

## JUNEAU TRAILS PLAN USER GROUP MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

5:30 pm Zoom Meeting

### Attendees

#### **Planning committee**

Allison Eddins - CBJ Community Development

George Schaaf - CBJ Parks and Rec

Ryan O'Shaughnessy - Trail Mix, Inc

Kate McWilliams - Trail Mix, Inc

Mike Dilger - USFS, Juneau Ranger District

Brad Bagarasky - Alaska State Parks

#### **User Groups**

Steve Brockman - Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEAL Trust), Executive Director

Jordan Tanguay - (SEAL Trust) Stewardship Coordinator

Kym Mauseth - Juneau Trail and Road Runners (JTRR)

Paul DeSloover - (JTRR)

Mike Hekkers - Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC)

Frankie Pillifant and Odin Brudie- JNSC

Merry Ellefson - JDHS XC, Lynn Canal Adventures (LCA), snowshoe

Tristan Knutson-Lombardo - JDHS XC, LCA, JNSC/Youth Ski

John Hudson- Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC), Restoration Biologist

I. Welcome and Brief Description of the Purpose and Scope of the Juneau Trails Plan

II. Introductions – tell us a little bit about yourself and the group you are representing and funding sources.

III. Discussion

#### **a. What are the organizational priorities for your group as they relate to trails?**

Mike (JNSC): skiers would like to see more trail connectivity. For example, the Under Thunder Trail connects trails at Mendenhall visitor center all the way out to Egan- We want to see that on the other side of valley. For example, MMS- Mendenhall to Montana to Spaulding Meadows.

Frankie (JNSC): Speaking for JNSC, 3 goals are 1) maintain current kilometers 2) identify new 3) increase trail connectivity

Steve (SEAL Trust): goals not specific to trails but looking for 5 resources to preserve: 1) wildlife habitat, 2) open space, 3) recreational opportunity, 4) cultural resources, 5) historic resources. We have some important spots like the east side of Montana Creek wetlands off the back loop. We hold these properties in fee title. Managed FOR conservation and trail improvements cannot conflict with that. SEAL Trust has to approve any projects that cross their land.

John (SAWC): works with communities to foster good watershed management. Minimizing impacts of trails on fish habitat. Examples: removed hollow log culverts that were blocking fish and replaced with a bridge, removed a social trail at sunny point.

- Allison (CBJ): Mike with AK State parks working on a sustainable trail plan with Alaska Trails Nonprofit. Might be a good partnership to include SAWC

SAWC also worked with airport to fix an existing trail at Jordan creek. It's beneficial to get people out into the watershed. Happy to help with future trails to make sure they're low-impact, prioritize a healthy trail system.

Frankie (JNSC): Don't see the term XC ski trail defined in any plans and that is important because certain conditions or grooming make these trails better- i.e. asphalt base (which holds snow longer), or packing snow also makes it last longer. One thing we do is look for trails that will hold the snow as long as possible once we groom it and compact it- set parallel tracks and create a skate-ski surface. We'd be using Spaulding if that was more accessible. A number of different ideas to share with trail mix about how that could happen.

Mike H (JNSC): Interested in having some trails going to Spaulding Meadows- but a road would be super beneficial to access snow that is creeping higher with the climate emergency (talked with USFS and Juneau Snowmachine Club about that. USFS said that we'd have to get approval and fund it ourselves \$2MM or more). Multiple ways to access!! Other unhardened trails we're interested in are Eaglecrest.

Merry (JDHS Coach+): SHOUT OUT TO OUR AWESOME TRAILS! How are Eaglecrest and other trails plans being integrated into CBJ trails plan?

- Allison (CBJ): Eaglecrest is taking the lead with their projects, but any of their trail goals, we'll attempt to incorporate into our plan. Eaglecrest has some awesome BIG ambitious plans for the next 20 years but we don't know if we'll incorporate into our long-term goals but definitely their mountain biking stuff.
- Very aware that a lot of Juneau's land goes through traditional Tlingit land and historic mining lands. We're including cultural and historic orgs in these discussions. Discovery Southeast also to have an educational aspect.

JDHS- Yadaa.at Kalé (XC):

- Maintaining and upgrading our local "home" course at A Káx Yaa Andagan Yé (Sandy Beach) home course with an eye towards hosting a state meet. JD XC has partnered with the CBJ for decades (cleaning up debris, building new trails and trail improvements, laying gravel, etc) to create Southeast Alaska's premiere XC course. We will continue to work with the CBJ as we envision expansions to this course. It's the premiere Southeast course and serves hundreds of youth at region and invitational meets (150-300) and is the primary training area for HS. We also host local middle school meets here
- Developing 2-3 more top notch courses in the areas which could host these large meetings including Eaglecrest, Mendenhall Glacier/Dredge Lake, end of Basin Road, etc.

- Ensuring that youth voices/advocates always have a place at the table when trails are discussed
- Maintaining our supportive collaborations with the CBJ, State Parks, and USFS
- Supporting all efforts to include Tlingit/indigenous acknowledgement and participation as we train/race at A Káx Yaa Andagan Yé and other areas
- All trail improvements support XC training!

#### Lynn Canal Adventures (LCA):

- Our premiere summer running camps are based out of the Eagle River Methodist Camp (28 mile) and we utilize trails from all points of our trail system: Point Bridget to Eaglecrest. We continue to expand running camp and in 2021 will have two teen and one middle school camp (capacity of 40 campers per camp)
- Priorities include access to all trails as we provide a full week of adventure and training, as well as including community service; we've partnered with Trail Mix, CBJ, State Parks, ERUMC to ensure our campers "give back" during the week of camp.
- We've developed the only snowshoe club in Alaska as we offer opportunities to explore and stay healthy, and train athletes for the biannual Arctic Winter Games.

#### Nordic Team

- Priorities include supporting the growth of this team, which was resurrected in Juneau in 2010 and now has elementary, middle school and high school programs with over 80 Juneau youth expected to participate in these programs this winter.
- Our training is dependent on snow and our options are often limited to Montana Creek (and Eaglecrest, depending on grooming). Motorized and non-motorized activities, especially in the dark of winter, don't mix. We respectfully request that the Montana Creek area remain non-motorized for the safety of our athletes.
- The expansion of trails available for Nordic skiing is critical to the growth of these programs.
- We are already running into a "cart before the horse" scenario where we have nearly doubled our program participation in one year, but have not increased trail availability to accommodate the increased use. The Mendenhall Recreation and Montana Creek Watershed areas are our strongest defense against our increasingly variable winters. Developing and connecting these areas (from the Under Thunder trail, over/under the Glacier Spur Road, through back Dredge, over the river, and up/over to Montana Creek) are critical for our programs' sustained development as we share the trails with hundreds of Juneau residents.
- Finding a suitable location to develop a biathlon range. This has been a long-term goal for the Nordic Ski Club and Ski Team. Montana Creek and Eaglecrest have both long been discussed as potential venues.

Frankie: Nordic ski club represents 700 members rn- might be largest membership org right now. Spaulding meadows gets snow early and we've developed a youth program. Families like Montana creek, Mendenhall lake. Could we talk with US forest service- how do we make Lake

Creek access at a higher elevation so that trucks with snow machines and skiers can access an area where they can branch off. (see Mike H's comments above)

- Mike Dilger: Regarding Lake Creek access to Spaulding Meadows via road--Lake Creek is a relatively steep valley itself and its narrow so there's not a lot of opportunity to crisscross back and forth. Feasibility of that road construction is a no-go. Might be better off if the Montana Creek road went back a little farther so that you're driving closer to more stable snow-pack.

Paul and Kym (JTRR): There aren't any trails that don't work for us. We just long for the Montana Creek to Windfall lake stretch. Maybe more restroom facilities because for races, they have to use a porta-potty. About 30 events per year, with email list of over 500 people.

**b. Are partnerships important to your organization and do you currently have any partnerships in the community?**

Paul (JTRR): we can provide volunteers for working on trails

JDHS XC, Lynn Canal, Juneau Nordic Ski Team:

- Together, these programs partner for various purposes with USFS, CBJ, State Parks, Trail Mix and Eaglecrest, Juneau Nordic Ski Club, Juneau Trail and Road Runners, Team Alaska (Arctic Winter Games) among others. We also continue to communicate with partners where we offer our programs (e.g. USFS, CBJ) when permits are required.
- We're committed to stewardship and each year the Nordic team collaborates with EC, the CBJ/Ski Club to provide trail maintenance at Eaglecrest, Montana Creek, etc. LCA ensures that campers support the maintenance of our trails each summer.

Frankie (JNSC): there are formal (CBJ, USFS, and AELP) and there are social user agreements. we're grooming some multi-use trails that we're sharing with....

**c. Which trails does your organization use and what works/doesn't work about these trails?**

Mike (JNSC) The main trails they groom are Mendenhall Campground and Montana Creek which are great but too short.

Paul (JTRR): Used to race from Montana Creek trail to Windfall Lake but haven't recently because of trail conditions

Kym (JTRR): We use what we have to the best of our ability, so we'll use improved trails! Appreciate loops.

- XC

Practices utilize trails throughout the Borough- from ERSP to Outer Point, primarily Silverbow basin (Perseverance/Granite/Roberts), Treadwell, Eaglecrest, False/Outer Point trail system, A Káx Yaa Andagan Yé, Salmon Creek, Under Thunder, Dan Moller, Sheep Creek, DHMS, TMHS/Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei trails, Dredge Lake, Mendenhall Glacier area trail system

- LCA:

Camp utilizes trails from Point Bridget to Eaglecrest on a four year rotating cycle-that is, if you were to go to camp for four years, you probably wouldn't repeat a trail. Examples include Boy Scout, Windfall, Gastineau/Gold Peak, Juneau ridge trail, Treadwell, Eaglecrest, Herbert, Eagle Glacier, Peterson, Perseverance/Red Mill, John Muir, Thunder Mtn. (We meet with the USFS for permitting)

Snowshoeing includes Dan Moller, Eaglecrest, Montana Creek, Perseverance, Mendenhall campground/area, Gastineau meadows, and Spaulding

- Nordic:

Grooming is limited in Juneau Borough and we work to spread out our teams as the community has grown to include nearly 1000 Nordic skiers. Primary trails include Montana Creek, the Mendenhall Campground, Eaglecrest, Eagle River State Park, and occasionally the N. Douglas Pioneer Rd.

#### **d. What are your organization's BIG trail goals for Juneau over the next 20 years?**

Mike (JNSC): Juneau could host a 50K ski race in town, rivaling the Tour of Anchorage. With new ski MMS (Mendenhall Montana Spaulding) trails connecting MGRA to Montana Creek to Spaulding Meadows and back. XC running, hiking, mountain biking, berry picking, hunting access recreation/events would be summertime multi-use.

Tristan (JDHS Coach+): No other course in our region provides the kind of XC terrain and loops to accommodate 200 runners from across the state. Eventually, we hope to host the State XC meet there- want that to be reflected in a long-range plan. How can we work in concert with the people of that neighborhood? We're engaging XC runners in trail building.

- Ryan (Tmix): What category of improvement would need to happen?
- Tristan: 1) Wider trails to accommodate more runners. 2) Adding in loops so that you could get 3 consistent laps. 3) Wide start/finish area.

Imagine a connection to Juneau all off-road, urban trail network like anchorage has- starting with Mendenhall valley trail network. Mendenhall has consistent snow! Twice as many people this year skiing than last year. Huge strain on the existing trail system. Off Dredge Lake trail system or Moraine system has some opportunity for some great trails, Eagle Crest, end of basin road.... out the road is just pretty far out there. Hard to say whether it's a bigger priority to build new trails or improve existing.

Merry (JDHS Coach+): Area by Amalga, Methodist camp, Eagle Beach could be a great spot for a big ol' trail network connecting over rivers etc.

Oden (JNSC): Lit trails

Mike (JNSC): Snow lines are getting higher and we need to be proactive about how that's going to change in the next 20 years. Skiing is an endangered sport because of that. Higher, colder parts of town are better.

XC:

- Continue to engage high school youth and utilize all of our local trails.
- Ensure that local trail access is a priority over tourism use
- Develop/improve our A Káx Yaa Andagan Yé course for ability to host the AK State XC meet
- Develop 2-3 more XC courses to serve more middle/high school athletes in Juneau/Southeast

LCA:

- We are expanding our programs slowly with goals of offering summer long opportunities for youth (K-12) in the next 5-10 years.
- Ensure that our nonprofit program/ trail access is a priority over tourism use
- Snowshoe: Continue to train young athletes as well as prepare them for the AWG. Establish annual community races/relays/events.

Nordic

- In collaboration with JNST, maintain and sustain our programs to develop more youth and adult Nordic skiers in our community
- Develop more access to groomed trails including Spaulding meadows, MGRA and Back Dredge, connected Eagle Valley Center/Boy Scout Camp/Eagle River State Park area.
- Support the expansion/grooming at Eaglecrest Ski area
- Ensure the safe and healthy experience of our users by separating non-motorized/motorized use.
- Build a biathlon range.

---

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FROM USER GROUPS** (Include name and group affiliation!)

Mike H (JNSC) Build the MMS ski and multi-use trails with the 3 land agencies (USFS, CBJ, and AKDNR).