

Meeting Minutes

Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: January 21, 2026

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00PM

Location: Via Zoom

Meeting called to order by: Shannon McCarthy/Rebecca Garrett/Hazel Cristobal

In Attendance

- ARTAC Members Present: Lisa Agnew, Craig Compeau, Jeffrey Collins, Lee Hart, Allie Sargent, Terry Valentine, and Jennifer Yuhas
- Agency Staff Present: Andy Mills, Shannon McCarthy, Hazel Cristobal, Rebecca Garrett (Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF)); Ricky Gease (Department of Natural Resources).

Summary

The Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (ARTAC) meeting on January 21, 2026, discussed the Snowtrails program, applications, and funding methodology. Committee members confirmed the use of reasonable and transparent criteria for project evaluation. Andy Morrison representing Alaska Backcountry Access raised concerns about funding for federal lands. The committee voted to proceed with the Snowtrails program, releasing federal funds for fiscal year 26. They also discussed the need for expediency in awarding funds and planned to review bylaws and charter in the next meeting, scheduled via Doodle poll. The meeting concluded at 12:27 PM.

Overview and Applications

- Snowtrails Program is a subrecipient award to local nonprofits, tribes, municipalities, or government agencies for grooming existing trails.
- Eligible activities include snow grooming, brush cutting, and similar trail maintenance.
- Funding source chosen: Recreational Trail Program (RTP) pending an advisory motion from ARTAC; STBG was previously considered but deemed more burdensome.
- Administration funding is forthcoming; inspections are planned and a partnership with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough will assist inspections and reduce admin costs; reporting requires photo documentation.

- Committee requested confirmation of state-agency oversight for accountability; grants were previously submitted/tentatively approved and are being confirmed for procedural appropriateness

Funding Source and Federal/State Process Details

- Advisory motion requested to use Recreational Trail Program (RTP) funds for the snowtrails snow-grooming program instead of STBG; funding is specific to multi-use snow trails.
- Projects are for FY26 only; awards were intended by October 1 but that deadline was missed.
- Clubs are operating on state (non-participating) funds currently; many awards historically issued in December or January.
- Planned timeline: applications in March–April, committee review and advisory recommendation in June, awards in place before October 1 to allow year-round maintenance (tree/brush removal, etc.).
- Federal award release requires this advisory vote; federal award process takes 4–6 weeks, staff will supplement with additional state funds while federal processing occurs; some awards already signed and funded by state.

Vote, Recusal, Governance & Next Meeting

- Advisory motion to release federal funds passed by roll call 6-0 and was forwarded to the commissioner.
- Federal award processing is expected to take 4–6 weeks; additional state funds will bridge awards while awaiting federal release; funding spreadsheet breaks out federal and state amounts by award.
- Committee will review bylaws, charter, program criteria and scoring for RTP, Snowtrails, Ice Roads, and Winter Trail marking and will aim to move applications earlier in the year.
- Next meeting to be scheduled via Doodle poll in 2–3 weeks with midday and evening options; at least two members requested avoiding Wednesday noon.
- Member recused due to board membership in a recipient; parliamentarian noted that a tied vote with recusals (e.g., 3-3) would result in a failed motion.

Motion to adjourn was made at 12:27 p.m. and was passed.