

# Meeting Minutes

## Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee Meeting

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Date: February 5, 2026

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00PM

Location: Via Zoom

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

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### In Attendance

- ARTAC Members Present: Lisa Agnew, Craig Compeau, Jeffrey Collins, Lee Hart (12:12PM), 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)); Natalya Fomina (Department of Natural Resources).

### Summary

The meeting focused on reviewing government documents, introducing scoring criteria for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), and addressing other business.

Public comments highlighted concerns about the exclusion of for-profit businesses, the 1099 model for snowmobile trail work, and the geographic inequality of the club-based grant system, particularly for Western Alaska. Bylaws need further revisions based on committee and public feedback, including public comment sections and record-keeping details. The Charter was approved with minor edits. Significant discussion revolved around the scoring criteria for the Multi-Use Trails and Ice Roads/Snow Trails programs, with a focus on reducing the weight of the "general quality and accuracy" category and incorporating equity considerations. The meeting concluded at 12:55 PM.

### Decisions Made

**Agenda Approval:** The agenda for the current meeting was approved.

*Motion by:* Jeffrey Collins

*Seconded by:* Jennifer Yuhas

**Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:** Postponed due to minutes not being included in packets. Will be reviewed at the next meeting.

**Adoption of Charter:** The charter was adopted as written; with the understanding that "draft" will be removed.

*Motion by:* Jennifer Yuhas

*Seconded by:* Lee Hart

**Scoring Criteria Discussion:** A motion was made and seconded to initiate discussion on the scoring criteria without expectation of adopting specifics at this meeting.

*Motion by:* Jennifer Yuhas

*Seconded by:* Allie Sargent

## **Tasks**

**Bylaws Revision:** Rebecca to prepare edits for the bylaws based on comments received, to be reviewed at the next meeting.

*Details:* Incorporate feedback on actions between meetings (4.3), officer elections (7.1), officer removal (7.3), public participation specifics (2.3), and meeting records (2.5).

**Charter Edits:** Rebecca to remove "draft" language from the charter.

**Scoring Criteria Revision:** Rebecca to prepare a marked-up version or new draft of the scoring criteria based on committee comments for discussion at the next meeting.

*Details:* Address the weighting of the "general quality and accuracy" category (28 points), consider breaking it into subcategories (e.g., narrative clarity, budget accuracy, schedule feasibility, completeness), incorporate historical access considerations, explore a rating system for previous awardees, and address geographic equity concerns (e.g., population served, rural/remote areas).

**Public Comment Emails:** Committee members to send emails with their comments on the bylaws and scoring criteria to Rebecca.

*Responsible:* All committee members

**Meeting Scheduling:** Rebecca to send out a Doodle Poll for the next meeting, approximately two weeks from now.

## **Deadlines**

**Public Comment Submission (Bylaws & Scoring Criteria):** Within the next three days (from the meeting date).

**Next Meeting:** Approximately two weeks from the current meeting date (Doodle Poll to be sent out).

## **Follow-up Actions**

**Bylaws Re-review:** Committee to review the revised bylaws at the next meeting with potential action.

**Scoring Criteria Re-discussion:** Committee to discuss the new draft of the scoring criteria at the next meeting.

**Public Comment Periods:** Ensure future meetings include two public comment periods: one at the beginning and one at the end.

**Record Keeping:** Provide specific directions for where meeting materials and minutes can be found.

## **Discussion Points**

**Public Comment Period Structure:** Request for more specific details on when public comment sections occur and for two comment opportunities per meeting (beginning and end).

### **Bylaws Content:**

Redundancy of "advisory only" statement in 4.3.

Clarity on officer elections (7.1) and removal (7.3) regarding commissioner concurrence and "at will" appointments.

Inclusion of guidelines for written comments and clear links to meeting records.

**Charter Content:** General agreement on the charter, with Rebecca noting the removal of "draft." Andy Mills provided context on the purpose of a department charter (vision, mission, values).

### **Scoring Criteria (Multi-Use Trails, Ice Roads, Snow Trails):**

Weight of "General Quality and Accuracy" (28 points): Concerns raised about this category being too heavily weighted, potentially penalizing applicants with less writing expertise and focusing on grammar/spelling over project quality. Suggestions to break it into subcategories (e.g., narrative clarity, budget accuracy, schedule feasibility, completeness).

**New Recreation Assets Criterion:** Lee Hart pointed out that the current scoring focuses solely on new assets, while RTP grants have broader allowable uses. Suggested indicating which of the seven general priority areas a grant fall under.

**Historical Access:** Jennifer Yuhas proposed adding criteria to consider projects that facilitate or further historic access.

**Previous Awardee Performance:** Jennifer Yuhas suggested a rating system for past awardees (like vendor procurement) to identify good partners and those who defaulted, while acknowledging the need to consider changes in entity leadership.

### **Geographic Equity:**

Concerns about funding primarily going to Railbelt snowmobile clubs and the exclusion of Western Alaska and other rural areas.

Lisa Agnew proposed adding a geographic question to the scoring, such as prioritizing projects in rural/remote areas or outside the Railbelt.

Lee Hart questioned the "population served" criterion, arguing it biases against projects in smaller communities that may have significant impact. Suggested focusing on "depth of partnerships."

Andy Mills provided context on DOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) which considers geographic parity, acknowledging higher infrastructure costs in some areas.

**Subjective Terminology:** Lee Hart noted the use of subjective terms in the criteria (e.g., "excellence") that lack clear definitions for applicants and scorers.

**Procurement/Bidding Requirements:** Lee Hart highlighted issues with requirements like three bids for materials over \$1,000, which can be unfeasible in remote communities with limited vendors.

**Public Notice and Landowner Identification:** Lisa Agnew suggested these should be eligibility requirements (yay/nay) rather than scored items, arguing that failure to meet them should disqualify an application. Rebecca confirmed public notice is a requirement for application.

**Public Comment (Second Period):**

Andy Morrison reiterated concerns about permit procurement violations, discrimination against Western Alaska due to the nonprofit-only restriction, and federal non-compliance issues if the charter funds unpermitted entities. He urged the board to amend the eligibility section to be "entity neutral."

Jennifer Yuhas sought clarification from staff on whether applications were received from Western Alaska for the Snow Trails program, noting none were received. She also reiterated that many tribal entities and local governments are nonprofits and asked about federal constraints on funds. Rebecca confirmed that RTP funds, used for snow trails, have specific eligibility criteria, limiting applicants to nonprofits, tribes, and local governments, and it is a grant program, not a bid program.

Motion to adjourn was made at 12:55 p.m. and was passed.