



2024

# Denali Borough

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COMMUNITY & OUTDOOR  
RECREATION PLAN





*The Community & Outdoor Recreation Committee would like to acknowledge that the Denali Borough is the home to many different Indigenous Peoples. They have cared for this land for thousands of years and we are reminded of their deep connection to this region.*



**Denali Borough**, the gateway to Denali National Park, embodies the best of Alaska with over 12,000 square miles of extraordinary scenery and wild country.



**The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA)** supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the United States. NPS-RTCA assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.



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# 01 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Community and Outdoor Recreation Plan (the Plan) supports the future of recreation opportunities in our communities for the benefit of residents, businesses, and visitors. The leadership of Mayor Chris Noel, Former Mayor Clay Walker, the Denali Borough Assembly, and the Denali Borough Planning Commission has supported the Plan's development. The partnerships with the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) and Alaska Trails have been instrumental in the success of this planning process. The Plan could not have been accomplished without the effort, direction, and dedication of our Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee.

## **Community & Outdoor Recreation Committee Members**

Tina Graham, Presiding Officer

Patrice La Vigne, Deputy Presiding Officer

Aaron Eddington

Luke Lohmuller

Gabe Travis

Terry Boyd

Kyle Davis

Al Guggisberg

Tammany George

Taylor Bracher

## **Ex Officio Members:**

Teresa Floberg, Denali Borough

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Haley Johnston, Alaska Trails

Sara Lucey, Alaska DOT&PF

Martha Tomeo, Denali National Park and Preserve

*Thank you to all the members of the public who have been engaged in this process and submitted comments along the way. There is still a lot of work to do. In fact, the work has just begun!*









# 02

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Denali Borough's Community and Outdoor Recreation Plan (the Plan) is a dynamic document designed to enhance local recreation opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors. The Plan includes the layout and demographics of the Borough's communities, details about land managers in the area, current conditions of local recreation, the purpose of the planning process, and public feedback on proposed concepts and projects. The collaborative planning process included municipal staff and volunteer committee members made up of local residents—with input from community surveys—over two years.

Residents and visitors alike value the natural beauty and abundant recreational opportunities afforded in the area. Except for those on federal lands, most of the parks, trails, and recreation resources in the Denali Borough are managed and maintained by local nonprofit organizations and the Denali Borough School District. The Denali Borough can add to the capacity of local recreation through planning and investments to further serve the needs of its communities. Community-developed goals in the Plan will guide intentional decisions for municipal recreation.

Strategies and action items assign specific tasks to Borough staff and the Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee to achieve these goals and strengthen the recreation programs and projects in the Borough's communities. In addition, seven recreation projects have been identified that have both public support and could be accomplished in the next 5-10 years. Each project will need further planning, public engagement, grant funding, and municipal investment to develop and implement.

The Plan is a strategic framework designed to enhance the quality of life for residents through new and improved recreational facilities and programs. It serves as a roadmap for fostering community engagement, promoting well-being, identifying new opportunities, and ensuring equitable access to recreational opportunities.



The land ownership information displayed on this map may contain errors. This map is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a legal survey or plat.

**Sources:** ADNIR, ADCRA, AKDOT, BLM, Denali Borough, Esri, USGS

**Created by:** Alaska Trails - 10/27/2024



\*project depiction and 17(b) may be approximate

## Community and Outdoor Recreation Goals

### COMMUNITY IDENTITY & PRIORITIES

Ensure the unique identity of each community within the Denali Borough is preserved.

### INDOOR & OUTDOOR FACILITIES AND PARKS

Support mental and physical health in the Denali Borough by increasing recreation opportunities.

### TRAILS

Create and maintain sustainable trail networks that improve and connect existing trails with new trails.

### EDUCATION

Educate the public on the values of responsible recreation and provide them with easily accessible information.

### PARTNERSHIPS

Bring energetic trails and outdoor recreation partnerships to the Denali Borough.



# PLANNING PROCESS

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**2018** **Department of Parks & Recreation established**

**Land Use and Economic Plan supports recreation & tourism**

The Community and Outdoor Recreation Plan supports the past planning efforts by the Denali Borough. The 2018 Land Use and Economic Development Plan included a land use goal to support quality, sustainable “front country” recreation and tourism. The next step was to work with partners like the State of Alaska and the National Park Service to improve the tourism and recreation opportunities and focus on those that simultaneously benefit visitors, residents, and businesses.

**2020** **Land Management Plan adopted**

The Land Management Plan adopted in 2020 set the stage for the intentional use of 47,000 acres of Borough lands to achieve the overarching goal of supporting uses that meet local needs. One of the classifications used for Borough-owned land is recreation—real property intended to be retained where the primary use is public and/or commercial outdoor recreational areas and facilities.

**2022** **Community Health Needs Assessment**

**Nine members appointed to Community & Outdoor Recreation Committee**

In 2018, The Denali Borough created the Department of Parks and Recreation by Assembly Ordinance 18-08. The department’s scope allows it to perform Borough activities, maintenance, and repairs as they relate to Borough facilities, including playgrounds, trails, municipal cemeteries, recreational and sporting facilities, and to support other Borough facilities and municipal property.

**2024** **Draft Plan shared with public**

The 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) identified strengths and health priorities for the Denali Borough. It also determined which resources are needed to address these priorities. Physical activity and indoor recreation ranked in the top five of priority health needs for the residents of the Borough.

The Denali Borough Assembly appointed nine members to the Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORA) in May of 2022 from the seventeen residents who submitted interest in serving on the committee. Careful consideration was given to appoint committee members who represented both diverse interests and backgrounds and were geographically spread throughout our several communities.

The CORA met every two months beginning in June 2022 to develop the Plan and engage the public. A draft of the Plan was shared with the public for comment in the fall of 2024. A final version was approved by the CORA and the Planning Commission and adopted by the Denali Borough Assembly in MONTH YEAR. The Community and Outdoor Recreation Plan is a living document. Its intent is to serve our communities and guide future planning and investments in recreation.







# 04 INVITATION TO READERS

The development of the Antler Ridge trailhead launched the Denali Borough into the world of recreation (project information in section 10). The project started in 2019 and was funded through the Federal Lands Access Grant. It has been a partnership project with Western Federal Lands, National Park Service, Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. It paved the way to undertake a comprehensive planning effort to guide future recreation opportunities and investments.

The Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORA) has identified specific recreation goals for the coming years (see section 5), as well as the strategies and action items to achieve these goals (see section 9b). Public surveys helped guide the planning process and identify community priorities.



The spring 2023 survey (245 public responses) demonstrated overall public support for recreation, as well as highlighted the top recreation opportunities residents hope to see in their community. Those survey results guided the development of seven potential project concepts that were presented in a fall 2023 public survey (241 public responses) to gauge the level of community interest (see section 11).

Not all of the highest-ranking projects have been included in the Plan. Larger infrastructure projects, such as a community recreation center, represent a level of investment and maintenance commitment that is beyond the current budgetary structure and capacity of the Denali Borough. Current efforts of local nonprofits to accomplish these large capital projects are outlined in section 8e.

The planning process focused on goals that will have a lasting impact on our communities by providing increased opportunities for recreation. Emphasis was placed on enhancing the quality of life for everyone that visits, lives, works, and raises a family in the Denali Borough, now and in the future.







# 05

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## PURPOSE

- Plan diverse and accessible community and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Protect the unique identity of our communities and subsistence uses of wild resources.
- Preserve our subarctic ecosystems through sustainable use and intentional management.

## VISION

Our vision is that the Denali Borough is a vibrant place to live and recreate. It is a place where recreation creates a strong sense of community identity, supports physical and mental health, sustains a resilient economy, and safeguards subsistence uses of the land. Planning and management of recreation resources and infrastructure are done with a commitment to community engagement and to balancing future growth with honoring the past.





# GOALS

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## **COMMUNITY IDENTITY & PRIORITIES**

Ensure the unique identity of each community within the Denali Borough is preserved.

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## **INDOOR & OUTDOOR FACILITIES AND PARKS**

Support mental and physical health in the Denali Borough by increasing recreation opportunities.

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## **TRAILS**

Create and maintain sustainable trail networks that improve and connect existing trails with new trails.

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## **EDUCATION**

Educate the public on the values of responsible recreation and provide easily accessible information.

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## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Bring energetic trails and outdoor recreation partnerships to the Denali Borough.

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# CONTEXT

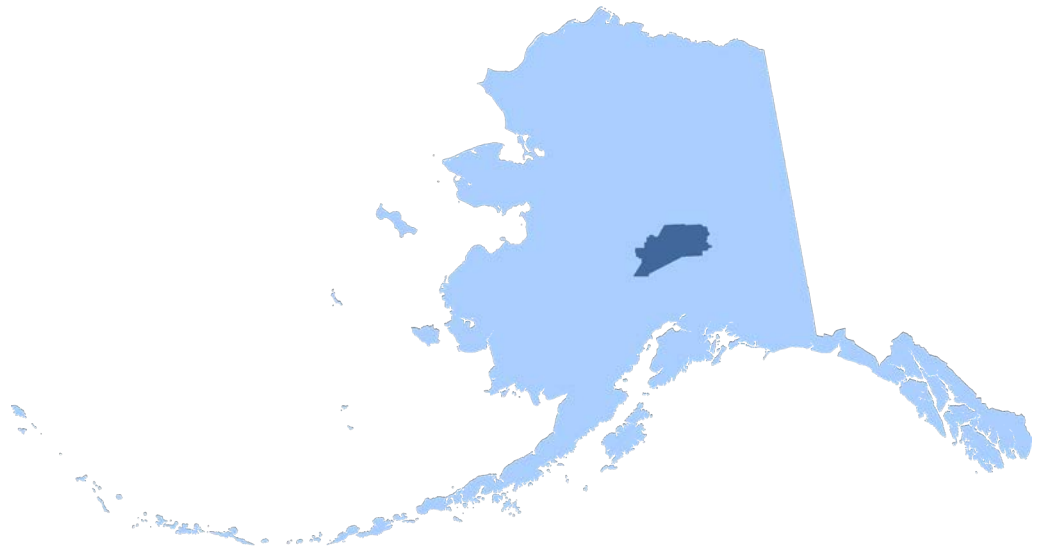


## THE DENALI BOROUGH

The Denali Borough was incorporated in 1990 and encompasses over 12,000 square miles (8.2 million acres). Located in the interior, it embodies the best of Alaska: extraordinary scenic and wild country, abundant wildlife, critical migratory bird habitats, the highest mountain on the continent (Denali at 20,310 feet), extensive and productive natural resources, a diverse economy, and 1,619 year-round residents (2020 Census).

Denali Borough is a home rule Borough. Home rule municipalities are political subdivisions that have adopted a home rule charter. In Alaska, they have all legislative powers not prohibited by law or charter. The mayor acts as the administrative manager and the assembly acts as the legislative body. Both the mayor and assembly are elected. The Borough funds education, solid waste disposal, planning, platting, EMS services (via volunteer departments), land use regulation, and 911 communications.

The Borough's location provides ample opportunity for outdoor activities year-round, including hiking, backpacking, biking, boating, skiing, snowshoeing, dog mushing, horseback riding, hunting and more. In line with the spirit of the Alaskan Lifestyle, Borough residents encompass a diverse population of outdoor enthusiasts, and the existing conditions of location, outdoor recreation opportunities, natural beauty, snowfall, and road system access are prime.





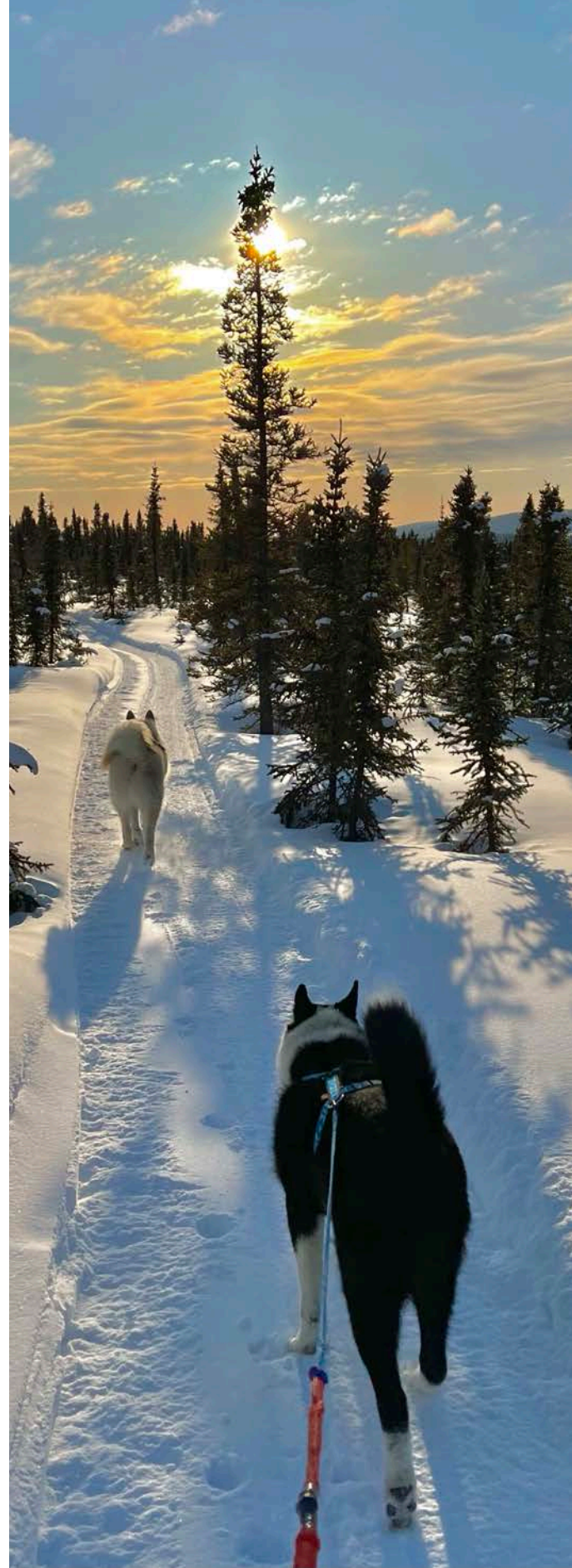
## COMMUNITY PROFILES

The Denali Borough has four main communities: Anderson, Healy, McKinley Village, Cantwell, and several smaller settlements. These communities are located along the George Parks Highway (Parks Highway) and the Alaska Railroad, both major north-south arteries that transport people and goods within the state. The Denali Borough is proud to serve as both a nurturing home for residents and a premier destination for over 600,000 summer visitors as a gateway to Denali National Park and Preserve.

### Anderson & Surrounding Communities

The City of Anderson was established in 1962 and is the most northern community in the Denali Borough, located approximately 6 miles to the west of the Parks Highway at milepost (MP) 283.5. It is the only incorporated community in the Denali Borough. The town was founded by homesteaders in the late 1950s. Arthur Anderson subdivided and sold his property establishing land lots available for civilian employees that worked at Clear Air Force Station. The land that Clear is built on was originally purchased by the Department of the Interior in 1949 for use as a gunnery range for Ladd Field. Construction began on the Clear Missile Early Warning Station facilities in August 1958 and the radar for air defense was operational by late 1961. Now called Clear Space Force Station, it continues to provide military missile warning and defense and is an employer of many Anderson residents.

Anderson is home to Anderson Riverside Park, a serene campground with river access to the Nenana River with campsites, some with electric hookups, and restroom facilities. There is a public use airstrip located between Anderson and Clear. The Clear Sky Sportsman's Club hosts trap shoots and outdoor activities. Neighboring settlements include Clear Sky, Rex Trail and the Kobe Ag subdivision.





## Healy & Surrounding Communities

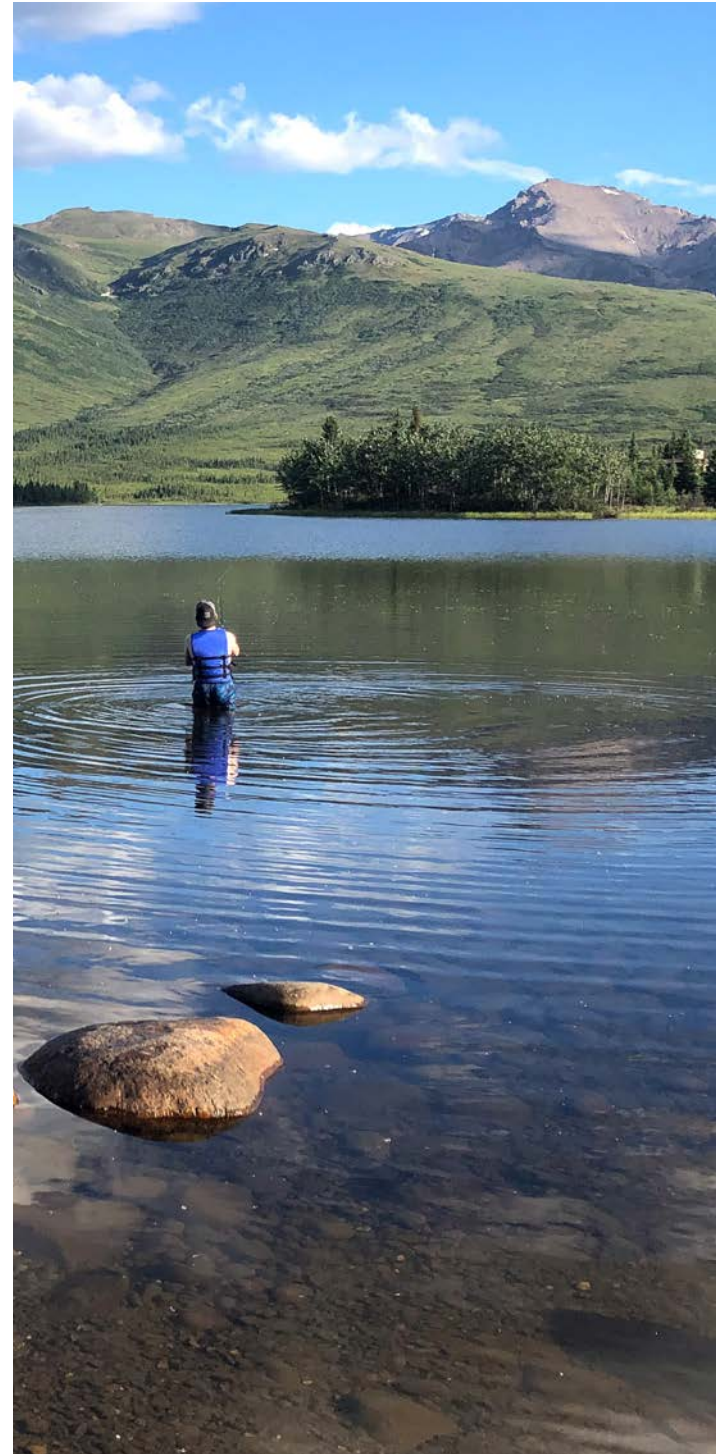
Healy, the Denali Borough seat, is centered near MP 248 of the Parks Highway. Healy is home to roughly half of the Borough's population with around 1,000 residents. During the summer months, the population more than triples with seasonal workers and visitors.

The area broadly known as Healy today found its start in mining. In 1914, the US Congress passed two Acts that were dependent on the other and of equal importance for the development of Healy. The Alaska Railway Act authorized the construction of an all-weather government railroad from Seward to Fairbanks, and The Coal Leasing Act opened federal lands for mining. Healy was established as a permanent railroad station by 1919, and mining operations began. In the 1940s, in the area now known as Healy River Valley, a series of mini communities had formed at each mining site. Over time, the mining operations merged or closed until only Usibelli Coal Mine remained. Healy was initially located next to the Alaska Railroad tracks near the Nenana River and over time, relocated along the Parks Highway. The Dry Creek Archaeology Site in Healy dates back 13,000 years before present (BP). This site is evidence that the area was visited by Upper Paleolithic hunter-gatherers who migrated across the Berling Land Bridge to Alaska. The Dry Creek site is significant to our understanding of the earliest Americans.

Beginning in 1965, it was possible to drive a car from Healy to Fairbanks. However, there was no bridge at Nenana, so drivers could only travel on the ice in the winter or take a ferry in the summer. If you wanted to drive to Anchorage, you had to go through Fairbanks, Delta, and Glennallen. The Anchorage-Fairbanks (now George Parks) Highway was completed in 1971.

Residential areas north of Healy include Bear Creek, June Creek and Rock Creek homesteads and the community of Ferry. Stampede and Lignite Roads each host a small subdivision. To the south of the central Healy area, the Otto Lake, Hilltop, and Ranch Road communities spread from the foothills of the Healy Range to Dry Creek.

The Healy area is full of a variety of recreation opportunities, including boating, hiking, hunting, ATV trails, berry picking, bike riding, dog mushing, snow machining, skiing, horseback riding, community playground, golf course, and many commercial activities.





## **McKinley Village, Denali Park & Surrounding Communities**

McKinley Village is an unincorporated community near the entrance of Denali National Park centered at MP 230 of the Parks Highway. It consists of residential neighborhoods mixed with seasonal tourism businesses. The McKinley Village area starts approximately seven miles south of the park entrance and is mostly hidden from view when traveling the highway.

The first year-round resident of the area was Bill Nancarrow who homesteaded land at Deneki Lakes in 1954. Other homesteads gradually grew in this area and many of them were eventually subdivided into the neighborhoods that exist today, including the Village View Subdivision. Prior to the Parks Highway, the Denali Highway opened in 1957, linking the Richardson Highway to the Denali Park Road. In the late 1950s, several small businesses opened in this area to support the tourism of the National Park, and this continues to be true today.

McKinley Village has a community center and playground that serves as a frequent gathering place for local events and activities. Community members enjoy backcountry and cross country skiing, dog mushing, snowmachining, hiking, berry picking, river rafting and other paddle sports, and hunting in the area.

To the north of McKinley Village is the main entrance to Denali National Park at MP 237 of the Parks Highway. Park Headquarters, located at MP 3.4 of Denali Park Road, is the center for many National Park Service employees. There are both permanent and seasonal housing neighborhoods in this area. Kantishna, a historic mining area at MP 92 of the Denali National Park Road, is home to seasonal businesses and a handful of private inholdings. Carlo Creek is a small neighborhood in this area with permanent housing and seasonal businesses, located at MP 224 of the Parks Highway.



## The Native Village of Cantwell, Cantwell & Surrounding Communities

Located in the southern portion of the Denali Borough at MP 210 of the Parks Highway, Cantwell has roughly 200 residents. The earliest inhabitants of the Cantwell area (Yedatene Na') were nomadic Indians who trapped, hunted, and fished throughout Interior Alaska and to the east in the Copper River basin. According to Donald Orth in *Alaska Place Names*, Cantwell was named after the Cantwell River (now known as the Nenana River), which got its name in 1885 when a US army officer, Lieutenant Henry T. Allan, explored parts of Alaska and made a map that named the river after John C. Cantwell, a captain in the US Revenue Cutter Service.

In 1919, Swedish immigrant John E. Carlson built and ran a roadhouse in Cantwell that outfitted the gold miners working at claims along Valdez Creek. When the railroad was constructed through the area, the roadhouse became a flag stop for railroad workers, gold miners and passengers. With the onset of WWII, and the closing of gold mines, many miners moved to Cantwell to find employment with the Alaska Railroad and the Alaska Road Commission. A native Alaskan that moved to the area when the price of furs dropped was Oley Nicklie, followed by his two brothers, who found jobs with the Alaska Railroad and became permanent residents. Both Carlson and Nicklie have descendants in the Cantwell community today.

The completion of the Denali Highway (1957) and the George Parks Highway (1971) greatly impacted the development of the area. Cantwell continues to be an important crossroads for Alaska's transportation network. Its connection to the Denali Highway offers tremendous recreational and subsistence opportunities. In winter, the wide-open tundra covered with deep snow makes this a winter wonderland, where skiers, snowmachiners, ice fishermen and dog mushers enjoy their activities. In warmer summer months, hikers, campers, packrafters, hunters, anglers, berry pickers, photographers, and ATV users adventure there.

A major landholder in this area is the regional native corporation, Ahtna, Inc (more information on Ahtna Inc., is included in the following "Land manager" section). The Native Village of Cantwell is a federally-recognized Indian Tribe government. Its governing body is the Cantwell Village Council, which has sovereign authority to create laws and policies that protect the health, safety, and welfare of its tribal members. Residential neighborhoods in and around Cantwell include the original Cantwell Townsite, the Drashner Lake area, Cantwell Heights, and The Jack River Nation.







## LAND MANAGERS

The Denali Borough land ownership and management is a mosaic of public, private, and Native lands. Most of the Borough's land is federally owned as part of Denali National Park and Preserve, but there are several other landowners and land managers with different priorities and objectives.

### Denali Borough

Denali Borough manages approximately 47,000 acres of land transferred from the State of Alaska, known as Municipal Land Entitlements or Municipal Land. The goal of these land transfers is to support locally important land use needs, including private residential and commercial uses, as well as retention for public purposes. Municipal Land is owned by the Borough and is separate and distinct from lands in the Borough held by private landowners and public land managers.

The Borough is authorized to sell, lease, retain, or use their entitlements in accordance with Title 4 of the Denali Borough Code, Real Property Acquisition, Management, and Disposal. A prerequisite for taking any significant action with its property is: 1) to classify each parcel (i.e. identify the parcel's present and intended future use); and 2) to prepare a management plan that details the Borough's intent for the parcel, which can include recreation purposes.

### Denali National Park & Preserve

Mt. McKinley National Park was established in 1917 and was the first national park created specifically to protect its wildlife. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980 tripled the park's size to 6 million acres and renamed it Denali National Park and Preserve. At the same time, most of the original 2 million acres of parklands were designated as federal Wilderness.

Denali National Park encompasses the Alaska Range and is a complete sub-arctic ecosystem with large mammals such as grizzly bears, wolves, Dall sheep, caribou, and moose. Today, the park accommodates a wide variety of visitor use including bus tours, wildlife viewing, scenic flights, mountaineering, camping, hiking, packrafting, cycling, skiing, and dog sledding.

*The Park's mission is to protect intact, the globally significant Denali ecosystems, including their cultural, aesthetic, and wilderness values, and ensure opportunities for inspiration, education, research, recreation and subsistence for this and future generations.*

### **Ahtna, Inc.**

Ahtna, Incorporated is one of 13 Alaska Native Regional Corporations established by Congress under terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971.

Ahtna owns 1.64 million surface and subsurface acres and an additional 63,000 acres of subsurface lands out of an original ANCSA entitlement of 1.77 million acres. Ahtna's Cantwell lands start at MP 117.5 on the Denali Highway and continue to MP 136.5 east of Cantwell. Ahtna's Cantwell lands also stretch from MP 192 to MP 230.5 of the Parks Highway, though there are some non-Ahtna inholdings in the area. Currently, MP 198.25 to MP 199.75 and MP 200.5 to MP 207 of the Parks Highway are in selection status with conveyance in process. Selected and unconveyed ANCSA lands are lands in the process of completing the aboriginal title settlement enacted in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement act of 1971.

Ahtna lands are privately-owned and require purchase of a land use permit for activities such as camping, land crossing, parking, fishing and general recreation. Permits are issued for predator control (bear, wolf and coyotes) and using one of Ahtna's allowed hunting guides allows you to hunt sheep and moose; all other hunting, as well as berry picking, is prohibited. Use of Ahtna lands without a permit is considered trespass under Alaska State law. Information on Ahtna lands, and how to request a land use permit, can be found on their website.

### **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

BLM Alaska manages 70 million acres of mountains, wetlands, and tundra for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. However, there are no National Conservation Lands Units, Recreation Areas, or Visitor Education Centers managed by BLM within the Denali Borough. The primary recreation resource that is managed by BLM in the Borough are 17(b) easements. 17(b) easements are right of ways reserved across privately owned Alaska Native Corporation lands. Travel on a 17(b) easement is allowed for all members of the general public, but use of the land adjacent to it, which is owned by the respective Native corporation, is not. Land-use permits are required for the use of lands adjacent to these easements.

More information on 17(b) easements can be found in the "Existing Conditions" section.

### **Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)**

The DNR's mission is to develop, conserve and maximize the use of Alaska's natural resources consistent with the public interest. It manages all state-owned land, water and natural resources, except for fish and game, on behalf of the people of Alaska. The Division of Mining, Land and Water is the primary manager of Alaska's land holdings and does allow certain uses and activities on state land. These uses include:

- Travel across state land
- Access improvements on state land
- Removing or using state resources
- Improvements and structures on state land
- Miscellaneous uses of state land

A full list of generally allowed uses can be found through the [DNR's website](#).

The Denali Borough has a current easement through the DNR for the construction and maintenance of the Antler Ridge Trail.



### **Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)**

ADF&G's mission is to protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of the state, and manage their use and development in the best interest of the economy and the well-being of the people of the state, consistent with the sustained yield principle. The game management units located within the Denali Borough are 20A, 20C, and 13E for hunting, and the Tanana River Management Area for fishing. ADF&G stocks two lakes in the Borough: Otto Lake and Parks Highway 261. [The Alaska Lake Database](#) shows the lakes that are stocked.

The interactive Anadromous Waters Catalog (AWC) Mapper indicates anadromous water bodies that are protected under Alaska Statutes 16.05.841 and 16.05.871. Fish Habitat Permits may be required for in-body work in fish bearing streams (including but not limited to mining, culverts, bridges, and streambank modifications) through ADF&G.

### **The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)**

The ARRC owns 6,037 acres of land in the Denali Borough, concentrated along the Parks Highway within and to the south of Healy; 4,680 acres of this land is vacant. ARRC seeks to attract the kind of developers and business partners that will continue to improve the state's economy, visitor industry and communities' quality of life. Land leases and permits are available through ARRC. There are several active leases and permits in the Denali Borough, but currently no permitted trails. Information on the status of ARRC land can be found on their [online map](#).

### **Alaska Mental Health Trust**

It is the duty of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide leadership in the advocacy, planning, implementing and funding of services and programs for Trust beneficiaries. The Trust Land Office resides within the DNR and is contracted exclusively by the Alaska Mental

Health Trust Authority to manage its land.

Public recreational use of Trust land for hiking, hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities do not require written permission provided it is: Day use only, non-commercial, non-motorized, and in compliance with applicable state, federal and local laws.

All other activities may require written permission or a permit. Permits are necessary and available online for all non-commercial, recreational activities on Trust land that include:

- Overnight recreational use (such as camping)
- Motorized use (max. curb weight of 1,500 lbs.)
- Firewood harvest
- Subsistence trapping access
- Aircraft landing

### **Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (AK DOT&PF)**

AK DOT&PF operates 35 pullouts/waysides along the 86-mile Parks Highway stretch in Denali Borough's boundary. Three of these locations have summer seasonal restroom facilities: Kingfisher Creek in the Nenana Canyon MP 238, June Creek north of Healy MP 269, and Swan Lake north of Anderson MP 287. The Kingfisher wayside is the only location that also has an interpretive kiosk, which is maintained by the Discover Denali Visitor Center. There is also a public right-of-way at MP 230 to access the Nenana River.

The Parks Highway is designated as a National Scenic Byway. It crosses Native Corporation, federal, state, private, and local municipal lands. The 2008 George Parks Highway National Scenic Byway Master Interpretive Plan identified a need to promote stewardship, enhance visitor connections, update existing interpretation, and tie together different resources and sites along the byway.









# EXISTING CONDITIONS

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## 07



### LOCAL PARKS, TRAILS, AND RECREATION RESOURCES

Both residents and visitors highly value the natural beauty and abundant recreational opportunities afforded in the area. Several local opportunities already exist to enjoy the outdoors and engage in recreation activities. Many of the parks, trails, and recreation resources in the Denali Borough (aside from those on federal lands) are managed and maintained by local nonprofits and the Denali Borough School District.

## Parks/Playgrounds

- City of Anderson Riverside Park
  - A scenic park located next to the Nenana River with views of Denali. Facilities include campsites, restrooms, showers, RV dumping, electrical hook-ups, rustic campsites with barbeque pits, a covered pavilion, and a rifle range. Owned and managed by the City of Anderson.
- Mountains of Fun Playground
  - Located between the Tri-Valley Community Center and the Tri-Valley School. Family friendly facilities that include a playground and covered pavilion; seasonal porta potty maintained on site. Located on Denali Borough property and managed by the Mountains of Fun nonprofit.
- Otto Lake Park
  - The only lakeside park in the Denali Borough, just a mile off the Parks Highway. Infrastructure includes a covered pavilion, playground equipment, BBQ's, picnic tables, sandy beach, dock, and a boat launch. There is no overnight camping permitted. Leased land from the Alaska Railroad and managed by the Healy Valley Lions Club nonprofit. At the time of this Plan, the Lions Club was working with the Borough on funding opportunities to build a vaulted toilet, an essential facility for a public park.
- McKinley Park Community Center Playground
  - Adjacent to the McKinley Park Community Center and Firehall on the Old Parks Highway in McKinley Village. An upgraded playground with picnic tables available to community members. Managed by the McKinley Park Community Center nonprofit.

## Sports Infrastructure

- Denali Borough Schools
  - The three brick and mortar schools (Anderson, Tri-Valley, and Cantwell) are owned by the Denali Borough. The Denali Borough School District manages and administers the education programs and school activities, as well as routine maintenance of the buildings. Infrastructure projects are a collaborative effort between the School District and the Borough. Each school has sports and recreation infrastructure, both indoor and outdoor.
    - Anderson: playground, track and soccer field, cross country trails, and basketball/tennis court (unsafe and unusable), rock climbing wall, gym/basketball and volleyball court
    - Tri-Valley: playground, soccer field, softball field, frisbee golf course, outdoor basketball court, and cross-country ski trails, indoor gym/basketball and volleyball court.
    - Cantwell: playground, hockey rink (unmaintained and unusable), gym/basketball and volleyball court
- Healy Hockey Rink
  - An outdoor hockey rink next to the Tri-Valley Community Center for both high school and club teams. Owned and managed by the Healy Hockey nonprofit.
- Clear Sky Sportsman's Club
  - Shooting and trap range that includes 25- and 50-yard outdoor pistol, 100-yard rifle, and trap. Owned and managed by the Clear Sky Sportsman's Association.
- Cantwell Shooting Range
  - Located at roughly milepost 213 of the Parks Highway on land leased from Ahtna, Inc. Rifle range for 100 to 300 yards. Managed by the Denali Sportsman's Association.



## Trails

- Antler Ridge Trail - located at Milepost 245 of the Parks Highway
  - Public trail that includes an ADA loop, construction scheduled for summer 2025. Maintained by the Denali Borough.
- Denali Highway
  - The Denali Highway is only plowed for three miles outside of Cantwell in the winter; the remaining length turns into a winter trail for snow machining, dog mushing, and skiing. The Denali Highway Trail Club provides winter trail grooming and maintenance.
- Stampede Trail - an RS 2477 trail that begins after the maintained Stampede Rd.
  - Right of way over public land to protect cross-country routes, specifically to mining claims in this location. Unmaintained.
- Rex Trail - eastern access at Milepost 280 of the Parks Highway
  - DNR easement to ensure long-term public access opportunities to support multiple use of state land. Unmaintained, managed as a primarily winter route.
- 17(b) easements - more information in following section on location
  - Managed by the BLM to access public lands adjacent to Ahtna, Inc. lands
- Countless social trails
  - Each community in the Denali Borough has a network of summer and winter, motorized and non-motorized, unmaintained trails used for personal and commercial recreation.

## Nenana River Boat Launches

- There are several informal access points along the Denali and Parks Highway rights-of-ways to access the Nenana River:
  - Reindeer Hills put-in at Milepost 114 of the Denali Highway
  - Windy Bridge put-in at Milepost 215 of the Parks Highway
  - Grassy Knoll put-in at Milepost 220 of the Parks Highway
  - Denali Park Village put-in at Milepost 231 of the Parks Highway
  - Kingfisher Creek put-in at Milepost 238 of the Parks Highway
  - Healy put-in at Milepost 3 of the Healy Spur Road
  - Ferry put-in at the train trestle on Ferry Road
  - Rex Bridge put-in at Milepost 276 of the Parks Highway



## DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE OPPORTUNITIES

Denali National Park and Preserve (DNP) attracts over 600,000 visitors to the Denali Borough annually. DNP is six million acres, two million of which are designated as Wilderness. A single 92-mile-long road bisects the park. This road accommodates tour and transit buses for scenic and wildlife viewing and backcountry camping and hiking. The majority of visitors access DNP via this road, but a variety of other activities are available for visitors to enjoy the Park's many opportunities.

### **Summer Recreation** *(late May to early September)*

- Ranger Programs: Sled Dog Demonstrations, Ranger Talks (evening campground programs), Guided Walks and Hikes, Discovery Hikes
- Wildlife viewing
- Photography
- Hiking
- Backpacking
- Camping
- Packrafting
- Cycling (possible on campground loops, Roadside Bike Trail, Denali Park Road)
- Bikepacking (bicycle camping)
- Fishing
- Flightseeing
- Mountaineering
- Bus tours
- Education programs

### **Winter Recreation**

- Wildlife viewing
- Photography
- Aurora Borealis and Star Gazing
- Flightseeing
- Winter Camping
- Snowshoeing
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Backcountry non-motorized snowsports
- Mushing
- Skijoring
- Mountaineering
- Winter biking
- Snowmobiling (area restrictions)



## Designated Trails

- Denali Park Entrance Area
  - Roadside Bike Path (Easy): 1.7 miles, One-way
  - Spruce Forest Trail (Easy): 0.1 miles, One-way
  - Horseshoe Lake Trail (Moderate): 4 miles, Round-trip
  - McKinley Station Trail (Moderate): 1.6 miles, One-way
  - Rock Creek Trail (Moderate): 2.4 miles, One-way
  - Roadside Hiking Trail (Moderate): 1.8 miles, One-way
  - Mt. Healy Overlook Trail (Strenuous): 2.7 miles, One-way
  - Triple Lakes Trail, north access (Strenuous): 9.5 miles, One-way
- Tsenesdghaas Na' Trailhead (Mile Post 231 of the Parks Highway)
  - Oxbow Loop Trail (Moderate): 1.5 miles, Round-trip
  - Triple Lakes Trail, south access (Strenuous): 9.5 miles, One-way
  - Nenana River Trail (Moderate): under construction at time of Plan
- Mountain Vista and Savage River Areas
  - Mountain Vista Trail (Easy): 0.6 miles, Round-trip
  - Savage River Loop (Moderate): 2 miles, Round-Trip
  - Savage Alpine Trail (Strenuous): 4 miles, One-way
- Eielson Visitor Center
  - Tundra Loop (Moderate): 0.3 miles, Round-trip with optional .25-mile spur
  - Thorofare Ridge Trail (Strenuous): 1 mile, One-way
  - Gorge Creek Trail (Strenuous): 1 mile, One-way
- Wonder Lake
  - McKinley River Bar Trail (Moderate): 2.5 miles, One-way

## Access on the Denali Park Road

- Summer: Tour and transit bus service begins May 20 through mid-September and private vehicles may drive as far as Savage River (Mile 15). After bus service ends in the fall, the Park Road is open to private vehicles as far as Teklanika Rest Area (Mile 30), weather permitting. After October 15, private vehicles are allowed to Mountain Vista Rest Area (Mile 12) until weather closes the road at Park Headquarters (Mile 3) for the winter.
- Winter: The Park Road is plowed to Park Headquarters (Mile 3) for the early part of winter. In mid-February, the road opens to Mountain Vista (Mile 13). Depending on snow conditions, the weather, and progress of the road crew's spring plowing, the Park Road will open to Savage River (Mile 15) and then Teklanika River (Mile 30) sometime in April or early May. DNP's website posts current conditions on the status of the Park Road.

## Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs)

- CUAs allow commercial operators to provide specific visitor services in the national park in limited circumstances. CUAs are granted for two years and authorize suitable commercial services that originate and terminate outside of the Park. The following CUAs activities and services exist in DNP:
  - Guided Day Hiking - Frontcountry
  - Guided Day Hiking - Kantishna and Wonder Lake
  - Guided Day Hiking - Backcountry
  - Group Camping - Savage River Campground
  - Guided Winter Activities
  - Guided Mountaineering - day trip and overnight
  - Air Taxi



## 17(B) EASEMENTS

17(b) easements are reserved to provide access to public federal and state lands across private lands. In the Denali Borough, these private lands are owned by Ahtna, Inc. Native Corporation. The uses allowed on a 17(b) easement are limited and they do not allow the public to use the private lands these easements cross. Ahtna, Inc. issues permits for certain activities on their private lands, which include camping, parking, fishing, and crossing of Ahtna lands. Berry picking and other subsistence activities are not permitted on 17(b) easements or adjacent private lands.

The authority for reserving 17(b) easements is the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) when land is conveyed to a Native Corporation by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Most easements are managed by the BLM. Easements accessing other federal lands (NPS, Forest Service, etc.) are typically managed by the agency whose lands are accessed and documented as such to the easement's casefile.

In October 2024, the BLM and Ahtna Inc. signed a multi-year self-governance funding agreement to improve management of 17(b) easements across privately owned Ahtna lands. Under this new agreement, Ahtna will administer these easements on BLM's behalf, supporting the public's continued access to public lands and waters while respecting privately owned Ahtna lands. This agreement will establish a common dataset of

ANCSA 17(b) easements and trails, verify legally reserved easement locations, and identify where constructive easement reservation corrections are needed within the Ahtna Region.

### **Common Allowable Uses (applicable in the Denali Borough)**

Allowable uses are described in the conveyance document issued to a Native Corporation.

- 25-foot trail: travel by foot, dogsleds, animals, snowmobiles, two- and three-wheeled off-highway vehicles, and small all-terrain vehicles (less than 3,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight).
- 50-foot trail: those allowed for a 25-foot trail plus large all-terrain vehicles (more than 3,000 lbs. gross vehicle weight), tracked vehicles, and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

### **17(b) Easements in the Denali Borough**

There are eight 17(b) easements in the Denali Borough, located from McKinley Village to Cantwell and out the Denali Highway. A ninth easement is identified off the Old Parks Highway in McKinley Village on BLM maps, but there is no legal record for this 17(b) easement. The following trails are 17(b) easements that exist in the Denali Borough:

- McKinley Village (EIN 13d L), USGS Quad Map Healy-C4 Yanert/Horse Trail (EIN 21 L): 25-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-C4
- Carlo Creek (EIN 17a L): 25-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-C4
- Sline/Slime Creek (EIN 16 C5, L): 50-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-C4
- Schist Creek (EIN 15 C5, L): 50-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-B4
- Windy Creek (EIN 7 a C5, D1, L): 25-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-B4
- Jack River/Wolf Point (EIN 3c C5, L): 25-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-B4
- MP 123.7/Reindeer Hills (EIN 22 D 1): 25-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-B4
- Edmonds Creek (EIN 23 D1): 25-foot trail, USGS Quad Map Healy-B4

Easements are identified with visible trail markers, but the majority of the easement trails in the Denali Borough have not been accurately surveyed, if at all. USGS quad maps can be found on the [Alaska BLM website](#).









# 08

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## MAKING THE CASE

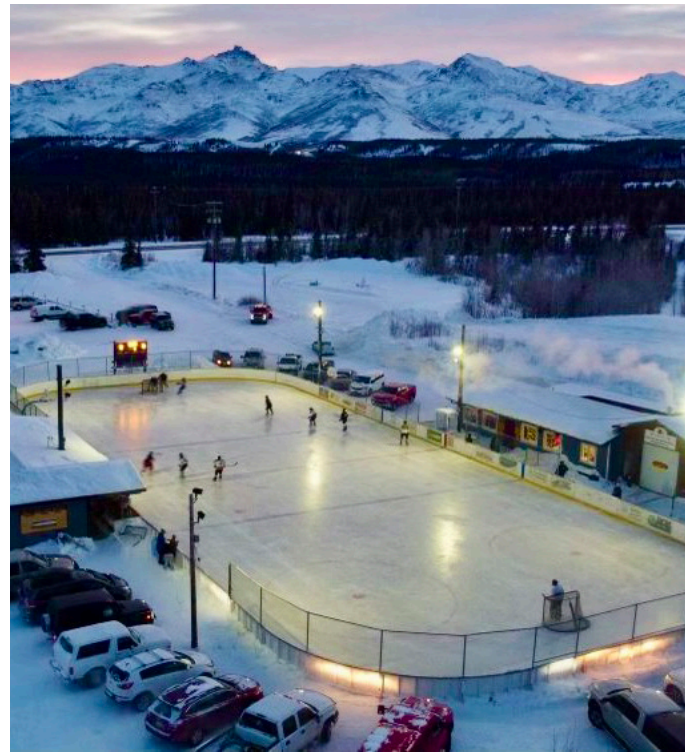
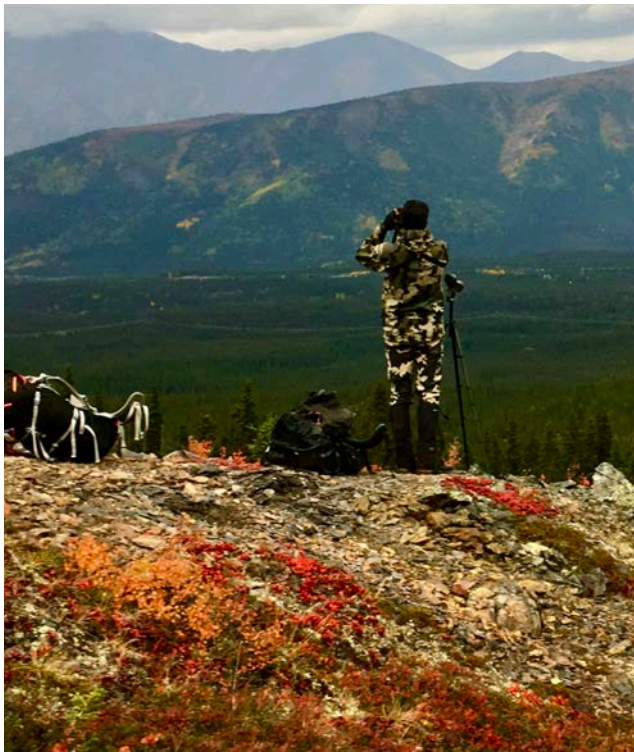
Year-round community recreation opportunities enhance physical and mental health, skills development, cultural identity, and economic growth. Increasing social interactions strengthens the link between the Borough's individual neighborhoods by creating a sense of place and ownership. According to a nationwide study in 2010, jobs and the economy are not the most important factors that create emotional bonds between people and their community; instead, it was physical beauty and opportunities for socializing. Other Alaska communities have put community recreation plans in place with great success, including Delta Junction, Girdwood, Kenai Peninsula Borough, and Juneau.

The median age in Denali Borough is 44 years, compared with 36 years in the whole state. Less than 20 percent are under 18 years or over 65 years. There are 105 reported employer establishments, and one-quarter of residents work in local, state, or federal government. More specifically, 37.9 percent of residents work in forestry, fishing, hunting, or mining. Census data does not show a dramatic climb in the population through the years, but the demographics have shifted. We must look toward and plan for the future. A recreation plan ensures we are keeping individual communities linked, maintaining property values, prioritizing health and wellness, and growing our local economy.









## THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY

Research from the Outdoor Industry Association demonstrates that outdoor recreation generates more annual consumer spending nationally compared to pharmaceuticals, household utilities, or motor vehicles. Tourism has a ripple effect, not only creating demand for existing businesses, but fostering entrepreneurship for new business ventures. Out-of-town visitors also eagerly engage in a community's culture, history, and traditions, which provides an opportunity for locals to embrace the roots. When building community recreation, it is crucial to leverage and encourage investments from partners.

A report from the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) indicates that Alaska has the 7th largest recreation economy in the country. Alaska's outdoor recreation industry generated \$2.6 billion in 2022 in economic output, supporting more than 20,000 jobs, according to Alaska Trails. In fact, outdoor recreation represents 4.2 percent of the state's economy.

Other communities have reported successful return-on-investments for recreation. After building the Virginia Creeper Trail, two counties in Virginia saw an additional \$1.2 million in spending. When Greenville, South Carolina, built a new trail system, average sales increased 47 percent for businesses nearby within the first 2 years of its existence. Bicycle tourism added \$60 million per year to the local economy in Outer Banks, North Carolina. Every \$1 spent on trails in Lincoln, Nebraska, saved almost \$3 in direct medical costs for residents over time, according to a 2005 study.

### Sources

Sample Letter of Support for Alaska Long Trail Projects  
 Alaska Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan  
 Parks and Health Infographic Library



## TOURISM IN THE DENALI BOROUGH

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of the Denali Borough. Over 600,000 visitors travel to our Borough each summer, and winter tourism continues to gain momentum. The local population more than doubles from May–September with the annual arrival of thousands of seasonal employees to work in the hospitality and outdoor recreation industry. The overnight accommodation tax, with the addition of the alcohol and marijuana tax in 2021, generates significant income for the Denali Borough. For the fiscal year July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, tax revenue was just over \$4 million for overnight accommodations and \$400,000 for alcohol and marijuana.

“One more day” has become a common term in tourism—the goal is to encourage visitors to spend more time in local communities. Data show that the demographics of Alaskan tourists have been changing to younger and more independent travelers seeking active, outdoor recreation experiences. In addition, almost 75% of Alaska’s two million annual cruise ship passengers indicate a desire to return to Alaska and explore different parts of the state, including the Interior.

Discover Denali Visitor Center, the local destination marketing organization, plays a crucial role in encouraging visitors to extend the length of their stay. It provides information on the “gateway” communities along the Parks Highway adjacent to Denali National Park. The resources available assist visitors exploring the area and highlight local opportunities that are outside of the national park. Discover Denali also works to increase off-season visitation and promote the Borough as a desirable year-round destination. Increasing year-round demand for lodging and commercial services will enhance local economic development.

On average visitors spend \$198 per day while in Alaska. However, there could be a \$250 million increase in annual spending if just half of out-of-state visitors added “one more day” to their Alaska trips. When we attract more visitors to stay longer, they spend money on food and lodging. By investing in community and outdoor recreation, Denali Borough would take ownership of local tourism that would benefit both residents and visitors alike.





## **COMMERCIAL USE ON DENALI BOROUGH LANDS**

The 2020 Denali Borough Land Management Plan includes a classification of “recreation” for certain municipal lands. The definition provided is, real property intended to be retained where the primary use is public and/or commercial outdoor recreational areas and facilities. Recreational uses include, but are not limited to, trails (non-motorized and motorized), ski areas, golf courses, day use facilities, campgrounds, and wilderness camps.

The Denali Borough Code does include a section on commercial use: 4.11.040 Commercial Use Permit. These permits provide for commercial non-extractive activity that occurs on Borough real property or traverses Borough real property within a specific time frame. The proposed commercial use of an area also must be consistent with the Land Management Plan’s classification.

At the time of the Community and Outdoor Recreation Plan, commercial use permits were not yet developed and being executed. Planning and developing recreation opportunities to foster a vibrant place to live must go hand-in-hand with managing commercial use of recreation resources. An important next step for the Denali Borough will be to work with local businesses providing visitor experiences on municipal lands to ensure use is sustainable and well managed.

## **THE ALASKA LONG TRAIL (AKLT)**

The AKLT is a statewide effort to build a 500-mile trail from Seward to Fairbanks that embraces the many ways Alaskans recreate outdoors. The vision of the AKLT is a world-class trail system connecting 500+ miles of Alaska’s iconic terrain and diverse communities from the Pacific to the Interior, embracing the many ways Alaskans recreate outdoors and bolstering the Alaska economy by attracting visitors from all over the world. The trail aims to support diverse trail users by incorporating a variety of year-round uses, both motorized and non-motorized, along multi-braided trail routes. Uses on specific trail segments will be determined by the terrain and the management policies of individual landowners and agencies. The ultimate goal is a network of routes to accommodate hiking, biking, horseback riding, skiing, and snow machining. Water routes and railroad connections will be incorporated to diversify ways to enjoy the trail system and bridge gaps where necessary.

Alaska Trails is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit spearheading the efforts with the support of many partners, including the Denali Borough. The Denali Borough Assembly passed resolution 22-15 supporting the planning and construction of the Alaska Long Trail. The Resolution noted that demand for outdoor recreation opportunities increasingly outpaces current infrastructure, especially true in Denali. It also stated that the AKLT is consistent with Denali Borough’s vision that residents, businesses, and landowners work together so the Denali Borough remains a spectacular natural environment and a caring community, together providing a great place to live, make a living and raise a family, and a rewarding, unique destination for visitors. Hiking is the fastest growing activity for visitors to Alaska. Identifying routes and channeling use to public trails that have been planned and maintained will serve both the needs of the Denali Borough and the Alaska Long Trail project.



## POPULAR LARGE CAPITAL PROJECTS NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

The Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee's planning process called attention to a few recreation opportunities that have a lot of community interest, but are not included as proposed projects in this plan:

- Community Fitness/Recreation Center
- Indoor/Covered Hockey Rink
- Indoor Swimming Pool

These projects represent significant infrastructure and investment. Building and maintaining these projects in perpetuity will require new and creative partnership models, as well as a change from the current budgetary structure and capacity of the Denali Borough.

The Denali Borough will look to community organizations and nonprofits to lead these efforts, with Borough support and partnership. The public survey results and documented support collected through this planning process will help strengthen any initiative to secure funding for these large capital infrastructure projects.

### Community Fitness/Recreation Center

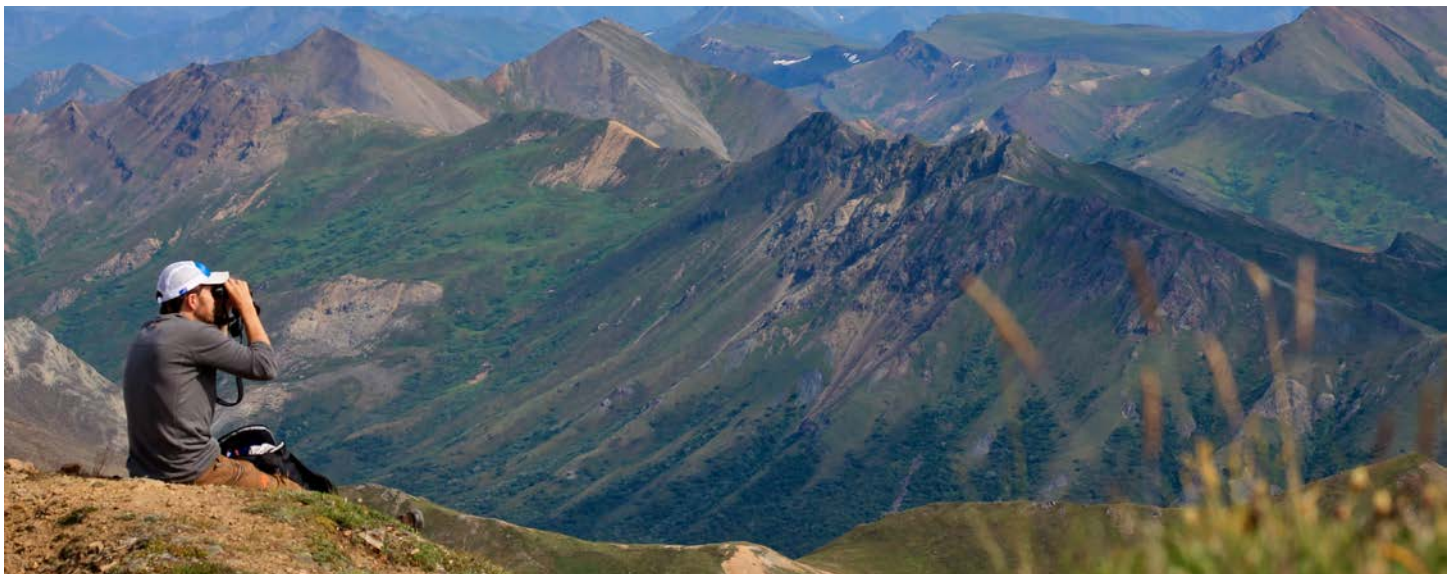
Ranked #1 for the recreation opportunity that residents hope to see available in their community from the spring 2023 public survey, receiving a total of 133 votes. There is a local partnership of nonprofits currently working on making a recreation center a reality for the Denali Borough. This partnership includes The Spruce Network, Healy Valley Lions Club, and Tri-Valley Community Library.

### Indoor/Covered Hockey Rink

Ranked #3 for the recreation opportunity that residents hope to see available in their community from the spring 2023 public survey, receiving a total of 95 votes (48 for covered ice rink, 47 for indoor ice rink). The Healy Hockey Association nonprofit owns and operates the Healy Hockey Rink. There are currently efforts underway to explore opportunities for improving this facility.

### Indoor Swimming Pool

There was not an option to select "swimming pool" as a recreation opportunity for residents to rank in the spring 2023 survey, however several written comments (15 comments in the spring 2023 survey and 19 comments in the fall 2023 survey) were received identifying this as a priority for many respondents. To the CORC's knowledge, there is not currently a nonprofit organization or community group working towards developing this project.









# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

## 09



### COMMITTEES AND SUBCOMMITTEES

The Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee was established to develop a comprehensive plan to guide future investments in recreation that reflect the priorities of our communities. The next step will be focused on implementing the strategies and action items outlined in the following section. The CORC proposes establishing a permanent committee to guide that implementation. A proposed format is as follows:

A seven-person committee recommended by the Mayor and appointed by the Assembly.

- Committee members will represent both diverse interests and backgrounds and be geographically spread throughout our several communities.
- Members will serve for 2-year terms.

Subcommittees will be chaired by Committee members. Members of the general public will be able to serve on subcommittees to bring additional knowledge and expertise to implementation planning for recreation projects and programs. The size and format of the subcommittees will be determined upon the formation of a permanent CORC. The following subcommittees are proposed to successfully achieve the goals of the Community and Outdoor Recreation Plan:

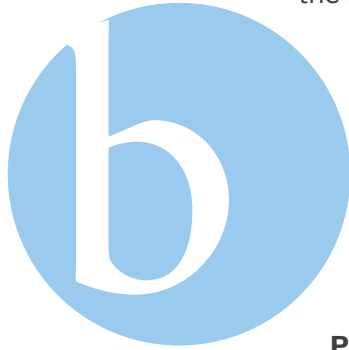
- Outreach Subcommittee
- Partnership Subcommittee
- Trail Subcommittee

## STRATEGIES AND ACTION ITEMS

Strategies detail what we will do to pursue our goals (listed below and on p. 11.) Listed under each strategy, there are action items or projects with leaders and deadlines.

### Goals:

**Community Identity and Priorities:** Ensure the unique identity of each community within the Denali Borough is preserved.



**Indoor and Outdoor Facilities and Parks:** Support mental and physical health in the Denali Borough by increasing recreation opportunities.

**Trails:** Create and maintain sustainable trail networks that improve and connect existing trails with new trails.

**Education:** Educate the public on the values of responsible recreation and provide them with easily accessible information.

**Partnerships:** Bring energetic trails and outdoor recreation partnerships to the Denali Borough.





## COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND PRIORITIES

*Ensure the unique identity of each community within the Denali Borough is preserved.*

Strategies	Action Items	Who	When
Public outreach	Create an Outreach Subcommittee.	CORC	< 1 year
	Create a public outreach plan to ensure diverse community viewpoints are considered.	Outreach Subcommittee, NPS-RTCA	< 1 year
	Manage public surveys and meetings that allow opportunities for residents to prioritize recreation investments as future projects are developed.	CORC, Borough staff	1-5 years
Identify and document local history, subsistence uses, land ownership, and recreation priorities of each of our communities.	Plan listening sessions in each community to learn about community histories and historical uses so we can honor the past.	Outreach Subcommittee	<1 year
	Document and detail historical and traditional uses and activities in each community.	Outreach Subcommittee, tribal partners	1-5 years
	Identify assets in each community that people do not want to change and ensure those assets are protected.	Outreach Subcommittee	1-5 years
Consistently interact with each community to ensure we arrive at the same goals.	Establish key points of contact within each community in the Denali Borough.	Outreach Subcommittee	<1 year and ongoing
	Establish and maintain communication with tribal representatives.	CORC, Borough staff	<1 year and ongoing
	Work with Partnerships subcommittee to engage community organizations and nonprofits in these activities.	Partnership Subcommittee	Ongoing

# INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITIES AND PARKS

*Support mental and physical health in the Denali  
Borough by increasing recreation opportunities.*

Strategies	Action Items	Who	When
Identify areas and lands that are appropriate for organized recreation use and development.	Inventory Borough neighborhoods and schools to identify what unofficial and organized recreation spaces currently exist.	Borough staff	<1 year
	Engage with HOAs and community groups to determine what kinds of usage they would like to see in their neighborhoods.	Partnership Subcommittee	1-5 years
	Research case studies that compare other gateway communities similar in size and recreation opportunities offered as a barometer for potentials in the Denali Borough.	CORC	1-5 years
Research and prioritize indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities that the community supports.	Categorize prioritized opportunities in terms of their accessibility, availability, and user type.	CORC	1-5 years
	Conduct feasibility assessment of prioritized recreation opportunities.	CORC, Borough staff	1-5 years
Engage with and apply for federal and state recreation and health services initiatives.	Compile a list of federal and state health and recreation initiatives.	Partnership Subcommittee, NPS-RTCA, DPOR, DOH	<1 year, Ongoing
	Identify and engage key people in the federal and state government with whom we can partner.	Partnerships Subcommittee, NPS-RTCA, DPOR, DOH	<1 year, Ongoing



# TRAILS

*Create and maintain sustainable trail networks that improve and connect existing trails with new trails.*

Strategies	Action Items	Who	When
Analyze existing informal trails for potential inclusion in these networks.	Map existing trails.	Denali Borough staff, CORC	<1 year, ongoing
	Catalog and map existing easements.	Denali Borough staff	<1 year, ongoing
	Determine which trails would be feasible to maintain or improve.	CORC, Trail Subcommittee	1-5 years
Adopt standards for sustainable motorized and non-motorized trails.	Create a Trail Subcommittee.	CORC	< 1 years
	Produce a Trail Design and Maintenance Plan.	Trail Subcommittee, CORC	<1 years
Create detailed project outlines for a trail network.	Categorize feasible trails by desired conditions, trail class, or geographic area.	Trail Subcommittee	1-5 years
	Produce maps of 2-3 potential trail networks for public review.	Trail Subcommittee	1-5 years
Ensure selected trails will be maintained in perpetuity.	Stand up “Friends Of” nonprofit group for each trail project area to ensure a project champion.	Trail Subcommittee, Partnership Subcommittee	1-5 years
	Write a trail management objective (TMO) for each selected trail.	Trail Subcommittee, Borough staff	Ongoing
	Work with commercial operators to monitor condition and needs of trails.	Trail Subcommittee, Borough staff	Ongoing

## EDUCATION

*Educate the public on the values of responsible recreation and provide them with easily accessible information.*

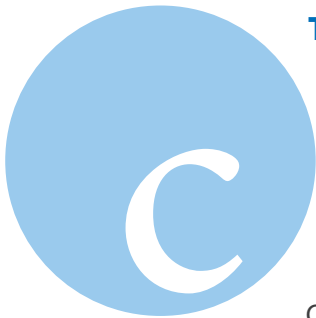
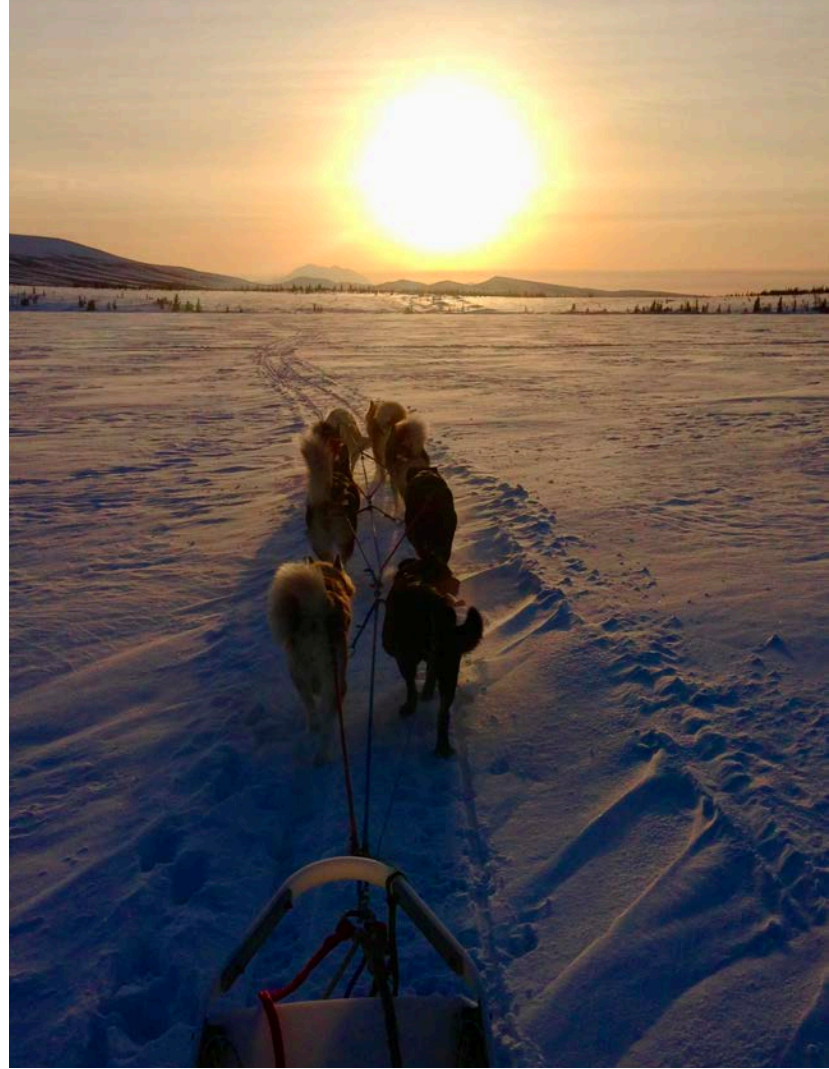
Strategies	Action Items	Who	When
Produce educational materials.	Develop paper and digital maps of trails and outdoor recreation spaces in the Denali Borough.	Outreach Subcommittee, Borough staff	1-5 years, ongoing
	Create a website platform to communicate information: land ownership, permit requirements, Leave No Trace principles, trails information, and a “responsible recreation toolkit.”	Outreach Subcommittee, Borough staff, NPS partners	1-5 years, ongoing
	Design educational kiosks around town and at trailheads and waysides.	Outreach Subcommittee, NPS interpretational staff	1-5 years, ongoing
Coordinate community events related to CORC updates and/or recreation in general.	Host annual community event on a relevant topic or activity: Responsible recreation, trail maintenance, guided hike on a local trail, or a recreation opportunity in need of attention, etc.	Outreach Subcommittee, Borough staff	<1 year, ongoing
	Host an annual open house on CORC updates.	CORC, Denali Borough Staff	<1 year, ongoing
Work with school and homeschool groups on activities and classes.	Work with schools to create/bolster recreation curriculum.	Outreach Subcommittee, Denali Borough staff	Ongoing
	Create a position for a school student on the CORC.	CORC	<1 year



## PARTNERSHIPS

*Bring energetic trails and outdoor recreation partnerships to the Denali Borough.*

Strategies	Action Items	Who	When
Create a network of partnerships.	Build and strengthen partnerships with groups and initiatives in Alaska (Alaska Trails, Alaska Outdoors Alliance, Alaska Recreation and Parks Association, Alaska Long Trail Coalition, etc.).	Partnership Subcommittee, Borough staff	<1 year, ongoing
	Engage with diverse local groups: outdoor recreation users, Chamber of Commerce, nonprofits, school, etc.	Partnership Subcommittee, Outreach Subcommittee	<1 year, ongoing
Apply for partnership assistance for trail design, building and maintenance	Identify partnerships that can assist with trail design, building and maintenance.	Partnership subcommittee, Trail Subcommittee	<1 year, ongoing
	Build capacity for trail maintenance through partnerships with SCA, Eagle Scouts, Alaska Trails, School District, nonprofits, etc.	Partnership subcommittee, Trail Subcommittee	1-5 years, ongoing
	Engage with partners who specialize in accessibility to maximize and prioritize access for families, elders, people of various abilities.	Trail Subcommittee, Partnership subcommittee	1-5 years, ongoing
	Aggregate examples of clubs and local investors that help fund public recreation resources in other Alaska communities.	Partnership subcommittee	<1 year
Support local nonprofits to forward local recreation projects and infrastructure.	Work with nonprofits to improve existing and create new recreation programs and infrastructure.	Partnership subcommittee, Borough staff	1-5 years



## TRAIL PLANNING, DESIGN, AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The Denali Borough has numerous user-created informal trails that no one officially manages, maintains, or preserves. Unplanned trail routes give little thought to soils, drainage, and erosion control, and can create long-term environmental impacts. Many trailheads lack restrooms, garbage service, or information kiosks. There are also misunderstandings and legal issues with right-of-way easements, public easements, and utility easements.

Cooperation is necessary among agencies, landowners, and users to establish dedicated public access and management that will support long-term use.

Core elements of a sustainable trail are to protect the environment, meet user expectations, and require little maintenance. Developed trails in the Borough should adhere to these core elements to reduce maintenance costs while also providing years of user satisfaction. Intentionally designing trails to be sustainable is the key to a successful trails system.

Interior Trails, a local business based in the Denali Borough that manages trail projects throughout the State (as well as nationally and internationally), provided the CORC with the following sustainable trail information to guide future trail planning and development.



## The Nine Elements of Sustainable Trails

A sustainable trail is one that conforms to and interprets its terrain and environment, is capable of handling its intended use without serious degradation, and meets the needs of its users while requiring minimal maintenance. Strive for all elements on new construction projects. Use the list as a template for identifying problems and implementing improvements on existing trails.

- 1. Planned and Designed:** The planning process is guided by agency design documents and specs; local knowledge, stakeholder input and formal public comment processes; EIS, NEPA, Section 106 and other compliance processes; map work, drone and aerial study; field reconnaissance; and professional alignment design and layout by field experts.
- 2. Contour Curvilinear Alignment:** Trail alignments are based on sidehill construction following topography. Contour alignments enable full bench construction, which promotes sheet flow drainage. Avoid fall line tread. Conforms to, not imposed on terrain.
- 3. Controlled Grade:** Grade choices are designed and deliberate, not just responding to terrain as encountered. Follows the “half-rule” regarding sideslope (trail grade not more than half the steepness of the sideslope it crosses.) Vary grades to create interest and promote drainage.
- 4. Integrated Water Control:** Drainage is designed and constructed into initial alignment (via grade reversals and sheet flow). Reduces dependence on drainage structures, which can fail. Post-construction drainage incorporates rolling grade dips, topo-mods, lateral drains, open or closed culverts. All tread either outsloped (toward drainage point) or crowned (on flat ground).
- 5. Full Bench Construction:** 100% of tread surface is excavated from native undisturbed ground. Avoid  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  bench (tread on cut and fill or retained sections.) Disperse cast material.
- 6. Durable Tread Surface:** When bench cut isn't possible or soils are fragile, use trail hardening methods: on-site material, imported material, structures, geo-textiles, etc. Implement the simplest solution first. Always begin with drainage structures before tread structures.
- 7. Regular Maintenance:** Even the most sustainable trail needs maintenance. This should be accounted for in trail planning documents and landowner funding. New trail requires a long-term commitment to be sustainable.
- 8. Integrates Well into the Environment:** Trail does not destroy the feel, aesthetics or ecological integrity of the environment. It enhances natural features and draws users into their surroundings. Trail is an interpreter of landscape.
- 9. Satisfies the Intended User:** If a user's needs are not met, they won't use the trail or are more likely to use it in a way that degrades it. A good trail makes a user happy!

## Desired Conditions and Trail Management Objectives

The CORC developed a framework based on the State of Alaska's trail management system to identify desired conditions for a proposed trail, as well as trail management objectives for an implemented project. These grids will function as a template for future trail planning and implementation projects.

### Desired Conditions

Project Name	
Location	
Project Description	
Existing Conditions	
Desired Experience	
Site-Specific Recommendations and Actions (Pre-Construction)	
Public Needs Met	
User Groups	

### Trail Management Objectives (TMO)

Trail Name	
Trail Length	
Trail Type	
Trail Class	
Designed Use	
Managed Uses	
Prohibited uses	
Design Parameters	<i>Tread width Design Surface Target Grade Max Grade Target Cross Slope Clearing Width Clearing Height</i>
Maintenance frequency	<i>Trail Opening Tread Repair Drainage Cleanout Brushing Condition assessment</i>
Land ownership	
Support Facilities	<i>Existing and Proposed</i>
Estimated Cost for Construction	
Estimated Cost for Maintenance	
Concerns	
Potential Partners	
Funding Source	





### **Trail Design and Maintenance Plan**

A Trail Design and Maintenance Plan has been drafted as part of the CORC's planning process. This trail plan will be completed as part of the committee's ongoing work (identified as an action item in section 9). The information has been adopted from State of Alaska and National Park principles, but it has been tailored to meet the local need and capacity of future trails in the Denali Borough.



## PARTNERSHIP AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### Partnerships

The Denali Borough has created connections and built strong partnerships to support recreation priorities and opportunities in our communities. These organizations and entities represent essential partnerships to maintain and foster as future recreation investments are planned and implemented.

- Ahtna, Inc. Native Corporation
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Alaska Department of Transportation
- Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Alaska Long Trail Coalition
- Alaska Outdoors Alliance
- Alaska Recreation and Parks Association
- Alaska Trails
- Alaska Travel Industry Association
- City of Anderson
- Denali Borough School District
- Denali Chamber of Commerce
- Discover Denali Visitor Center
- Denali National Park and Preserve
- Eagle Scouts
- Native Village of Cantwell
- Student Conservation Association
- Numerous local nonprofits from Anderson to Cantwell that support recreation infrastructure and programs.



## Grant Programs

Numerous grant programs support active transportation, public services, and economic stimulus. The grants listed here are not an exhaustive list of potential programs available for recreation and trails. The programs notated with a \*\* indicate grants that the Denali Borough has received for recreation or trails projects. Most recreation and trail grant programs require a percentage of matching funds. The Denali Borough will require appropriation of funding for the match requirements for awarded grant.

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game: Pittman-Robertson Hunter Access Grant Program
- Alaska Department of Transportation: Transportation Alternatives Program\*\*
- Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation: Recreational Trails Program
- Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation: Land and Water Conservation Fund
- American Trails: The Trail Fund
- American Trails: Trails Capacity Program
- Bureau of Land Management: Recreation and Visitor Services Program
- Environmental Protection Agency: Recreation Economy for Rural Communities
- Federal Highway Administration: National Scenic Byways Program
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation: American the Beautiful Challenge
- Rails to Trails Conservancy: Trail Grants
- Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program: Community Assistance Program\*\*
- Western Federal Lands: Federal Lands Access Program\*\*
- Federal Allocation: Congressionally Directed Spending\*\* - not a grant, but a source of successful funding for the Denali Borough towards the Parks Highway Separated Bike Path Project.

# 10



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FEATURED PROJECT:  
ANTLER RIDGE TRAIL  
AND ADA LOOP











The Denali Borough recognized the need to relocate and improve access for hikers to Mount Healy from the Parks Highway. Several public planning efforts had identified this as a need:

- 2017 Denali Borough Needs List submitted to Alaska Dept. of Transportation
- 2018 Denali Borough Land Use and Economic Development Plan
- 2019 Alaska Statewide Trails Initiative Report
- 2022 Cantwell to Healy Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

The purpose of this project has been to improve access to Mt. Healy for recreational purposes. The parking lot location at Bison Gulch was the primary access point to Mt. Healy. This parking area is on the east side of the Parks Highway and causes pedestrians to cross the highway in the center of horizontal and vertical curves, resulting in poor visibility. By relocating the parking lot onto the west side of the Parks Highway closer to Antler Ridge, trail users would have direct access from a parking area to a new trailhead location.

The Antler Ridge Trail project is a valuable community resource that offers the opportunity to hike in pristine and remote alpine tundra. It is adjacent to Healy, the largest Borough community, and will soon be connected by a bike path to Healy. The ridge trail terminates at Black Diamond Peak, which has views of the “tri-valleys”: Nenana River, Healy River, and Dry Creek. The ADA loop and picnic area will accommodate multi-generational families seeking an option to enjoy the outdoors outside the National Park. The location hosts an interpretive Dall sheep kiosk constructed by a local Eagle Scout and a memorial bench commemorating a cherished member of our community. The trail is a place where locals can bring their kids, dogs, or strike off on a solo hike. It has been the location of two National Trails Day volunteer events as of 2024 and will hopefully host many more community events in the years ahead.





This project has been funded through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). Two rounds of funding through FLAP have supported planning, design, and construction.

- 2019 FLAP Award (\$725,000): Relocation and construction of parking lot to establish a new trail head at Antler Ridge. Completed in 2021. Borough Match: \$10,000.
- 2021 FLAP Award (\$805,000): Construction of a vaulted toilet, picnic and interpretive kiosk area, 0.55-mile ADA loop, and 2.08-mile ridge trail. Vaulted toilet completed in 2024; trail construction anticipated for 2025. Borough Match Commitment: \$5,000.

The National Park Service provided the majority of the required match through funding from the Federal Lands Transportation Program.

Partnerships that have made this project a success:

- Western Federal Lands
- Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- National Park Service – Regional and Local
- National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program
- Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources



## Trail Management Objectives (TMO)

<i>Trail Name</i>	<b>Antler Ridge Alpine Trail</b>
<i>Trail Length</i>	2.08 miles
<i>Trail Type</i>	Terra Trail (summer)
<i>Trail Class</i>	Class 2
<i>Designed Use</i>	Hiker/Pedestrian (summer)
<i>Managed Uses</i>	Hiker/pedestrian winter use
<i>Prohibited uses</i>	All motorized use, Bicycle
<i>Design Parameters</i>	Tread width: up to 24" Design Surface: natural Target Grade: up to 25% Max Grade: 35% Clearing Width: 6' Clearing Height: 12'
<i>Maintenance frequency</i>	Trail Opening: Annual Tread Repair: Annual Drainage Cleanout: Annual Brushing: Every 3 years Condition assessment: Every 3 years
<i>Land ownership</i>	Denali Borough Alaska Department of Natural Resources - easement for trail secured
<i>Support Facilities</i>	Existing Trailhead parking Bathroom facilities Trailhead kiosk Proposed 0.6-mile multiuse ADA trail
<i>Estimated Cost to Construct</i>	Part of the 2021 \$805,000 FLAP grant award (vaulted toilet, picnic and interpretive kiosk area, ADA and alpine trails). Denali Borough match commitment for the entire project: \$5,000
<i>Estimated Maintenance Cost</i>	\$0.25 per foot
<i>Concerns</i>	Interactions with wildlife, unmanaged connections to trails on the west side of Black Diamond Peak, overuse of parking area facilities and unauthorized overnight camping.
<i>Partners</i>	State of Alaska, NPS, AKDOT
<i>Funding Source</i>	Federal Lands Access Program



## Trail Management Objectives (TMO)

<i>Trail Name</i>	<b>Antler Ridge ADA Loop</b>
<i>Trail Length</i>	0.55 miles
<i>Trail Type</i>	Terra Trail
<i>Trail Class</i>	Class 4
<i>Designed Use</i>	Hiker/pedestrian
<i>Managed Uses</i>	Bicycle, wheelchair, cross-country ski, snowshoe
<i>Prohibited uses</i>	All motorized use
<i>Design Parameters</i>	Tread width: 6' Design Surface: Compacted gravel Target Grade: less than 7% Max Grade: 8% Clearing Width: 10' Clearing Height: 12' Trail Opening: Annual
<i>Maintenance frequency</i>	Tread Repair: Annual Drainage Cleanout: Annual Brushing: Every 3 years Condition assessment: Every 3 years
<i>Land ownership</i>	Denali Borough
<i>Support Facilities</i>	Existing Antler Ridge Trail Trailhead parking Trailhead kiosk Proposed Antler Ridge Alpine Trail upgrades
<i>Estimated Cost to Construct</i>	Part of the 2021 \$805,000 FLAP grant award (vaulted toilet, picnic and interpretive kiosk area, ADA and alpine trails). Denali Borough match commitment for the entire project: \$5,000
<i>Estimated Maintenance Cost</i>	\$0.25 per foot
<i>Concerns</i>	Interactions with wildlife, unmanaged connections to trails on the west side of Black Diamond Peak, overuse of parking area facilities and unauthorized overnight camping.
<i>Partners</i>	State of Alaska, NPS, AKDOT
<i>Funding Sources</i>	Federal Lands Access Program









# 11

## POTENTIAL PROJECT CONCEPTS

The Community & Outdoor Recreation Committee (CORC) developed seven project concepts based on the spring 2023 public survey results, a 2022 trail sustainability assessment, and committee discussions over 18 months. The seven projects were chosen based on the CORC's belief that they could be achievable in the next 5-10 years. Each of these projects will require additional planning work, public involvement, and grant funding pursuits before they can become a reality.

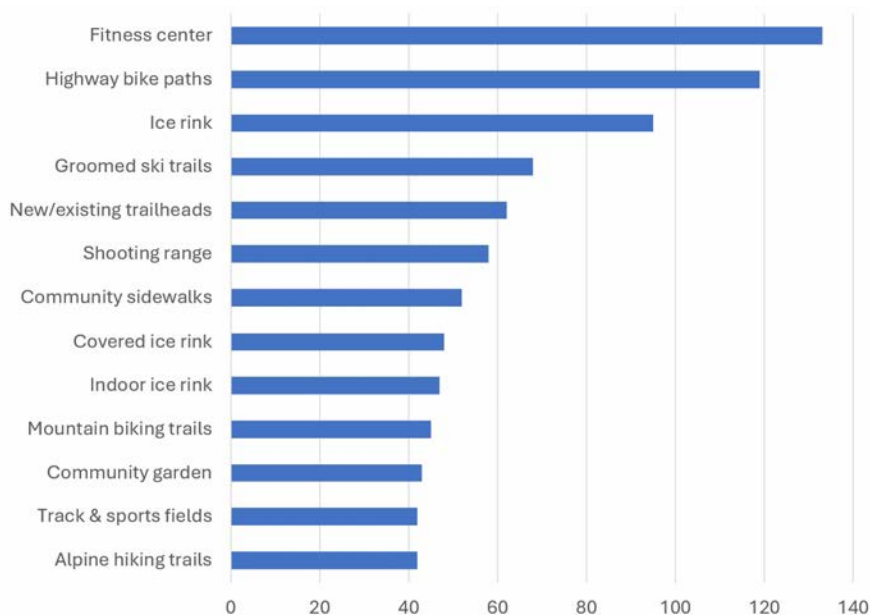
- Community Connector Bike Paths
- School Sports Infrastructure Upgrades
- Multi-Use Trail System from Bison Gulch to Stampede Road
- Antler Creek East Trail Network
- 17(b) Trail Easements: Assessments, Surveys, and Future Planning
- Public Shooting Range
- Interpretive Waysides with Facilities and Trailheads

All seven projects received an average ranking that demonstrated public support. The complete surveys and aggregated data are in Appendix A. The following pages outline each potential project's proposed location, existing conditions, desired experience, site-specific recommendations and actions, user groups, and the public needs met.

# SPRING AND FALL 2023 SURVEY RESULTS

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**Top 10 Recreation Opportunities** residents hope to see in their community:  
245 public responses received



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## Potential Project Concepts Responses

241 public responses received

5 = Yes! I support this concept and I want to hear more about how

4 = I generally support this concept

3 = I'm neutral about this concept being considered for our community

2 = I have reservations about this concept

1 = No! I do not support this concept and I oppose it being

**Separated Highway Bike Path from Cantwell to Stampede:** Average ratings = **4.32**

**Sports Infrastructure at All Three Schools:** Average ratings = **3.87**

**Multi Use Trails Connections from Bison Gulch to Stampede Road:** Average ratings = **3.80**

**Development of Trails on the East Side of the Highway At Antler Creek:** Average ratings = **3.70**

**Assess 17b Trail Easements Across Ahtna Land to Access Public Lands:** Average ratings = **3.64**

**Shooting Range In Healy:** Average ratings = **3.48**

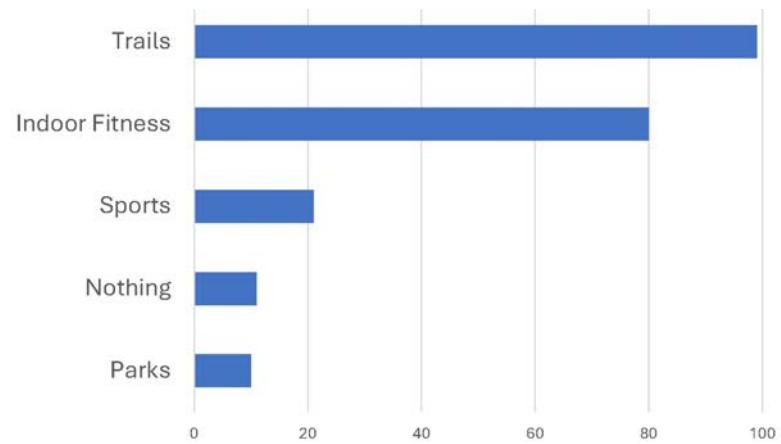
**Wayside Development and New Accessible Trails:** Average ratings = **3.46**

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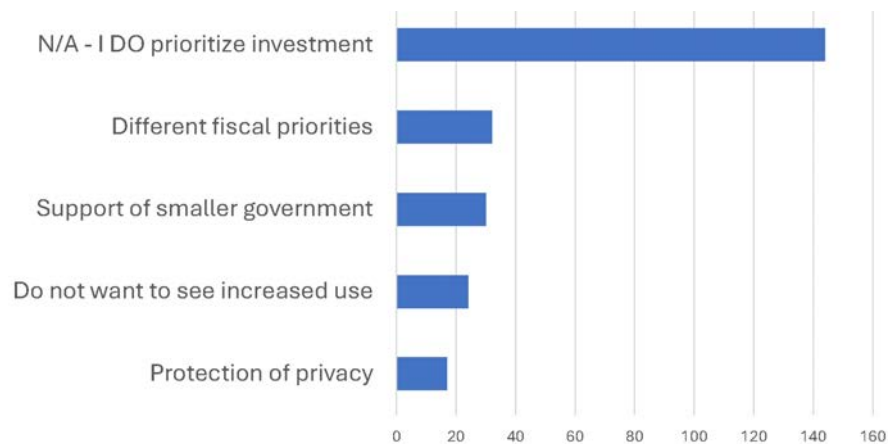
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*If you had to choose one, **what would you prioritize for Borough investment?***



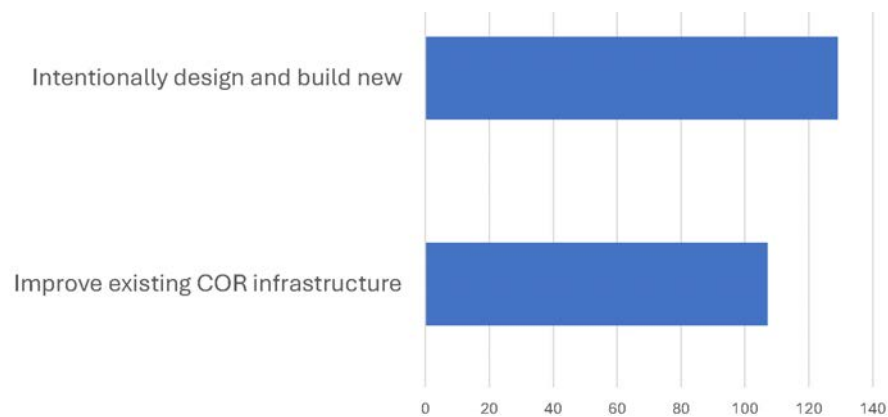
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*If you would **NOT** prioritize recreation for Borough investment, why?*



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*If you had to choose one, **what would you rather see for your local area?***



# COMMUNITY CONNECTOR BIKE PATHS

## AT A GLANCE

### LOCATION

Jack River Pullout (south of Cantwell at Mile Post 209) to Stampede Road (north of Healy at Mile Post 251)

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The only highway-side separated path is from the Denali Park Road entrance to the business district in the Nenana River canyon, roughly 1-mile long.

The 2022 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study identified five community connector segments: Cantwell to Carlo Creek, Carlo Creek to Crabbies Crossing, Crabbies Crossing to the Denali Park Road, Denali Park Road to Healy, and Healy to Stampede.

### DESIRED EXPERIENCE

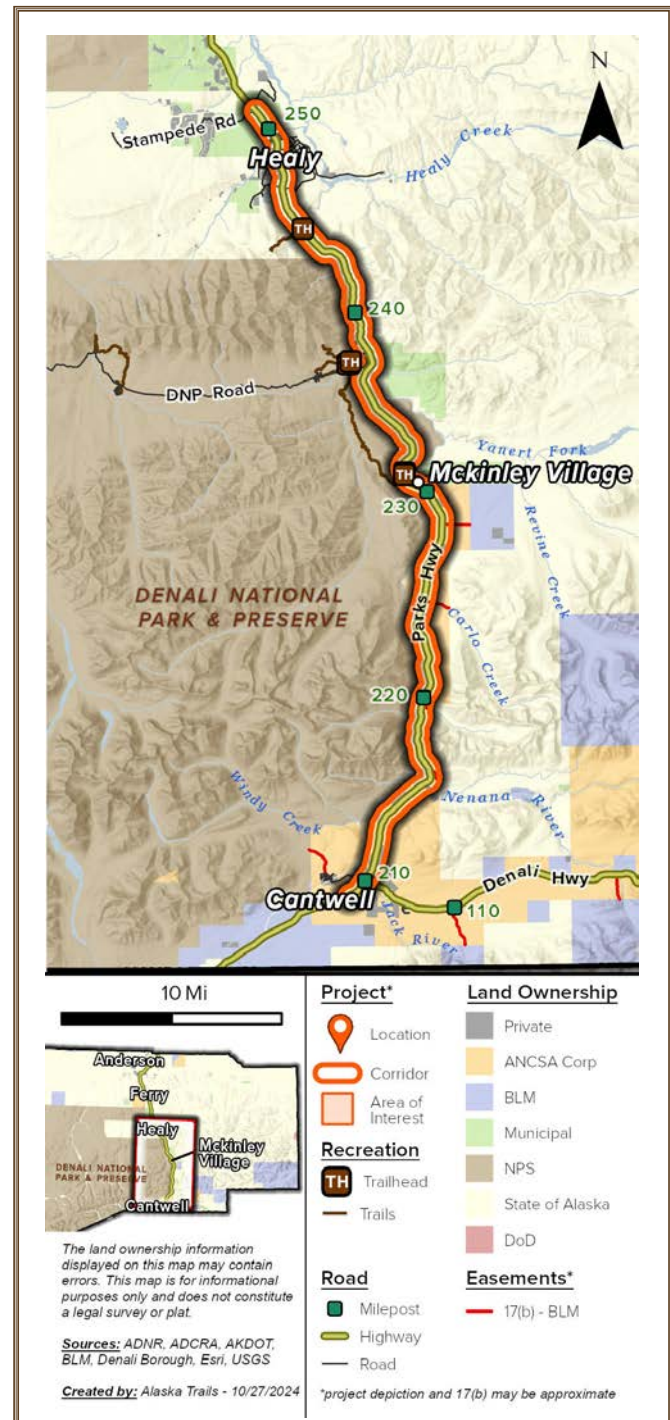
To connect communities and outdoor recreation locations, improve safety, provide active transportation, and support opportunities for community events.

### SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)

- Design, engineering, and utility work to identify segments routes within the Alaska DOT&PF right of way.
- Identify locations when the path could move away from the highway for a more scenic route.
- Consider parking options to alleviate pressure where there are limited options available.

### PUBLIC NEEDS MET

A highway side path for bikers, runners, dog walkers, etc. to move within and between communities. This route will also serve as a bike segment for the Alaska Long Trail.





## Separated highway side bike path for summer non-motorized use that provides a safe and convenient path along the Parks Highway.

### Survey Rank

Scored **4.32 out of 5** from public responses gauging support for the project.

Highway bike paths ranked 2nd out of top 10 recreation resources the public hopes to see available in our community.

*A highway bike path to link to Denali National Park would be amazing for both visitors and locals.*

- SURVEY RESPONDENT



S. ELAHI/NPS RTCA

**User Groups:** Non-motorized: bikers, joggers, walkers, runners, and dog walkers

# SCHOOL SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

## AT A GLANCE

### LOCATION

Cantwell, Healy, and Anderson

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The three brick and mortar schools (Anderson, Tri-Valley, and Cantwell) are owned by the Denali Borough. The Denali Borough School District manages and administers the education programs and school activities, as well as routine maintenance of the buildings. Infrastructure projects are a collaborative effort between the School District and the Borough. Each school has existing recreation infrastructure with varying needs of maintenance, updates, and repairs.

#### Anderson

Indoor: rock climbing wall, gym/basketball and volleyball court. Outdoor: playground, track and soccer field, cross country trails, and basketball/tennis court (unsafe and unusable)

#### Tri-Valley

Indoor: gym/basketball and volleyball court. Outdoor: playground, soccer field, softball field, frisbee golf course, basketball court, and cross-country ski trails.

#### Cantwell

Indoor: gym/basketball and volleyball court. Outdoor: playground, hockey rink (unmaintained and unusable).

### DESIRED EXPERIENCE

Schools that can host a larger variety of school sport and community events, produce more state champions, accommodate a range of community activities, increase safety, and create quality infrastructure.

### SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)

- Inventory, assess, and identify needed upgrades at each of the three school locations.
- Coordinate with local community groups who have an invested interest in the future of recreation infrastructure at these public facilities.

### PUBLIC NEEDS MET

Supports the physical and mental health of students, families, residents, seasonal employees, as well as increases opportunities for sports teams and recreation leagues.





## Upgrade existing recreation facilities and identify opportunities for new recreation infrastructure to benefit our students and the public.

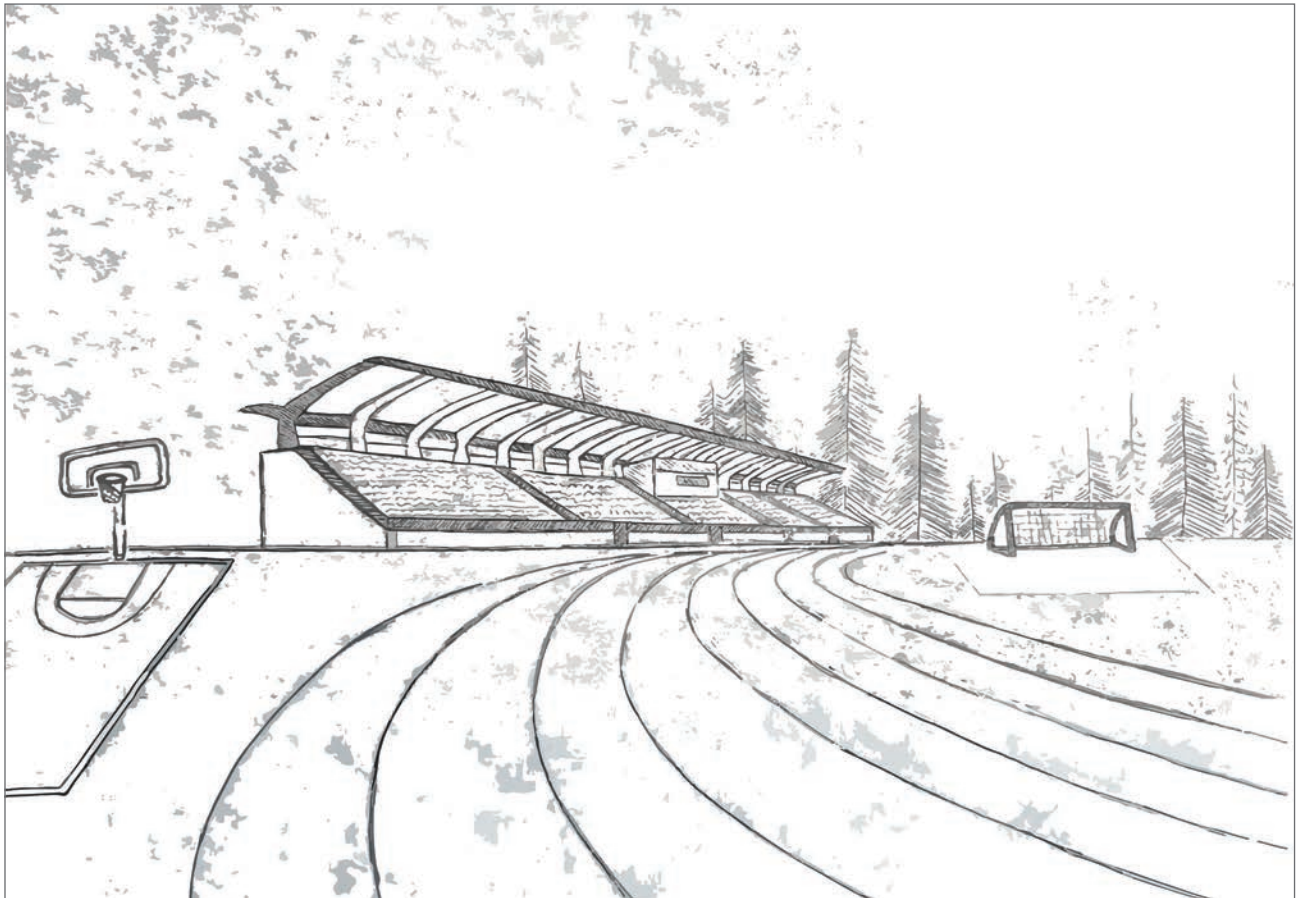
### Survey Rank

Scored **3.87 out of 5** from public responses gauging support for the project.

Track and sports fields ranked 10th out of top 10 recreation resources the public hopes to see available in our community.

*We love our community because this is where we recreate. This is very important to us!*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT



S. ELAHI/NPS RTCA

**User Groups:** Students, sports teams, families, residents, seasonal employees, and rec leagues.

# MULTI-USE TRAIL SYSTEM FROM BISON GULCH TO STAMPEDE ROAD

## AT A GLANCE

### LOCATION

Trail Connections from Mile Post 244 to 251 of the Parks Highway and west onto Denali Borough and State of Alaska land.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Multiple unmaintained summer and winter trails (both motorized and non-motorized) with different levels of use and access challenges.

### DESIRED EXPERIENCE

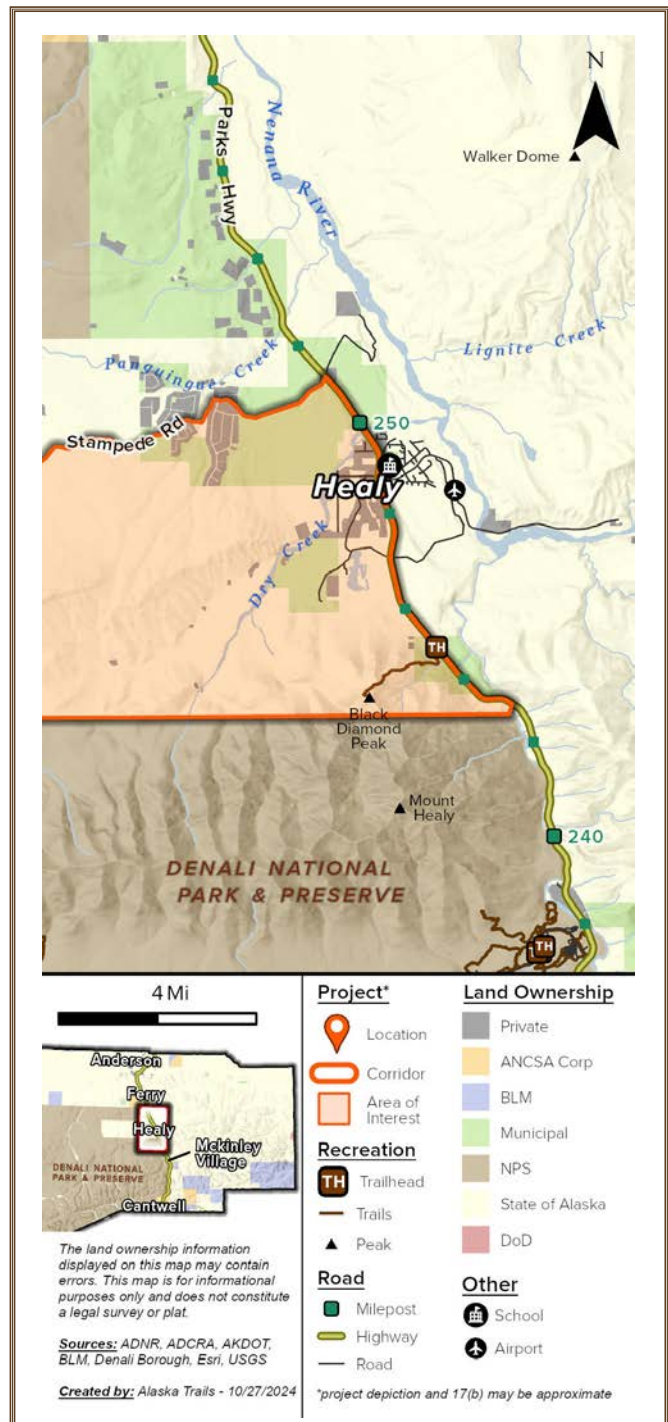
An intentional trail network with established access points that accommodates motorized and non-motorized uses, as well as summer and winter recreation opportunities. Formalized trail routes will promote sustainability, prevent degradation, and increase safety.

### SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)

- Survey Work
- Scoping for different trail uses based on topography and surface type.
- Identify locations to integrate existing trails and their main use type.
- Determine which areas and trail types are suited to motorized, non-motorized, summer and/or winter recreation.
- Design for multiple trail uses that prevent user conflicts across trail types.

### PUBLIC NEEDS MET

Increases recreation opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized users, including skiers, hikers, ATVs, mushers, trail runners, equestrian, fat bikers, and commercial groups.





A multi-use trail system that provides access to different recreational use areas. Trailheads will link backyards to public recreation opportunities and connect neighborhoods to Healy.

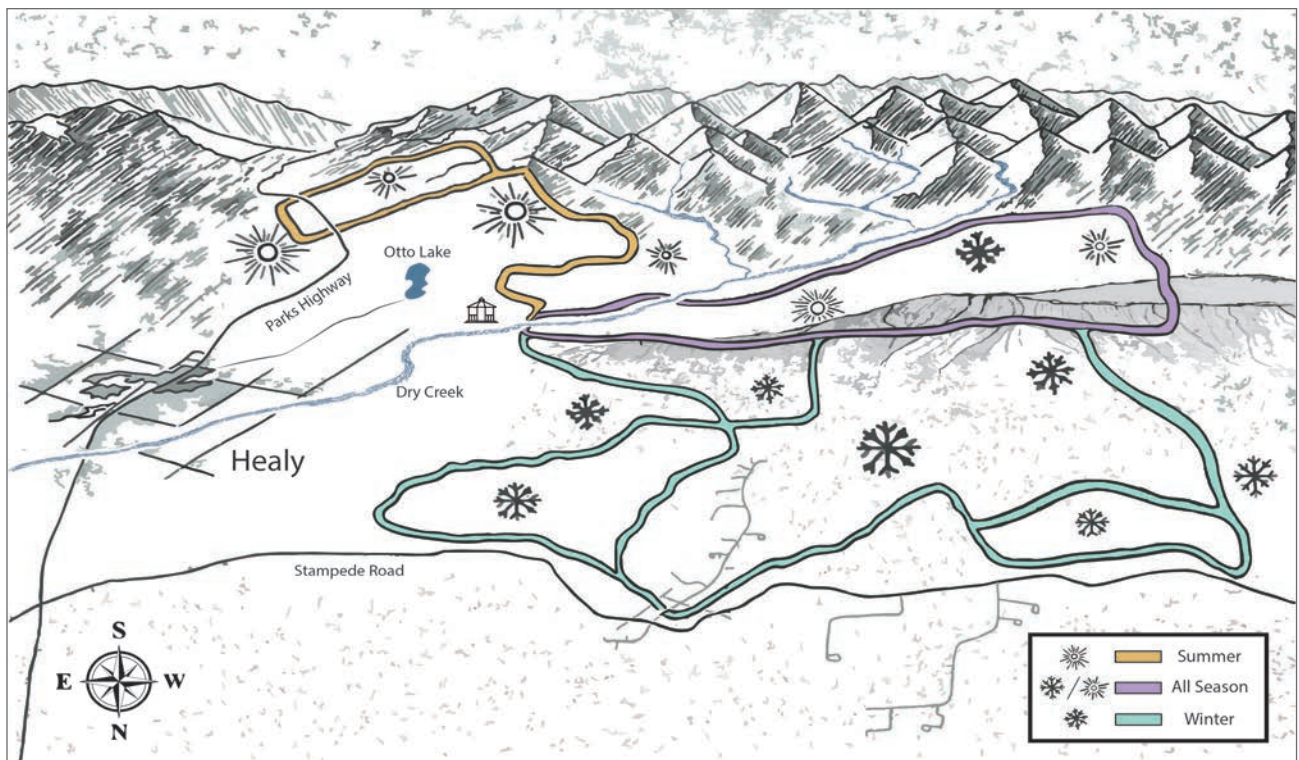
#### Survey Rank

Scored **3.80 out of 5** from public responses gauging support for the project.

Groomed ski trails ranked 4th, and new/existing trailheads ranked 5th, out of top 10 recreation resources the public hopes to see available in our community

*There is so much potential in the area, we just need a network of trails as a catalyst.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT



S. ELAHI/NPS RTCA

**User Groups:** Motorized and non-motorized: skiers, hikers, ATVs, mushers, trail runners, equestrian, fat bikers, and commercial groups

# ANTLER CREEK EAST TRAIL NETWORK

## AT A GLANCE

### LOCATION

East side of the Parks Highway between Milepost 244 and 246.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Unofficial pullouts along the Parks Highway and networks of unmaintained social trails and motorized tracks.

### DESIRED EXPERIENCE

Formalized access to and infrastructure for an already used area. This location would support a variety of community uses, including cross country races, fun runs, family activities, and a pump track course. The topography also offers scenic views of the Nenana River and photography opportunities.

### SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)

- Survey Work.
- Scoping for different trail uses based on topography and surface type.
- Designs for multiple trail uses that prevent user conflicts across trail types.
- Ensure ADA and family friendly trails coexist with single track bike, ski and hiking options.
- Feasibility study of a connection to the Antler Ridge parking lot on the west side of the highway, as well as a connection to Borough land bordering Bison Gulch to the south.

### PUBLIC NEEDS MET

Year-round trails for a variety of non-motorized uses and ability levels.





Multi-use non-motorized trails, including single-track bike loops, easy to moderate trails for walkers and hikers, and winter routes for snowshoers and skiers.

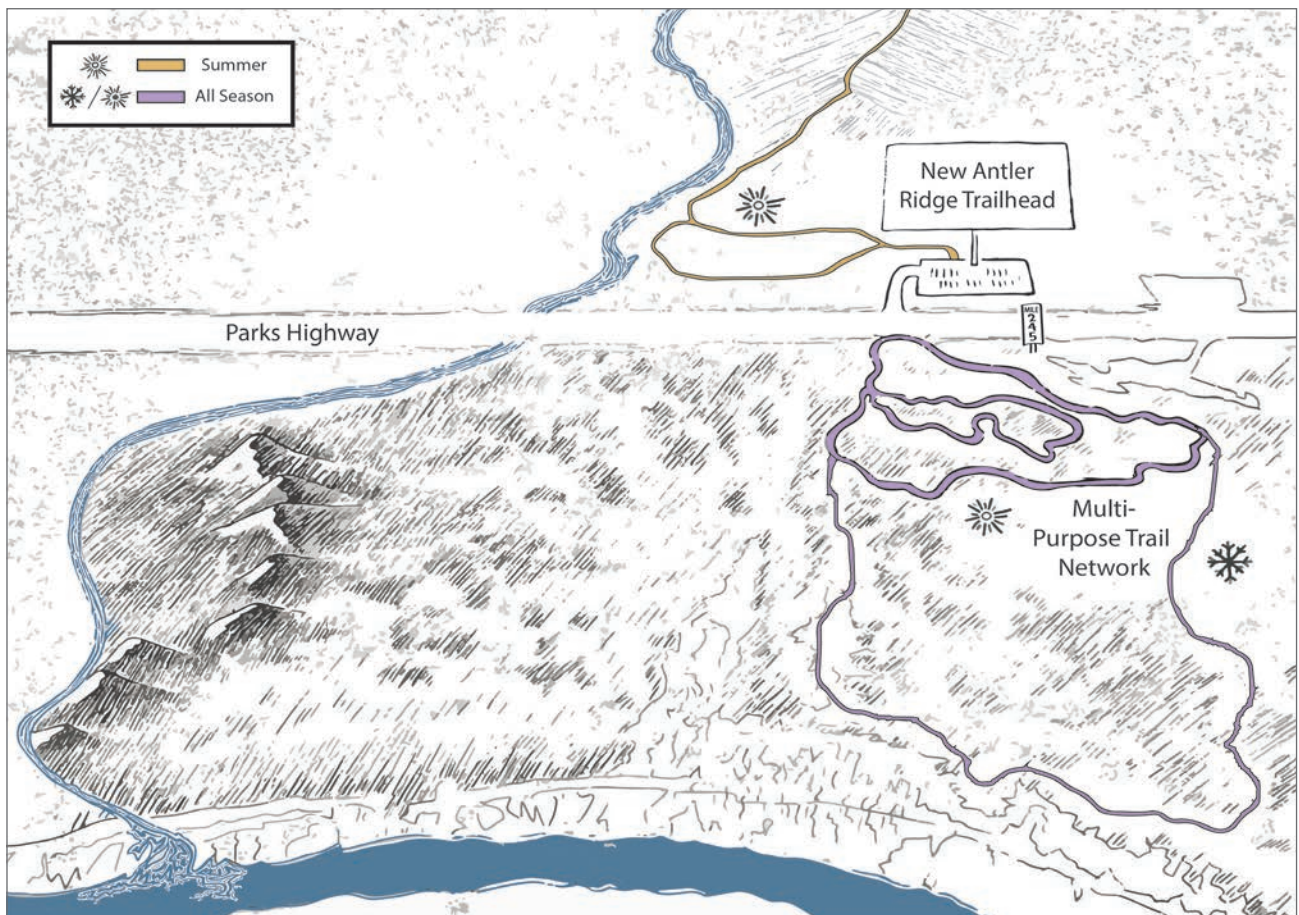
#### Survey Rank

Scored **3.70 out of 5** from public responses gauging support for the project.

New/existing trailheads ranked 5th, and mountain bike trails ranked 8th, out of top 10 recreation resources the public hopes to see available in our community.

*There is a huge opportunity to make mountain biking a bigger part of the recreational landscape.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT



S. ELAHI/NPS RTCA

**User Groups:** Non-motorized: single track mountain bikers, skiers, hikers, trail runners, equestrian, fat bikers, and commercial groups.

# 17(B) TRAIL EASEMENTS: ASSESSMENTS, SURVEYS, AND FUTURE PLANNING

## AT A GLANCE

### LOCATION

McKinley Village, Carlo Creek, Sline Creek, Jack River Nation, Cantwell, Denali Highway

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are nine legal public easements in the southern half of the Denali Borough: McKinley Village, Yanert Horse Trail, Carlo Creek, Sline/Slime Creek, Schist Creek, Windy Creek, Wolf Point/Jack River, Reindeer Hills, and Edmonds Creek.

Each of these easements has a unique set of challenges, which range from inconsistent signage and uncontrolled parking areas to degraded trail conditions and incorrect routing.

User groups vary between easements and include hikers, hunters, motorized vehicles, horse packing, anglers, and guided groups.

### DESIRED EXPERIENCE

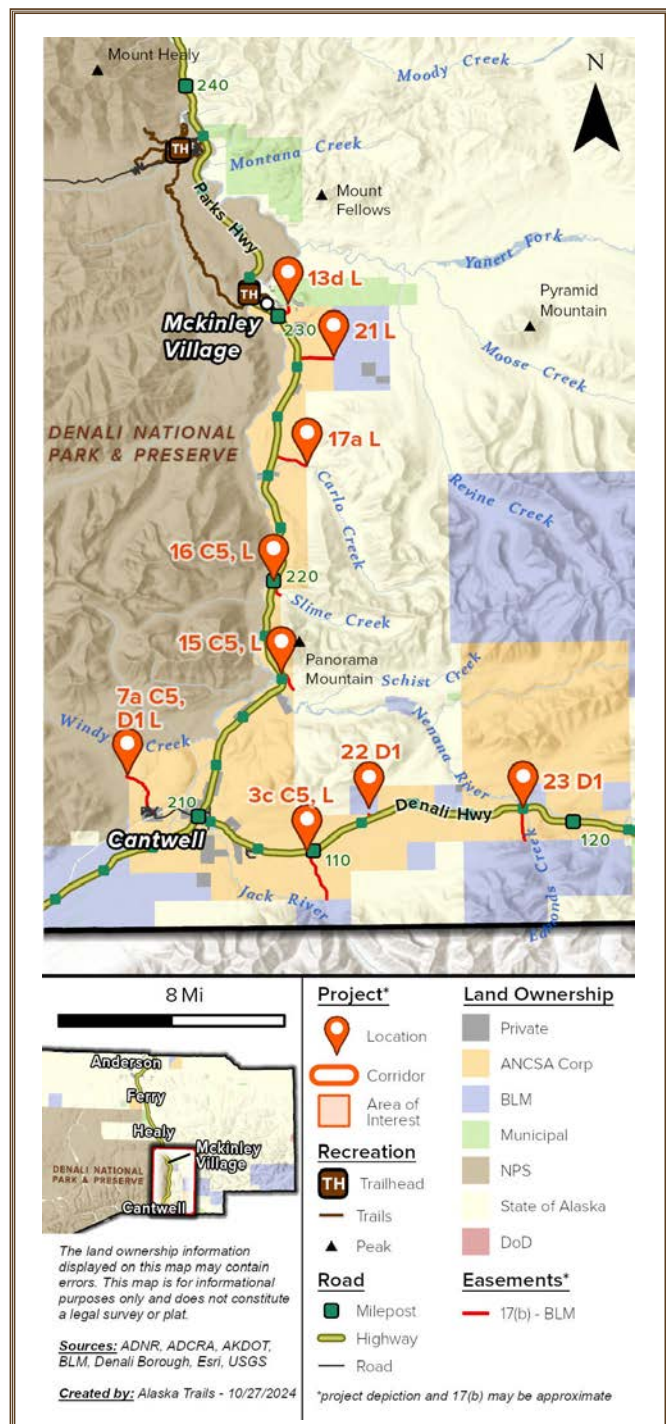
Restoration of degraded trailheads will support hiking and subsistence activities that utilize 17(b) easements to access public lands.

### SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)

- Consider specific needs and priorities of adjacent communities for each 17(b) easement.
- Work closely with BLM and Ahtna to determine suitability of each 17(b) easement for improvements and/or maintenance.
- Survey easements to correctly identify routes.
- Public education and signage to better protect legal access and prevent trespassing.

### PUBLIC NEEDS MET

Improved access for motorized and non-motorized user groups who access public lands, while also protecting local recreation spots and preventing trespassing.





## Determine future possibilities for improvements and maintenance of 17(b) trail easements across Ahtna land to access state and federal public lands.

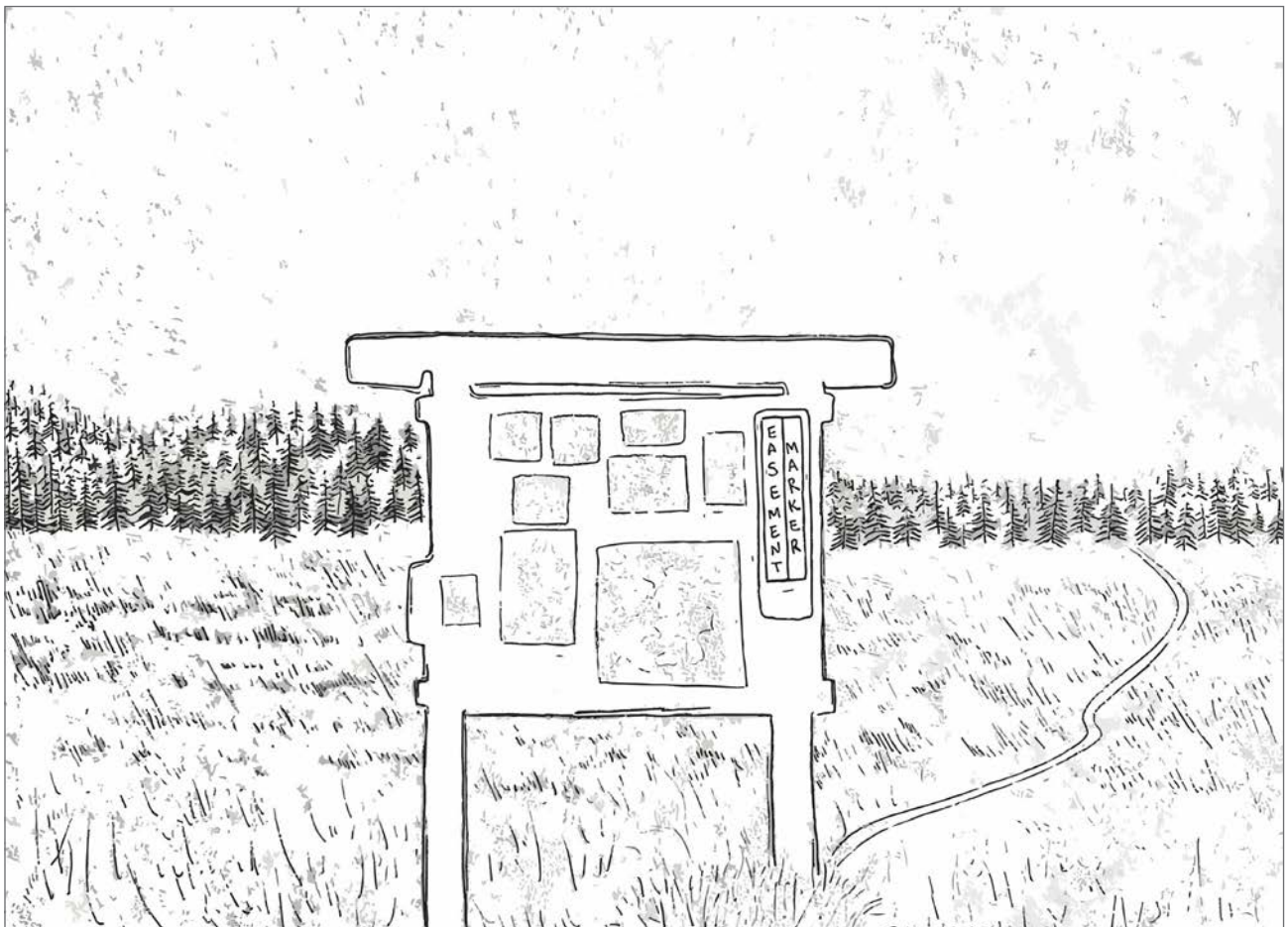
### Survey Rank

Scored **3.64 out of 5** from public responses gauging support for the project.

New/existing trailheads ranked 5th, and alpine hiking trails ranked 10th, out of top 10 recreation resources the public hopes to see available in our community.

*All options for recreational development should be explored. We want to continue to make this a vibrant, active place to live!*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT



S. ELAHI/NPS RTCA

**User Groups:** Motorized and non-motorized: Hikers, hunters, equestrian, ATVs, snowmachines.

# PUBLIC SHOOTING RANGE

## AT A GLANCE

### LOCATION

Healy

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Firearm activity is currently concentrated to gravel pits in the surrounding Healy area, which has a negative impact on adjacent neighborhoods and residents.

### DESIRED EXPERIENCE

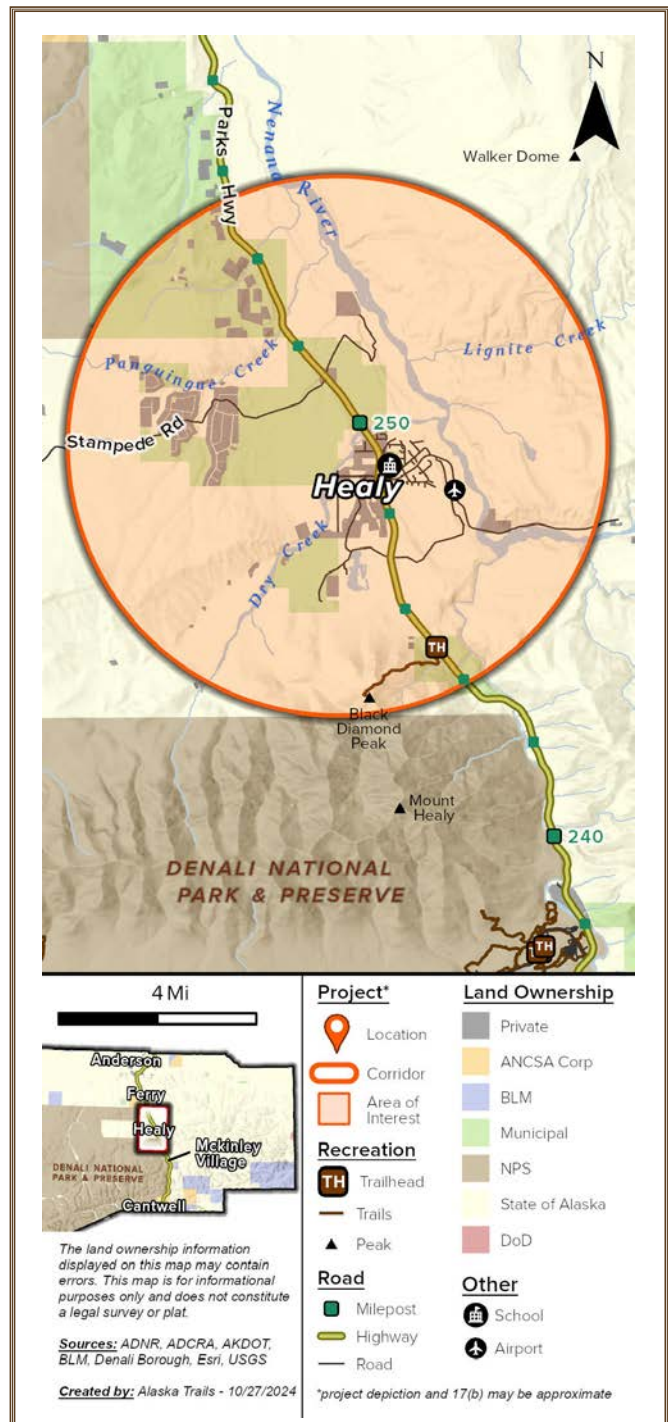
Consolidate and formalize shooting activities, increase safety, provide quality infrastructure, accommodate long distance ranges, and decrease unmitigated use of gravel pits.

### SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)

- Identifying several locations as candidates to consider the development of a shooting range.
- Conduct a feasibility study to determine the suitability of a shooting range of one or more locations.
- Identify needs and opportunities to work with State Troopers and National Park Service Law Enforcement Rangers.
- Collaborate with a local shooting club on ideas for long-term management.

### PUBLIC NEEDS MET

Resource for hunters, hunter safety courses, troopers, rangers, shooters, and clubs.





An official shooting range for Healy and area residents to improve safety and access for firearm use. Provide 200-to-500-yard options to sight in rifles, as well as a location for hunter safety classes.

#### Survey Rank

Scored **3.48 out of 5** from public responses gauging support for the project.

Shooting range ranked 6th out of top 10 recreation resources the public hopes to see available in our community.

*It sure would be nice to have a clean, safe covered spot to shoot that I can take my children to practice safe gun management.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT



S. ELAHI/NPS RTCA

**User Groups:** Hunters, hunter safety courses, troopers, rangers, shooters, and clubs

# INTERPRETIVE WAYSIDES WITH FACILITIES AND TRAILHEADS

## AT A GLANCE

### LOCATION

Clear/Anderson: Swan Lake scenic pullout at Mile Post 287 of the Parks Highway.

Nenana River Canyon: Coyote Creek pullout at Mile Post 243 of the Parks Highway.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Swan Lake: highway wayside with seasonal toilet facilities, an unobstructed view of Denali, and the start of a Tamarack stand that extends into the Eastern Alaska Range.

Coyote Creek: highway wayside with overlooks of the Nenana River, access across the highway to the Coyote Creek social trail, and adjacent to the Dragonfly pullout that accesses Dragonfly ridge social trail to the east and the waterfall social trail to the west.

### DESIRED EXPERIENCE

Safe, convenient, and scenic highway rest stops along the Parks Highway to enjoy the scenic and recreation opportunities of both locations. Waysides can act as a “welcome” location to a community and be a place for visitors to learn about the area.

### SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS (PRE-CONSTRUCTION)

- Survey Work
- Scoping for different trail locations to access nearby scenic sights and overlooks.
- Collaborate with DOT and FHWA on how these projects support the George Parks Highway National Scenic Byway Master Interpretive Plan.

### PUBLIC NEEDS MET

The Parks Highway is a National Scenic Byway that is one of the most important corridors in Alaska for commerce and recreation. These projects provide a unique, convenient, maintained, and safe location for visitors, residents, dog walkers, hikers, climbers, rail fanning, and commercial groups.





Wayside development to capitalize on scenic qualities of the Parks Highway corridor. Projects would include a toilet facility at Coyote Creek, short ADA trail loops, and interpretive information on natural and cultural history at both locations.

#### Survey Rank

Scored **3.46 out of 5** from public responses gauging support for the project.

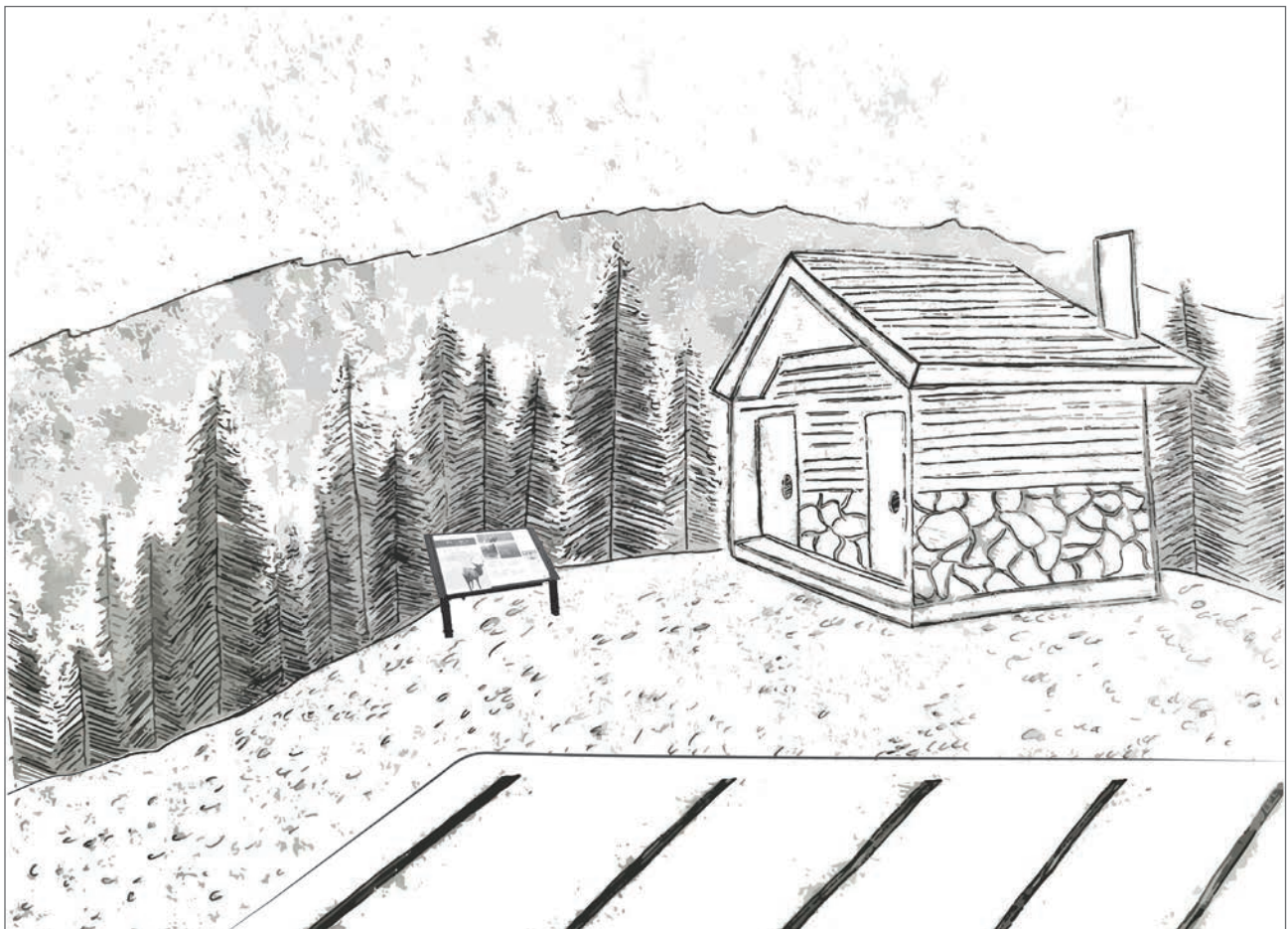
New/existing trailheads ranked 5th out of top 10 recreation resources the public hopes to see available in our community (wayside bathrooms ranked 12th).

“

*We need to prioritize improving the pullouts and rest stops.*

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

”



S. ELAHI/NPS RTCA

**User Groups:** Non-motorized: dog walkers, hikers, climbers, and commercial groups.







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## APPENDIX

- A. SPRING 2023 SURVEY RESULTS
- B. FALL 2023 SURVEY RESULTS
- C. FALL 2024 SURVEY RESULTS
- D. TRAIL SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT
- E. PAST DENALI BOROUGH PLANS