles, about the same size they are asking for in phase two. The first phase of the trail is for intermediate users and their goal is to include beginning and advanced trails in the next couple phases. How many people will use these trails? There is no exact number. This trail could be a destination spot for people who don't want to go to the southside of Anchorage. Will Ptarmigan Ptrails be building this trail? They are no longer in Alaska. The contractor committed to doing phase two because he did phase one. The contractor himself wasn't there most of phase one, he had someone who works for him present. If Ptarmigan Ptrails is unable to do the work, could they hire another contractor? Darcy Harris said he could if it was the same scope of work and within 5-10%. It is possible but doesn't happen very often.

Suggestions: application could use more project narrative and budget detail as well as a better visitor count.

4.) **Tsalteshi Trails**

Applicant: Slikok Expansion

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 93/100

Project Discussion:

A very well-done application and scored the highest. Applicants are great to work with and utilize funding effectively. Are there plans to expand past the existing Tsalteshi Trails? Bill Holt, the project manager and representative, present in the room, said that the Kenai Peninsula Borough has given them a 20-year use permit for some new land south of the Tsalteshi Trails. In addition to this project they have already built a mile of single-use ski trail and then with the funding they are asking for from RTP there will be 4 more miles of ski trail that can be multi-use. The Kenai Peninsula Borough is very supportive of this project and is working to help clean up an area for parking.

5.) **Iditarod NHT (Crow Pass) Phase 1**

Applicant: DPOR/Chugach

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$49,998.00/\$5,574.00

Final Score: 88/100

Project Discussion:

Is there a definitive visitor count? Joe Hall, the project representative, and present in the room, stated that they don't have actual numbers but it is more than 1,000. There was no letter from the Alaska Conservation Corps (ACC). ACC is a part of the Parks program in which they administer and will include young adults 18 and older working on the trail. Will State Parks hire a year-round position and would RTP funding subsidize it? Joe clarified that they have a 6-month Natural Resource technician on staff, project money will extend the person's season. Tools are being ordered from Arizona instead of Alaska. Some of the tools are only available from Arizona. No Alaskan dealers have those tools. Flooding on this trail has been a problem. Joe replied that about half of the 26-mile trail is in flooded area but most of it isn't bad enough to close the trail. The priority is to reroute a quarter mile of the trail that is a safety issue.

Suggestions: The public notice was only posted at the Eagle River Nature Center and should be posted in multiple places and social media. DPOR applications are better this year.

6.) Rabbit Lake Trail Improvements

Applicants: DPOR/Chugach

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$33,601.00/\$3,901.00

Final Score: 88/100

Projects Discussion:

The overall application was good but the project narrative was minimal. Discussion of "micro blasting". Other parks around the U.S. have used this technique. The technique is non-explosive and the trail won't need to be closed. Discussion of the process. Drill holes into the boulders and put in a liquid mixture that comes from powder into the holes and after about 24 hours the rock breaks down by the mixture expanding. Explain why so many chainsaws are needed. A six-person crew that runs the chainsaws in pairs which is 3 chainsaws and the other 2 will be switched out as saws need repair or sharpening. Chainsaws wear down quickly from use. Will the road that leads to the trail be repaired? Joe replied that the old road became a part of the trail.

7.) Iditarod National Historic Trail – Part 1

Applicant: Girdwood Trails Committee

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$49,822.00/\$5,686.00

Final Score: 84/100

Project Discussion:

Application discusses using a youth program but provides no letters of commitment. Kyle Kelly, the project representative on the phone, replied that they could get the letter because they have a standing contract. The project is shovel ready after completing permitting requirements with the USACE and Municipality's Watershed Management office. The Forest Service has approved of this plan. Administrative costs are high. Eighty hours for overseeing the contractor, about 11% of the budget.

Suggestions: Be more specific in the budget regarding administrative costs.

8.) Tanana Lakes Phase IV

Applicant: Fairbanks Northstar Borough

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$41,975.00/\$4,664.00

Final Score: 86/100

Project Discussion:

Darcy Harris sent an email to the ORTAB members that Brian Charlton, the project representative from the Fairbanks Northstar Borough, explaining schedule for funding with the Borough Brian stated that they are shovel ready but can't obligate any funds until they are notified that the grant will be approved. Their match comes from wages for project coordination and they match everything at 10%. The first three phases have been managed well. Steve Neel replied that it has except there was no activity for almost 9 months. Brian replied that last year they didn't have a complete understanding of the requirements of the RTP. They will fix that. This is a very popular park.

Break for lunch – 11:45pm to 1:00pm

ORTAB meeting came back into order after lunch where Melissa Richie, Administrative Operations Manager for DPOR, joined and introductions were made. She provided ORTAB her background and explained that she also manages the Division's budgets and signs the grants.

There was discussion of not considering Ira Edwards' scores since he was unable to be present for the meeting, but most members agreed to keep his scores.

Geoff Orth, Straydogs Inc. was present on the phone, representing Delta Junction Trails Association.

9.) Bluff Cabin Trail Phase II

Applicant: Delta Junction Trails Association

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$92,228.00/\$10,249.00

Final Score: 86/100

Project Discussion:

There was a letter from the Boy Scout's charter organization. Maps were not useful. Darcy Harris pointed out that this was one of three motorized projects that applied. ORTAB didn't have any questions on this project. Geoff Orth said they are realigning the trail rather than maintaining phase one because it saves money and mitigates possible impact to cultural resources. This trail is only one of two projects north of the Alaska range that are not DPOR.

End of projects with people present in person or on the phone

10.) 2018 Trail Guide Videos (Kbay)

Applicant: DPOR Interp/ED

Category: Safety and Education

Funds Requested/Match: \$44,7122.00/\$4,974.00

Final Score: 75/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB said they'd rather see ground broken than digital projects, although the K'esugi Ridge video was incredible. ORTAB can only fund one of three Safety and Education projects submitted because of the 5% limit. These videos will be posted on the state website and DPOR Facebook page and other social media. There were 131 views on YouTube and about 4,200 views on Facebook.

11.) Caines Head Interpretation Panels

Applicant: DPOR Interp/ED

Category: Education and Safety

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 69/100

Project Discussion:

Discussion of panels being ordered from New York and the high cost. Darcy Harris and Steve Neel commented that all the panels across Alaska have a similar look and they all go through the same design and procurement process. ORTAB members noted that the maps weren't helpful and are unsure of where the panels will be installed. There was a very large number of unnecessary photos that were taken of Caines Head. Darcy mentioned she removed dozens of photos before sending it because of file size.

Suggestion: The ORTAB would have liked to have seen pictures of where the panels would be going.

12.) Afognak Trail

Applicant: DPOR/Kodiak

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$9,512.00/\$1,056.000

Final Score: 78/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB member Mike Sirofchuck is a part of the Kodiak citizens advisory board but didn't know about the grant application. However, there was a letter of support for the project from the chair of the advisory board submitted with the application.

The applicants are only asking for \$10,000 for 3.5 miles but the maps weren't helpful and no publication of a public notice. Another ORTAB member stated that it was an inexpensive project but only a short-term fix. The area will need maintenance or result in a larger and more expensive problem. Another ORTAB member remarked that the current social trails don't get many visitors. If the trail is improved maybe it would get more visitors.

13.) Fort Abercrombie Trail

Applicant: DPOR/Kodiak

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$14,415.00/\$1,602.00

Final Score: 85/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB would rather fund maintenance of existing trails than building a new trail. Fort Abercrombie is a high use area and is increasing in popularity. The Kodiak Cross Country team uses this trail and does volunteer work on it. ORTAB thought the budget and photos were helpful. The ORTAB would like to see this project get funded.

14.) Morgan's Landing

Applicant: DPOR/Kenia

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$36,294.00/\$4,092.00

Final Score: 85/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB members wondered if the boardwalk was necessary since people fishing are wearing waders anyway. The boardwalk will help mitigate further erosion along the Kenai river. Fiberglass walk planks allow light and water for the vegetation to grow underneath but could also support bikes. There was discussion about this being high cost for a short trail but that it was an existing trail that needed maintenance. It should be a priority because of the erosion problem and high numbers of local users and tourists.

Project Suggestion: This application might be better funded under the Pittman-Robertson grant or Sport Fish Restoration program although the money is more competitive.

break 1:54pm

15.) Eshamy Bay Public Use Cabin

Applicant: DPOR/Kenia

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$45,596.00/\$5,064.00

Final Score: 85/100

Project Discussion:

Discussion: will FWHA allow this project to be categorized as *motorized* because of its location and requiring the use of motorized boats to access? By looking at the map people are unable to get to the cabin by foot due to a glacier. Presumably it would be accessed by boat motorized boat. Darcy Harris brought up that this project is partially funded by a USFS grant and the RTP money will allow DPOR to leverage that grant to complete the project. . ORTAB members discussed whether this money would be well spent since the cabin is only open for 5 months although does bring in revenue. There aren't opportunities for youth development.

Steve Neel called FWHA to see if this grant can be classified as motorized and they said it could be classified as motorized or diversified since the predominate way to get to the Public Use Cabin is by motorized boat. This helps fulfill the requirement of 30% motorized.

16.) Lagoon Trail Repair

Applicant: DPOR/Kenai

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 86/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB discussed whether this project had a good long-term maintenance plan. They haven't had the money to maintain it and if nothing is done it will be lost to overgrowth. ORTAB members are reluctant to add any new trails to that area because the existing trails are hard to maintain. An ORTAB member argued that this isn't a new trail, it is just one that needs to be cleaned up.

17.) Saddle Trail

Applicant: DPOR/Kenai

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 88/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB had a discussion that the cost for labor seemed expensive. Also, there was no description of project expenditures. This project is at phase four over a 5-year plan. ORTAB members noted that funding limits are internal decisions. The Director set the \$50,000 limit to spread the money regionally and to different organizations.

18.) Curry Ridge/ Phase IV

Applicant: DPOR/Mat-Su

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$99,335.00/\$11,138.00

Final Score: 84/100

Project Discussion:

Discussion that Director of DPOR had prioritized projects and waived the \$50,000 limit, this project was one of them. ORTAB members discussed that a lot of money has already gone into this area with the new K'esugi Ken campground and visitor center. There was an extension of a

powerline from Trapper Creek all the way up to this area. This project is about 140 miles from Anchorage which is good for tourism.

19.) Hatcher Pass Trail

Applicant: DPOR/Mat-Su

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$51,734.00/\$6,905.00

Final Score: 83/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB asked if this project was approved to go over the 50,000 limit. Darcy thinks the applicant misunderstood the directions. This is a high use public area with tens of thousands of visitors a year and they like the idea of repairing an existing trail rather than building something new. There was concern that equipment costs lumped together in the budget were exactly \$500. Pricing may change by the time the project starts. ORTAB likes to see projects buy lots of tools because they last and will be used for many projects. The maps weren't very clear which may be due to the applicants' assumption that everyone is familiar with that area.

Suggestions: Darcy recommends that applicants consider their audience and not make assumptions about people's knowledge. Applicants should assume the audience is coming in with no knowledge and to have a clear and illustrative package.

Other Discussion: Why did Ira score this project coming from Denali, so low? DPOR applications have improved.

20.) Snowmachine Trail DSP

Applicant: DPOR/Mat-Su

Category: Motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$253,462.00/\$29,800.00

Final Score: 88/100

Project Discussion:

DPOR Director waived the \$100,000 limit on this project because he considered it a Division priority. An ORTAB member commented that in the future this project will help connect to an existing trail that goes from Big Lake to mile post 131 in Alaska State Parks. Now it is just a trail from the visitor center to Byers Lake which is only about 15.5 miles each way. He was also concerned that this may pressure Park Rangers to groom this trail which will need SnowTRAC Grooming Pool money. Darcy Harris stated that one goal of this project was to make the area more of a destination. ORTAB members said, along with the Public Use Cabins at Byers Lake, there is a camp ground which connects to the K'esugi Ridge hiking trail and the Veterans' memorial.

Other Discussion: ORTAB members discussed that Ira Edwards scored this project low as well. Elise Johnston commented that about 50% of her calls are for Public Use Cabins so there is a lot of public interest in them.

21.) Angel Rocks

Applicant: DPOR/Northern

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$17,455.00/\$1,881.00

Final Score: 82/100

Project Discussion:

This project had a very short budget narrative. This is a very popular trail in Fairbanks. The section of trail they are working on is steep and very badly eroded. The application discusses adding landscaping in general but nothing specific. The application also contained pictures of the current progress and trail condition.

Melissa Richie leaves meeting

22.) Mastodon Construction

Applicant: DPOR/Northern

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$91,426.00/\$10,159.00

Final Score: 79/100

Project Discussion:

ORTAB members noted that this is another project the Director prioritized and raised the application dollar limit. ORTAB members discussed that they continue seeing applications for this project and that is part of the reason the bulldozer and four wheelers continue to erode the new trail. Erosion could be mitigated if the work was done in the winter but a dozer cannot be used when the ground is frozen. There are sections that are wet and muddy but once done, maintenance will be minimal. They project that this will be a highly popular trail.

break at 3:04pm

23.) Mastodon Hardening II

Applicant: DPOR/Northern

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$23,900.00/\$2,656.00

Final Score: 81/100

Project Discussion:

This project had a reasonable budget. ORTAB liked that they are using geo-block and it is a high use area. They don't have much choice but to fix it.

24.) Training and Assessment

Applicant: DPOR/Northern

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$13,313.00/\$1,478.00

Final Score: 81/100

Project Discussion:

The Northern State Park Superintendent puts in an application for this every year for training for the use of chainsaws or First-Aid/CPR. ORTAB members said that it would be good to see these grants come in from all the areas.

25.) Mt. Riley Trail Restoration (Haines)

Applicant: DPOR/ Southeast

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$19,272.00/\$2,166.00

Final Score: 85/100

Project Discussion:

This application was clear and a good use of money in a highly used area. It maintains an existing trail and there are not many projects coming from Southeast.

26.) Settlers Cove Trail Access Improvements (Ketchikan)

Applicant: DPOR/Southeast

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$47,808.00/\$5,706.00

Final Score: 87/100

Project Discussion:

The ORTAB hasn't seen a project from Ketchikan in a long time and it is a hard place to recreate due to high rain fall.

27.) Historic Lightkeeper's Trail Repair

Applicant: Cape Decision Lighthouse Society

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000.00/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 74/100

Project Discussion:

Five hundred visitors annually may be a high estimate. Expensive for a mile-long trail for a rarely used site. It is a unique situation with the lighthouse. This organization has been trying for 20 years to get it restored. The application had good letters. It was unclear where the trail originates. A visitor must take a boat to the trail and then the trail leads to the lighthouse. It is hard to get there and you need a boat, or money to charter a boat. Travel to the trail is likely expensive and difficult. ORTAB prefers to award projects that benefit the most people for the least money. The results from RTP projects should be available readily and for free to the public.

Suggestion: ORTAB members think it's a great application but can't justify funding the project right now. The applicant should submit the project again because maybe one year ORTAB can find a way to fund it.

28.) Russian Jack Wayfinding

Applicant: Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation

Category: Education and Safety

Funds Requested/Match: \$33,903.00/\$3,768.00

Final Score: 69/100

Project Discussion:

The application was not thorough and a little confusing. ORTAB agreed that signs were necessary in the area on these trails but thought these estimates seemed too expensive. The board asked Steve Neel about past RTP projects managed by the applicant. Huddle, the contractor hired by the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation, currently has 4 open projects, this one being the 5th grant they are applying for. They have made little progress and nothing has been completed. FHWA may not be interested in allocating more money until these projects have had significant development and billings.

Suggestion: ORTAB would like the applicants to apply again when a couple of the other projects are finished.

29.) Winner Creek Trail

Applicant: USDA, Chugach National Forest

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$49,918.00/\$5,546.00

Final Score: 81/100

Project Discussion:

Steve Neel stated that the local USFS is great to work with but the billing is done in New Mexico which causes problems because of timeliness. Five percent of the funds must come from non-federal sources but with the Forest Service and FHWA both being federal. Steve is glad to be working with the USFS again. ORTAB members concurred that they liked the proposal and this project is good for the public

30.) Tutka Backdoor Access and Continuity

Applicant: Ground Truth Trekking

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$18,100.00/\$2,135.00

Final Score: 88/100

Project Discussion:

Phase 1 is complete and used almost all the money. It is an interesting trail that leads to an unusual place. Discussion that the Kachemak Bay State Park is already having a hard time maintaining and keeping open, existing trails. It is a rudimentary trail, and will require significant maintenance which is expensive. The area superintendent supports the project and said that there's not a lot of damage like excavating being done; they have volunteers to help and they'll try to maintain the trail, but if they can't then they'll just let it grow over. ORTAB likes trails being built for people to see new things. The application states they will promise 10 years of maintenance. This is more of a route than a trail since it gives guidance to the coast and some people prefer more rudimentary trails.

ORTAB member Mickey Todd makes a motion to adjourn for the day and Mike Sirofchuck seconds the motion

January 17, 2018/Day Two

ORTAB Members Present:

Jeff Budd - Chair - Represents Non-Motorized trail users

Mike Rearden - Represents Diversified trail users

Ron Lurk - Represents Motorized trail users

Mickey Todd – Represents Motorized trail users

Seth Adams - Represents Diversified trail users

Mike Sirofchuck – Represents Non-Motorized trail users

ORTAB Member Not Present:

Ira Edwards- Represents Trail Users Experiencing Disabilities

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

Elise Johnston- Directors Office, Minutes

Ethan Tyler -DPOR Director

Public Present:

Tom Korosei from Federation of Community Councils, Government Hill

On the Phone:

Laura Hoffman with Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District

Lynne Brandon with Sitka Trail Works

9:05am the ORTAB meeting comes into order

Darcy Harris started the meeting by welcoming everyone and giving a friendly reminder to turn off cell phones. She then reminded the board members to give their travel receipts to Elise Johnston by the end of the meeting. ORTAB members started the second day with Laura Hoffman from Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District on the phone and informed her of the rules of the ORTAB meeting. Then they let Laura have two minutes for public comments

31.) Riverside Trail

Applicant: Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District

Category: Non-Motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$49,988.00/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 81/100

Project Discussion:

Laura Hoffman thanked the ORTAB members for awarding the funding from a past grant for the Susitna Valley High School Trail in Talkeetna and lets them know that the town of Talkeetna appreciates the approval of the grant. Applicants need to have a letter from the youth group. Clarification requested regarding \$32,000 for the YCC for 2 weeks and that includes a director and crew leader. Director of YCC is the crew leader of this project. The 1/3-mile trail will be ready to use after two years. The first summer is used for an archeological survey and then the trail building would begin in 2019 and finish by August. The trail is already there but has been eroded. If the current alignment will impact cultural resources there is enough space to move the trail alignment. Darcy Harris brought up that in the application there was a letter from Judy Bittner who is the State Historical Preservation Officer stating that they didn't have any concerns but still wanted the survey completed. Laura replied that the crew they are using aren't allowed to use anything motorized so they have a pulling system to remove stumps. Laura also applied for another grant with the Mat-Su Trails and Park Foundation to match the RTP grant and, in that grant, she included funding for a power wagon which would haul the gravel to crown the trail and a compactor. Last year's project was modified to add money but they were outstanding with reporting and documentation.

Suggestion: ORTAB suggested to shorten the next application so it isn't 70 pages long.

Tom Korosei with the Government Hill West Bluff Trail Connection project was present for any other additional questions the ORTAB members may have about the project. The ORTAB didn't have any but gave feedback which is stated in the project suggestions.

32.) Sea Lion Cove Trail Repair

Applicant: Sitka Trail Works

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$39,979.00/\$4,460.00

Final Score: 80/100

Project Discussion:

An ORTAB member from Sitka stated that this trail is 8 ½ miles away from Sitka and you will need to have a boat to get there. The trail is "a mess" because it has rotting structures. Sitka Trail Works will work with The Boat Company to help get people to the trail. Funding this trail would be a good local benefit, stating it has 236 visitors annually. The application states that the trail is only for "skilled and fit people". Steve Neel discusses budgeting concerns, the application states that \$11,000 of the request is for the Director and it wasn't clear if she would be in the field staying at the remote camp or working at a desk in Sitka. They also budgeted \$13,000 for labor for Trail Mix and \$1,000 of that is just for the Executive Director. Last year they had difficulty with the reimbursement process and following the approved budget. ORTAB members discussed lowering the amount given to this applicant so that it just covers the materials and not funding the administrative portion but Darcy Harris said the project may not be possible without the full amount being funded. ORTAB members agreed to either give the whole amount or not fund it at all.

ORTAB members agreed they wanted Lynne Brandon, the Executive Director, to call into the meeting so they could ask her about the budgeting issues, and agreed to resume their discussion after they were done discussing the other projects and Lynne Brandon was on the phone.

Lynn Brandon called in and the ORTAB started by asking how much of her Executive Director time was going to be in the field. She answered that she will be making trips with her own boat out to that trail and approximates 150 hours. ORTAB then asked what she would be doing in those 150 hours. Lynne answered that she will be out there with the crew as much as she can be but will be mostly making day trips. The hours also include her time for going out to the trail which takes

about an hour and a half each way and will be doing coordination work in town. ORTAB brought up that they were asking because \$11,000 is high for what they usually get for administrative time. An ORTAB member asked how much progress they will have on the 2 ½ mile trail. Lynne responded that they will work as far as they can by working on the worst spots that are safety issues first and then work on the rest of the trail. ORTAB members asked how many people Lynne thinks will use this trail once improved. Lynn responded that Juneau area State Parks report 236 permits last year, but there are also others that aren't permitted that go. So overall, she believes about 600 people per season. Lynne said that this project is high priority and a safety concern.

ORTAB members thanked Lynne Brandon for answering their questions and she got off the telephone line.

ORTAB members discussed that it is still high in administrative costs compared to other projects. Steve Neel said there are three ways to provide match which are: volunteer hours, cash donation or equipment use.

Suggestion: ORTAB members think that Lynne Brandon should have also accounted for her different roles which would explain more of her hours.

33.) Shoup Bay Trail Rebuild to Gold Creek

Applicant: Levitation 49

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$46,100.00/\$5,062.00

Final Score: 79/100

Project Discussion:

Seth Adams informed the ORTAB members that he helped prepare this grant and he will not be included in the scoring. He recused himself.

Seth Adams clarified that Levitation 49 is the contractor for the Valdez area State Parks. They had two projects last year. One project was asking for funding for equipment but didn't get a waiver for the Buy America Act and the other project was asking for administrative funding for working on the Shoup Bay Trail. The Shoup Bay Trail project that got funded last year left \$17,000 out of \$39,000 unused, several items were turned in late, and there were several reimbursement requests for things not on the approved budget. The contractor will try to use local gravel. The ORTAB member also asked if Shoup Bay was covered in the Prince William Sound land use plan. Another ORTAB member asked how they collected numbers of trail users. Seth Adams said a lot of locals walk the trail. Seth Adams says the goal is to extend to Gold Creek then go to Shoup Bay which is a little more difficult and make a loop and go back by Mineral Creek. Darcy Harris said any public notice format with the pertinent information is acceptable ORTAB members discuss this is the only application coming from Valdez. Seth Adams also stated that this specific project won't leave money on the table because it is in contract.

break at 10:08am

34.) Gov't Peak Single Track Phase III

Applicant: Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers

Category: Non-motorized

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,556.00

Final Score: 76/100

Project Discussion:

There was visitor count for the trail and the application didn't include the budget in the required Excel sheet. They also commented that this trail was designed for fast, accomplished riders and the ORTAB members felt that they didn't see a big public benefit since that's a small number of people. VMBaH doesn't have a contractor but the application stated they could find one to do this

work in a week, which they felt was unrealistic. VMBaH included a \$40,000 contract line item in the budget but there was no bid from a contractor to back up that number. One of the ORTAB members who knows the applicant knows that he is in constant contact with Ptarmigan P-trails and assumes he would ask that contractor to do as much as he can for \$40,000. ORTAB members agreed that this wasn't very good project planning. Also, the bridge and culvert installation is a concern because it wasn't discussed in the Environmental Review Checklist and there were no pictures or diagrams of where those would be installed.

35.) Stream Hill Park Trail System

Applicant: Stream Hill Parks Homeowners Association

Category: Diversified

Funds Requested/Match: \$50,000/\$5,560.00

Final Score: 70/100

Project Discussion:

The Homeowner Association is applying for the grant which may only benefit a small group of residents versus the public. One of the ORTAB members who lives in Homer said he is familiar with the trail and it has a lot of public use because there is a public access easement. He also said that although that the trail has a couple of wet spots he doesn't think putting gravel on the trail is necessary. ORTAB discussed the trail entrance location and how it is in a neighborhood that isn't fully developed yet. It's possible that when all the lots in that neighborhood are developed that people who live there aren't going to be happy about this public access. They were also worried about the applicant's involvement with the neighborhood and if the purpose of this trail is for the public or private use. Overall ORTAB members agree it's a good application but it sounds like the trail is fine how it is.

Lynne Brandon gets on the phone to discuss the questions the ORTAB members have. The discussion is summarized in the project discussion above.

The ORTAB spent the next part of the meeting moving projects around from their original designations (non-motorized, motorized, diversified) to move toward the required ratio (30% motorized, 30% non-motorized, 40% diversified and 5% education /safety if they chose to fund those projects.) There was discussion about the safety and education projects subtracting money from the other three classifications. The ORTAB members needed to decide if they wanted to recommend any education and safety projects with a total limit of \$75,000. Also, Steve Neel let the ORTAB members know that if they are close to the allowed amount for each classification FHWA would likely accept it.

The DPOR Director joined the meeting again. ORTAB members first asked him about the Curry Ridge project and how important it was to him since he waived the \$50,000 limit and makes the final decision of what projects get funded. ORTAB told him that the project scored in the bottom three of the non-motorized category mostly due to Ira's low score. The Director explained his rationing behind waiving the limit. This will be enough to actually finish the project. ORTAB members asked the Director if he wanted to address two state projects, Curry Ridge and Mastodon Construction. The Director replied that he would like to know the board's opinions and if it throws off the required ratio, then he's willing to negotiate the amount of the big projects. There was discussion about splitting funding between state and non-state, and the impact of the large state projects. Steve Neel said that they haven't always had the projects split perfectly, some years there have been more state projects funded and some years there have been more non-state funded.

The DPOR Director leaves the meeting

Mike Sirofchuck makes a motion to drop all 3 Safety and Education projects from consideration. Mickey Todd seconds that motion.

Discussion: The three projects scored relatively low and if they drop those projects it allows more money for other projects with higher scores. Darcy Harris stated that the national manager's main concern is

getting the most money on the ground, so it makes these projects hard to fund. An ORTAB member asked if RTP doesn't fund these state interpretation and education projects, could they get funding somewhere else. Darcy Harris and Steve Neel had said that they couldn't really answer that without talking to someone in that office but because they are project funded, it would have to be another source that is interested in funding those projects.

Motion is call to vote, 5 yes and 1 no, motion passes

Mickey Todd makes a motion to break for lunch until 1pm

ORTAB members come back from lunch and Darcy Harris opens the teleconference line and Jean Ayers has joined the meeting in person.

Jean Ayers said hello to everyone and said that she was at the meeting to update everyone on the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Special Reapportionment Account (SRA). Jean said that the LWCF grant is different than any other grant she has worked on because all projects funded by the program that finish under budget or terminate, have the remaining money de-obligated by the NPS and put into the SRA. Jean said that they had two projects from last year where the money was put back into the SRA and LWCF must go through a certain process to get that money re-obligated to Alaska, otherwise it becomes general federal money that any state can request.

They have identified two projects this year where they think they could ask NPS to reapportion money to. One is the Rabbit Lake Trailhead Improvements project that the Design and Construction section of the DPOR would be working on within Chugach State Park who also applied for a related grant through the RTP. Jean thinks they could get \$40,000-\$50,000 back to help with that project. The other project is with the Metlakatla Indian Community to whom the LWCF has given small grants for the Cedar trail. They have tremendous community support for those projects for Cedars Trail project and have about \$30,000 in over-match so Jean thought their project would be a good candidate. Jean told the ORTAB she doesn't need any action from them now.

The ORTAB thought it was great that LWCF has a chance to get money re-obligated to the state because RTP doesn't have the spending authority to use that money. An ORTAB member asked if there are any updates with the LWCF grant. Jean answered that the NPS is reorganizing so they are affecting not only LWCF grants but also other grants. ORTAB approved several projects last year that are still pending NPS approval. ORTAB members noted that LWCF is an underused grant source and Jean Ayers agrees that unfortunately it is because it is a complex program with difficult perpetual compliance requirements. An ORTAB member asked if it was possible to lower the 50/50 match to make applying for the LWCF grant more appealing. Jean answered that the state doesn't have the authority to do that but they have lowered the funding request limit to try to attract smaller projects or smaller communities. The current LWCF SCORP priority is to upgrade and improve existing facilities.

Jean Ayers then thanks the ORTAB members for their time and left the meeting.

An ORTAB member contacted Ira Edwards, via Facebook, during lunch about his low scores for the Curry Ridge and Mastodon Construction projects. Ira said he scored low because the limit was very high but since knowing more information he raised his score. Darcy Harris updated Ira Edwards' scores for the Curry Ridge and Mastodon Construction projects.

Darcy Harris let the ORTAB members know that Laura Hoffman from the Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District sent in a resolution that shows she works with the Youth Conservation Corps.

There was also discussion of the top-ranking state projects and trying to keep funding 50% state projects and 50% non-state projects. Some ORTAB members believe that this year there are better state projects that should get funded while other ORTAB members would like to see more non-state projects get funded. There is also discussion of funding projects evenly throughout Alaska and not just a bunch of projects from one area. Steve Neel reminded the ORTAB members that they are funding entities not areas.

ORTAB members discussed moving Curry Ridge and Mastodon projects to the top of the list for funding since they are a priority to the Director. Also moving the Eshamy Bay public use cabin project to the top to help fill the 30% motorized requirement. They do this by making the score read 100% to ensure funding.

An ORTAB member said he would like to see the Alaska Trails', Mirror Lake project make the cut because they lowered their administrative costs.

ORTAB members discussed lowering Federal Share amount for certain state projects to help fund more projects. ORTAB members decide to lower the Federal Share amount for the Snowmachine trail DSP project by \$13,000.

All the projects were ranked from highest score to lowest score regardless of being state or non-state. They then saw where the \$1.2 million limit was and how that compared to the 30%/30%/40% break down. With the category requirement fulfilled, the \$1.2 million limit and the highest scored projects all working together, ORTAB discussed the 14 state projects and 8 non-state projects that may be funded.

Mickey Todd makes a motion to vote for projects above the budget line. Seth Adams seconds the motion. Motion called to vote- 5 yes and 1 no

Discussion: Steve Neel brought up that usually DPOR only submits 9 or 10 applications and this year there were 19. ORTAB members then discussed the regional breakdown of funding.

A break was taken at 2:40pm

ORTAB members discussed the unobligated funds and being able to access them. Darcy Harris stated that the Director has already talked to her about making that a goal.

Seth Adams made a motion for Darcy Harris, Steve Neel and the director Ethan Tyler to find out about unobligated funds. Mike Sirofchuck second it. Motion call to vote – 6 yes 0 no

The ORTAB would like grantees to send photos of their projects.

An ORTAB member asked Darcy and Steve about the two RTP training sessions. Darcy said two people called in each time and both were the same people from DPOR. People may not know they can ask the board members questions about their grant applications. ORTAB members discuss trying to find ways to let applicants know they can have ORTAB members proof read their application or ask questions.

Mike Rearden nominated Jeff Budd as chair of the ORTAB and Ron Lurk seconded it. Jeff Budd agrees and the motion gets call to vote- 5 yes and 0 no

Seth Adams starts a discussion to raise the application limit for DPOR from 50,000 to 100,00 or 200,000 for motorized and non-motorized. Most projects have multi-phases due to the \$50,000 limit and it would be more efficient to raise the limit so the projects can be completed faster. This doesn't mean everyone ask for more money. He also says it will benefit the community. Darcy Harris brings up that this might mean fewer summer jobs available in some regions. Seth argues that there will still be smaller projects and \$50,000 doesn't keep people busy all summer anyway. If the limit is raised it could employ people for a whole summer rather than a couple of weeks. The ORTAB members discuss that this would just be for DPOR because DPOR staff have more control over grantees than they would with non-profits and non-state groups. Seth Adams also adds that if the larger projects do come from just DPOR then the superintendents and the Director could manage the applications.

Seth Adams made a motion to raise the application limit for DPOR to \$200,000 for non-motorized and motorized with the requirement of at least one motorized project application and Mike Rearden seconded it. Motion called to vote-5 yes 1 no

Discussion: an ORTAB member stated that if they are raising the limit for DPOR, he would like to see the limit for non-state be raised too. ORTAB members discussed that non-profits can't be held accountable like DPOR and it may result in more de-obligation of project funds. There was also discussion about having no control over non-profits applying for motorized or non-motorized like they can with the state. Darcy Harris said they had spoken to the Director about marketing and working with motorized entities to apply for this opportunity. An ORTAB member noted that it's challenging to find motorized groups interested in applying for these grants.

Jeff Budd made a motion to raise the limit for non-motorized and diversified for non-state to \$75,000 and Ron Lurk seconded it. Motion called to vote – 6 yes and 0 no

Discussion: Steve Neel stated that more money is de-obligated from non-profit grantees than state. An ORTAB member brought up that there are two different types of applicants in non-profit, one who uses a contractor and things go smoothly and those that do the work themselves. ORTAB members agree that they will pay attention to the projects asking for \$75,000 having a contractor.

In final remarks, ORTAB members agreed they liked comments that staff had added to the spreadsheet about the applications. They also agreed that the state applications have improved tremendously and the timeline this year was much better.

(4:06pm) Mike Rearden made a motion to adjourn meeting and Ron Lurk seconds the motion. Motion called to vote – 6 yes and 0 no