

Meeting Minutes

Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: May 7, 2026

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:30PM

Location: Via Zoom

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

In Attendance

- ARTAC Members Present: Lisa Agnew, Jeffrey Collins (12:11PM), Craig Compeau, Lee Hart, Allie Sargent (12:05PM), 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 Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (ARTAC) held a meeting on May 7th to review and act on prior meeting minutes and recreational trails applications. The meeting began with technical difficulties, and issues with committee members joining as presenters. Rebecca Garrett, Chair of the ARTAC committee, led the meeting. Hazel conducted a roll call, confirming five members present and two absent, allowing the meeting to proceed.

The agenda included approving prior meeting minutes and reviewing recreational trails applications. Public comments were opened, with speakers representing various organizations and projects, including Valdez Adventure Alliance, snowmobile trail programs, Alaska State Parks, Big Lake Trails, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Eagle River Nature Center, Petersville Community Nonprofit, and the City of Kake. Many commenters provided details on their projects, requested funding, and offered to answer questions.

The committee then began reviewing applications, discussing Petersville Community Nonprofit's Tundra Mats project, Chugach National Forest Trail Brushing, Alaska State Parks' Winter Trailhead Site Improvements, and Petersville Trails and Rescue Center. Key discussion points included discrepancies in budget figures, lack of contractor quotes, concerns about the longevity of materials, and clarity on land access and partnership letters. Some committee members, like Ali

Sargent, indicated they scored lower due to lack of detail in budget breakdown or justification for specific items. Several committee members expressed a desire for clearer guidelines and a more streamlined application process, particularly regarding quotes, project timelines, and the applicability of scoring criteria to diverse project types (equipment, safety/education, trail construction). There was also discussion about how to handle conflicts of interest and how to ensure consistent scoring standards across different applicant types.

The meeting included discussions on several specific projects, with some applicants providing clarifications and responses to committee questions during public comments. The meeting involved a detailed review and scoring of several project applications: the City of Bethel's YK Trail, the City of Cape's Cape Community Nature Trail, the Buskin River Safety and Education Project, and the Silver King SRA Groundwater Education Project. Discussions highlighted issues such as missing match information, inconsistencies in project descriptions and budgets, and the need for clarification on specific task details and eligible costs. The group decided to follow up with applicants for clarification on key issues, particularly regarding funding match and budget discrepancies. The educational projects (Buskin River and Silver King) were noted as falling within a special set aside for RTP funds. The meeting concluded with a plan to update score sheets, finalize scores, and make decisions based on a 30/30/40 split for funding. The next meeting will focus on scoring criteria for the upcoming application season.

Technical Difficulties

Initial challenges with meeting access and presenter roles.

Meeting Logistics

Roll call, approval of prior meeting minutes, and establishment of public comment procedures (2-minute limit, hand-raising for unmuting).

Application Review Process: Scoring Discussion

Committee members presented and justified their scores for each application.

Common Issues Identified

Lack of detailed contractor quotes or bids.

Discrepancies in budget figures and narratives.

Insufficient justification for specific equipment or material choices.

Inconsistent or missing public notice documentation (e.g., photos of postings, incorrect dates).

Clarity on land access and letters of support from relevant entities (e.g., borough, state parks).

Concerns about the longevity and durability of proposed materials for projects.

Clarity on ADA accessibility implementation.

Questions regarding the categorization of projects (e.g., motorized vs. non-motorized for equipment purchases).

Lack of detail on equipment maintenance plans or disposal.

Inconsistencies in tribal consultation documentation.

Recommendations for Future Application Cycles

Clearer instructions for uploading supporting documents (e.g., quotes, maps).
Dedicated sections for equipment requests in budget workbooks.
Guidance on documenting the efficacy or alternatives considered for project solutions.
Standardized expectations for all applicants (state, non-profit, tribal entities).
Improved clarification on match contributions (volunteer vs. monetary) and documentation.

Application Feedback and Clarification

Need for clarification on funding match for the Kake Community Nature Trail.
Questions about the eligibility of specific costs (e.g., \$40,000 planning study).
Concerns regarding consistency between project descriptions, public notices, and budgets.
Blank Task 3 in an application spreadsheet.

DOT&PF Policy and Procedure

Confirmation that scores must be based on submitted applications, with follow-up questions for applicants handled after the meeting.
Mention of a 5% cap for educational use of Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds, with two projects falling under this special set aside.
Decision-making for funding will be based on a 30/30/40 split after scores are finalized.

Committee Process & Future Steps

Ability to adjust scores live during the meeting.
Clarification on accessing reviewer comments for applicants (via Submittable).
Discussion on the possibility of continuing the meeting to complete application reviews due to time constraints, and the public notice requirements for such a continuation.
Acknowledgement that some applicants, despite submitting quotes, experienced issues with them appearing in Submittable, indicating system-level improvements are needed.
Acknowledgement of the small trail community leading to familiarity among applicants and reviewers, and the need to clarify conflict of interest guidelines.
Natalia to send instructions for updating score sheets.
Final scores will be made public.
DOT&PF will make final funding decisions.
A follow-up meeting will be scheduled soon to continue working on scoring criteria for the next application season.

Motion to adjourn was made at 2:16 p.m. and was passed.