

Workforce Challenges and Solutions

Expanding Capacity to Design, Approve, Build and Maintain Trails in Alaska

Alaska Trails Annual Conference April 2022

A decorative background element consisting of white, stylized topographic contour lines on a dark grey background, located at the bottom of the slide.

Participants

- Ryan O'Shaughnessy – Trail Mix, Inc.
- Ben Hughey – Sitka Trail Works
- Elizabeth Thomas – Tlingit Haida Central Council
- Bryant Wright – Fairbanks North Star Borough

Panel Lead: Chris Beck, Alaska Trails

A decorative background at the bottom of the slide featuring a topographic map with white contour lines on a dark grey background.

SESSION AGENDA

1. Introduction to the Panel and Topic – Chris (5 min)

2. Introduction to Issues and Opportunities – Ben Hughey (5 min)

3. Sustainable, Leveraged, Aggregated Funding: the Heart of the Solution? (20 min)

A. Juneau/Trail Mix – Ryan

B. SSP/ Alaska Youth Stewards – Elizabeth

C. Trail a year/Soil & Water Conservation District – Bryant

4. Bigger Picture Application of these Success Stories – Panel & Audience Discussion 20 min

- How to succeed in different settings, from smallest villages to larger communities?
- Role of non-profits - public sector partnerships?
- Importance of a package of benefits to trail crew workers (housing, health care...)?
- Specific training and skill development programs?
- Need for OR career paths, progressing from entry to living wage jobs?

5. Wrap up – Chris (1 minute)

Introduction to Issues and Opportunities

- The opportunity
 - Living wage jobs
 - Career pipeline
 - Public & economic benefits
- The challenge
 - Lack of certainty and sustainability of funding
 - Modest, project specific grants
 - Scale thresholds difficult for smaller communities
 - Seasonal employment
- Leaky pipeline
 - Trail worker to project manager to program director



Sustainable, Leveraged, Aggregated Resources – the heart of the solution –

Three Case Studies:



Case Study: Trail Mix and the City and Borough of Juneau

● Background

- Formed in 1993 as an all volunteer organization
- Funding committed by CBJ in 1998
 - \$23,000- Commercial User Fees
- Sustained funding committed in 2001
 - \$40,000- CBJ Parks and Recreation funds
- Renewed emphasis on capacity building through workforce development in 2020
 - \$460,000- CARES funding for workforce development and job skills training



Above: 2001 Trail Crew works on the Auk Nu trail

Left: 2021 Trail crew takes lunch break at the EVC



Case Study: Trail Mix and the City and Borough of Juneau

- City and Borough of Juneau Partnership
 - CBJ P&R commits project funding via Trail CIP fund
 - Work is authorized by an annual work plan and MOA
 - CBJ reimburses Trail Mix for labor at a rate of double minimum wage
 - CBJ purchases trail project materials



Above: CBJ P&R Supervisor Colby Shibler surveys trail layout
Left: 2021 Trail crew works with CBJ Park Ranger Dale Gosnell to address beaver flooding



Case Study: Trail Mix and the City and Borough of Juneau

- Outcomes

- Increased employee retention
- Increased public benefit
 - Better application of outdoor recreation investment
 - Increased career opportunities for local workers in related industries
- Increased organization capacity and flexibility

- Challenges

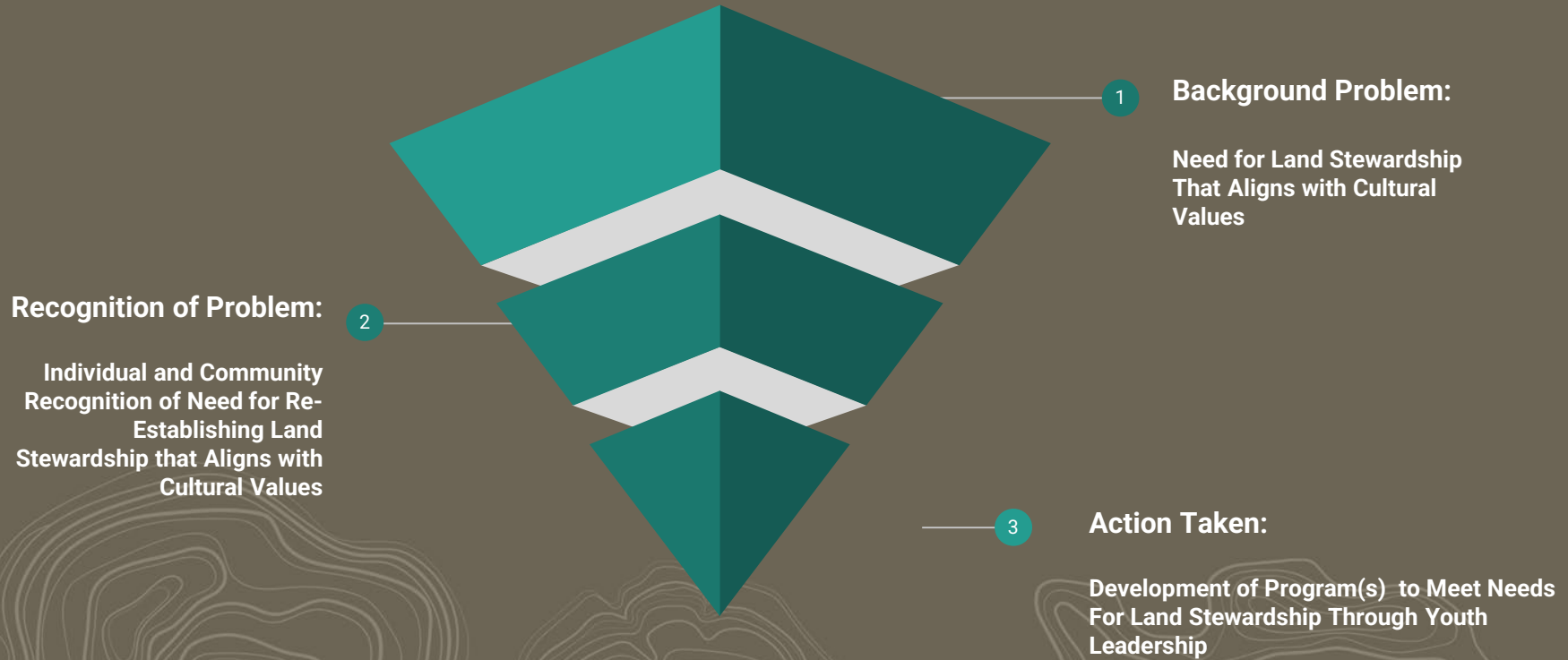
- Seasonal employment
- Limited opportunities for direct career pathways in Alaskan trail building



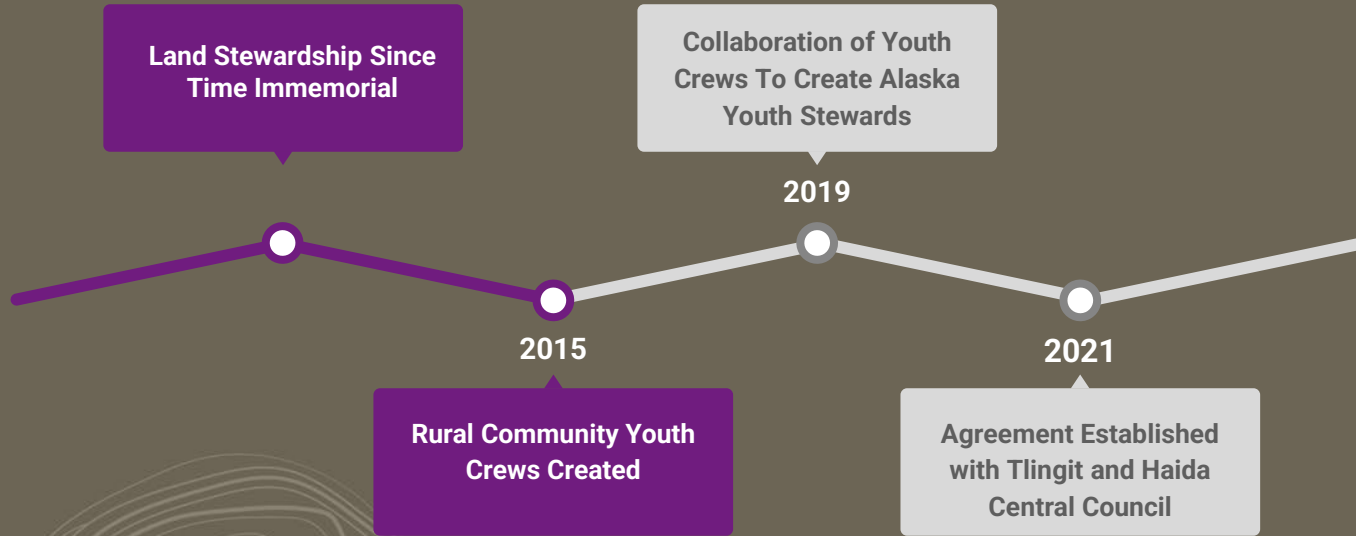
Above: Trail Mix CCC crew finishes a bridge in 2020



Case Study: Alaskan Youth Stewards and the Development Process



Case Study: Alaskan Youth Stewards Timeline of Development



Benefits of AYS Collaboration: POW, Kake, Angoon, Hoonah

Mission

Alaskan Youth Stewards (an umbrella title for Training Rural Alaskan Youth Leaders and Students (TRAYLS) and Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) programs in Southeast Alaska) blends experiential education, on the job training, career counseling and job placement for youth in rural Southeast Alaska to get on the path to higher education and employment in natural resource stewardship.

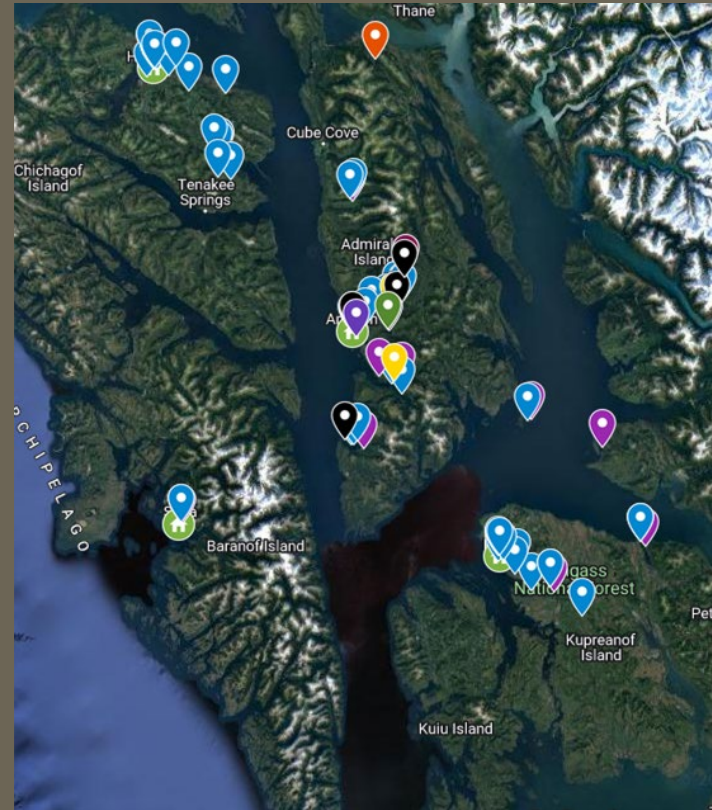


Alaska Youth Stewards Projects

Crews Track Projects Using an Interactive Google Map

- Story Mapping is a Fun, Interactive Supplemental Program Project
- Dynamic Reporting
- Shows Crew Deliverables

[Story Mapping Project](#)





Kake - building a trail on Grave Island - to make it more accessible for the community.



Angoon - Joanne George leading youth from Angoon into Mitchell Bay - first time many have been in kayaks, learning water safety



POW - posing on an ATV bridge - Bob Girt will be sharing more about the POW program in Lessons Learned section

Case Study: Fairbanks North Star Borough

Systematic Trail Needs for Trail Plan

1. **Access**
 - a. Acquire LEGAL ACCESS
2. **Management & Maintenance**
 - a. Establish policies and maintenance protocols
 - b. Build, develop, MAINTAIN trails
3. **Outreach Promotion**
 - a. SEND people to trails



Maintenance Needs

- **Brushing, vegetation removal**
- **Address poor soils**
 - Hardening
 - Drainage
 - Realignment

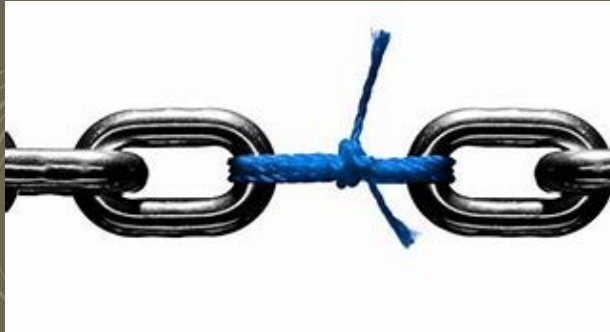


Case Study: Fairbanks North Star Borough

FNSB Capital Improvement Plan

“Trail-a-Year” Funding Program \$350K/Year:

“...Securing public access to the FNSB Trail System... Phased annually, 1 of 18 priority trail routes will be surveyed and missing easements purchased or negotiated. The project will include critical and key connections or new construction or restoration for routes...”



Case Study: Fairbanks North Star Borough

Who will perform maintenance, and how?

Contractual Labor

- Requires staff coord.
- Small jobs: Parks Maintenance Funds
- Big jobs: Grant Funds, special appropriations
- Expertise & Insurance

Staff Labor

- Need >1 staff!
- Supervision
- Expertise, coordination
- Vehicles & Equipment

Volunteer Labor

- Requires staff coord.
- Expertise in community
- Support, equipment
- Formal agreements, insurance



4. Bigger Picture Application of these Success stories – 20 mins

Panel and audience discussion, led by Chris. Topics to include:

- How to succeed in **different settings**, from smallest villages to larger communities; options for trail organizations at the community, subregional and regional scale?
- Role of **non-profits/public sector partnerships** as aggregator of funding, workforce employers, multi-year continuity, and local knowledge?
- Importance of **package of benefits** to trail crew workers (housing, health care...)?
- Specific **training and skill development** programs?
- Need for OR **career paths**, progressing from entry to living wage jobs; differences between skill sets and futures of trail work jobs and design/permitting agency jobs?

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

- Need “resources to get resources”, and partnerships are the path to that outcome
- Start local gov’t support with measurable econ impacts; then move onto strong but less measurable benefits, like resident quality of life (e.g., Juneau)
- Solutions to multi-owner trails require planning and set the stage for funding
- The right kind of planning/of advocacy sets the stage for decision maker support and funding (e.g., FNSB “trail a year program”)
- Relationship building with potential partners is critical, and takes time.
- Measure of success: multi-year trail crews, many applications for new positions



Thanks for participating!
Check out Alaska Trails website for more info
[Alaska-trails.org/alaska-trails-initiative](https://alaska-trails.org/alaska-trails-initiative)