

Southeast Cluster Initiative  
 Action Initiative Status Report  
 Updated December 2012



Action Initiative Information			
Cluster:	Visitor Products		
Initiative:	Develop Land and Water Trails and Support Facilities		
Goal:	The goal of this initiative is to develop and maintain a safe, accessible and diverse land and water trail system, both non-motorized and motorized, that allows for optimum outdoor recreational use of the region by residents and visitors, promotes increased visitation to local communities and promotes wellness through physical activity, while protecting the region's natural and cultural resources.		
Champion:	Jeremy Gieser, Gastineau Guiding, jeremy@gguiding.com Trail packages: Jill Ramiel, Silverbow Inn, jill.ramiel@gmail.com Trail conference: Linda Kruger, USFS, PNW Research Station, lkruger@fs.fed.us; Odin Brudie, Alaska Office of Tourism Development, odin.brudie@alaska.gov		
Team:	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">           Amanda Smith, Student Conservation Association            Amber King, SEATrails            Becky Janes, Above &amp; Beyond Alaska and Alaska Boat &amp; Kayak Center            Bob Janes, Gastineau Guiding            Carol Rushmore, City of Wrangell            Clark Simpson, USFS, Developed Rec Program Mgr, Misty Fjords            Erik Boraas, Trail Mix            Hans vonRekowski, USFS, Recreation, Lands, Minerals staff officer            Jill Ramiel, Silverbow Inn            Jim Duncan, General Manager, Mt Roberts Tramway            John McConnochie, Cycle Alaska            Ken Leghorn, Pack Creek Outfitters            Linda Kruger, USFS, PNW Research Station            Lindsey Doctorman, University of Alaska            Lynn Humphrey, USFS, Regional Recreation and Tourism Program Mgr            Marti Marshall, USFS District Ranger            Mary Ann Ray, Pearson's Pond B&amp;B            Milton Fusselman, USFS, Natural Resource Specialist            Neil Nickerson, Blue Nose Surf            Odin Brudie, Alaska Office of Tourism Development            Paul Brewster, USFS, Assistant Dir. Program         </td> <td style="vertical-align: top; padding-left: 20px;">           asmith@thesca.org            amber@seatrails.org            becky@beyondak.com             bob@gguiding.com            ecodev@wrangell.com            csimpson@fs.fed.us             erik@juneautrails.org            hvonrekowski@fs.fed.us             jill.ramiel@gmail.com            jim.duncan@goldbelt.com            jpm@gci.net            ken@packcreekoutfitters.com            lkruger@fs.fed.us            ljdoctorman@uas.alaska.edu            lhumphrey02@fs.fed.us             mmarshall01@fs.fed.us            maryann@pearsonspnd.com            mfusselman@fs.fed.us            sup@bluenosesurf.com            odin.brudie@alaska.gov            pbrewster@fs.fed.us         </td> </tr> </table>	Amanda Smith, Student Conservation Association Amber King, SEATrails Becky Janes, Above & Beyond Alaska and Alaska Boat & Kayak Center Bob Janes, Gastineau Guiding Carol Rushmore, City of Wrangell Clark Simpson, USFS, Developed Rec Program Mgr, Misty Fjords Erik Boraas, Trail Mix Hans vonRekowski, USFS, Recreation, Lands, Minerals staff officer Jill Ramiel, Silverbow Inn Jim Duncan, General Manager, Mt Roberts Tramway John McConnochie, Cycle Alaska Ken Leghorn, Pack Creek Outfitters Linda Kruger, USFS, PNW Research Station Lindsey Doctorman, University of Alaska Lynn Humphrey, USFS, Regional Recreation and Tourism Program Mgr Marti Marshall, USFS District Ranger Mary Ann Ray, Pearson's Pond B&B Milton Fusselman, USFS, Natural Resource Specialist Neil Nickerson, Blue Nose Surf Odin Brudie, Alaska Office of Tourism Development Paul Brewster, USFS, Assistant Dir. Program	asmith@thesca.org amber@seatrails.org becky@beyondak.com  bob@gguiding.com ecodev@wrangell.com csimpson@fs.fed.us  erik@juneautrails.org hvonrekowski@fs.fed.us  jill.ramiel@gmail.com jim.duncan@goldbelt.com jpm@gci.net ken@packcreekoutfitters.com lkruger@fs.fed.us ljdoctorman@uas.alaska.edu lhumphrey02@fs.fed.us  mmarshall01@fs.fed.us maryann@pearsonspnd.com mfusselman@fs.fed.us sup@bluenosesurf.com odin.brudie@alaska.gov pbrewster@fs.fed.us
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Meeting Summaries		
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Date:	Attendees:	Outcome:
12/17/12	CWG monthly call-in	Next steps are to meet at the local level with Marti Marshall and others from the FS to discuss what can and can't be done on the Wilderness boundaries.
12/7/12	Becky Janes, Erik Boraas, Jeremy Gieser, Jill Ramiel, Jon Martin, Ken Leghorn, Linda Kruger, Milton Fusselman, Neil Nickerson, Odin Brudie, Brian Holst, Eva Bornstein	<p>Purpose of meeting was to get ideas from industry and entrepreneurs - What are the opportunities and challenges to bringing a "trails" product/package forward? Discussion identified four areas of need: marketing, infrastructure cost of access and regulation. A summary of discussion for each follows:</p> <p>Marketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The small operators are dependent on larger entities to generate information on what is available. They do not have the budget or resources for promotion. Packages need to be marketed with government support – city, state and Forest Service (FS).</li> <li>• For independent traveler packages – hub and spoke is best. Hub and spoke from Juneau is Glacier Bay – Skagway – Tracy Arm. Get Juneau known as hub for - Chilkoot Trail, Glacier Bay. Develop hub and spoke for Ketchikan and Sitka and then connect communities for multi-community itineraries.</li> <li>• FS website can be more commercial friendly by providing links to commercial opportunities to visit the wilderness – this is a service to the public. Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center/Tongass websites should link to commercial outfitters and guides. Also commercial links should be available through Seatrails and CVBs. B&amp;Bs also need information to pass on to guests.</li> <li>• The use of freelance writers who take the trips is a cost effective marketing tool.</li> <li>• AZ put together coordinated itineraries with providers – look at this example of state promotion.</li> </ul> <p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider a cabin at Herbert Glacier. Could commercial operators build their own commercial use cabin?</li> <li>• Tracy Arm is a good place to build a mixed use – public and</li> </ul>



		<p>commercial use - cabin or platforms. Wilderness Act limits are a barrier to infrastructure development, but legal structures are in place to do things like this in wilderness. Other places have set precedents with concession sites - yurts are popular because can be taken down. Look at Wilderness boundaries to develop infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People prefer a loop rather than an out and back for a multiday experience. Trail connections could be created by putting temporary yurts in between existing cabins. Put in yurts that are a day ski apart on the wilderness boundary.</li> <li>• Tongass is looking at opening up forest service cabins to outfitters and guides. However, the reservation system for the cabins is not compatible with commercial use. Operators are working one year out, but cabin reservations system is only 6 months out. Jon Martin will check into why the six months limitation is in place.</li> <li>• The visitor experience to the Tongass could be easily enhanced by small infrastructure amenities - small value added features, such as viewing decks on trails, would make visitors more comfortable. The FS should look at commercial activity as a service to the public that facilitates a visit to the wilderness - and partner with outfitters to enhance the visitor experience. Commercial outfitters should articulate barriers and make needs know by writing letters to Forrest Cole, Forest Supervisor, to request infrastructure.</li> <li>• Cabin rental is undervalued. FS is not getting the money they should – and need.</li> </ul> <p>Cost of access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local, and regional, family and friends market is huge and untapped, but options are needed that keep cost of access down.</li> <li>• Water taxis to shuttle equipment to start of itinerary are too expensive. Outfitter/guides would like to have ability to keep kayaks and canoes out at tour locations so clients can fly in and rent equipment from there as a way to keep costs down for the client.</li> </ul> <p>Regulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no option in between an equipment rental business that cannot help facilitate the trip into the wilderness and a fully guided tour. FS should figure out how to allow/permit an outfitter to provide incidental/occasional guiding service. To do any level of guiding, an outfitter/guide needs expensive insurance, and a permit is needed one year in advance. The result is so much overhead for outfitter/guide that a high volume is the only way to</li> </ul>
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		<p>be profitable, so visitors are concentrated on a few high volume trails. A mindset shift is needed for the FS - to promote/encourage lighter commercial usage throughout the Tongass instead of concentrated usage in a few places.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get comments into the Shoreline II plan. The FS is working on the Wilderness Commercial Needs Assessments (WNA) for Admiralty Island NM, and Hoonah, Juneau and Sitka Ranger districts. A WNC determines if commercial enterprise is necessary to assist in providing access, services or other assistance for recreational users. More information about the project is found on the project website at <a href="http://go.usa.gov/Pzi">go.usa.gov/Pzi</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Jeremy Gieser, Gastineau Guiding, will take over as champion of the initiative. Jill Ramiel will support Jeremy in work related to developing packages, and Linda Kruger and Odin Brudie will support Jeremy in work on a Trails conference.</p>
11/2/12	Amber King, Odin Brudie, Linda Kruger, Eric Boraas, Jeremy Gieser, Bob Janes, Lynn Humphrey, Eva Bornstein, Carol Rushmore, Aaron Ferguson, Brian Holst, Ed Grossman	<p>The group reviewed the original list of 8 action plan activities for this initiative and made suggestions to pare down and combine. Odin Brudie volunteered to rework the list. The Status Report below has been updated to reflect the revised and reordered list of activities. The group's current focus is on developing one or two trail itineraries as coordinated "packages" that could marketed to (receptive) tour operators. The group will organize a meeting for 12/7/12 to gauge interest from commercial operators in building a product. The group then discussed presenting these itineraries to (receptive) tour operators and adventure tour companies for feedback and to explore barriers faced by those tour operators. Continuing to address gaps in long distance trails, and huts/cabins and trying to find funding is also a priority. The group discussed creating a list of community trail maps and their availability. The Juneau Trail Map has been very successful, and has sold 5000 copies. Developing trail maps for communities that don't have one, or have an outdated one, is recommended, as is a trail map for all of Southeast. Linda would still like to see a white paper or a delineation of the Return on Investment for trails that draw visitors.</p>
4/27/12	CWG monthly call-in	<p>It was suggested at the updates teleconference that community representatives and commercial users need to be invited to participate in the trails initiative so that trails are developed in cooperation with communities to make sure they will get local use as well as commercial use. Funding is needed for the proposed white paper to catalogue potential regional trail assets, provide proposals for long distance trails, and evaluate usability and</p>

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		economics.
4/10/12	Ketchikan Cluster Working Group meeting	Clark Simpson, Developed Rec Program Manager, USFS Ketchikan Ranger District/Misty Fiords National Monument, has joined the initiative team.
3/16/12	Amber King, SEATrails; Bob Claus, SEACC; Charles Horan, Sitka Trail Works; Eileen Chanquet, Sitka Trail Works; Ed Grossman, USFS; Erik Boraas, Trail Mix; Heather Rice, NPS RTCA; Jack Mosby, Alaska Trails; Jacqueline Ashwell, Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park; Jeremy Gieser, Gastineau Guiding; John Neary, USFS; Karen Petersen, POW; Linda Kruger, USFS; Odin Brudie, AKDCCED; Theresa Thibault, Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park; Eva Bornstein, JEDC	<p>Theresa Thibault of the Chilkoot Trail - Klondike Goldrush National Historic Park gave the group an overview from the perspective of the only multi-day trail in the region. She estimated usage to be about 3,000-4,000 hikers each year. The core demographic is baby boomer age, particularly families with teenagers. She also estimated that 30% of hikers are from within the region. They do not collect data on hikers, but Parks Canada does. A couple of outfitters have commercial use authorization. Groups are kept to no more than twelve. The limited number of campsites available and the limit on the number that can cross into Canada each day all limit commercial use. The heavy use of the trail is the lower two miles where commercial groups walk in and float out.</p> <p>John Neary commented on the Cross Admiralty Canoe and Kayak trail. This is a historic trail in a designated wilderness. No guided service offers transit. It is underutilized, mostly used by Juneau residents. It is 30 miles in length with easy access at one end by state ferry, but requires a plane pick up at the other end. The shore line plan will say how much guided use is appropriate.</p> <p>Discussion followed on the decline of the use of the Chilkoot Trail since a high point a decade or two ago. Commercial trips on the Tatshenshini River are also down from years ago. The region has also seen demise in the number of commercial outfitter tours in the region. Tourism was high when the Tongass debate was in the news in the 80's, bringing visitors to see the endangered rainforest. The Denali corridor now out-markets Southeast. The decline also coincides with the decline of the state funds to market Southeast.</p> <p>Linda proposed that the next step is the development of a concept paper to examine the economic impact of long distance trails, both the Chilkoot and other examples. It would also catalogue potential regional trail assets, provide proposals for long distance trails, and evaluate usability and economics.</p> <p>Sitka Trail Works would like to see a long distance trail in South Sitka Sound that would tie in to Goddard Hot Springs. It was suggested that a long distance trail should be accessible to the cruise market at both ends to generate revenue. Several trails out</p>

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		<p>of Juneau on the ice field side were discussed, including access from the Mt. Roberts tram and from a Lemmon Creek multi-user trail. Linda also suggested the group work toward a regional trails symposium in 2013. A funding session should be part of this symposium.</p> <p>Funding availability was discussed. The Forest Service, because of a declining budget, is not building new infrastructure. New trails need a sustainability model from a commercial perspective. Juneau has potential for long distance trails, but some commented that fixing existing trails should get priority over building new ones.</p> <p>POW has new shelters built for a water trail on the west side and a new cabin on the east side. The Harris River trail interconnect could be an 18 mile walk across the island with access by ferry in Hollis. There is potential for a hut to hut water trail on the west coast. There are also miles of road for potential loop biking routes.</p> <p>Jacqueline offered her office as a conduit to get information about trails to an urban audience.</p> <p>Next steps: Linda Kruger, Jeremy Geiser, Sitka Trail Works, and Amber King volunteered to develop a proposal for a trails conference.</p> <p>Linda Kruger, Jeremy Geiser, Erik Boraas, Odin Brudie and Amber King will develop an outline for the regional trails white paper.</p>
3/8/12	CWG monthly call-in	<p>The team has invited all trail organizations and agencies to participate in a conference call on March 16. The goal is to update all groups on what is happening on local trails in the region, to discuss ideas for long distance trails, and to determine interest in a trails summit.</p>
1/31/12	Linda Kruger, Amanda Smith, Odin Brudie, Lynn Humphrey, Carol Rushmore, Marti Marshall, Hans von Rekowski, Eva Bornstein	<p>Group will organize a teleconference for all trail groups in region to identify interest in long distance trails development and to share information. Lynn will work with Amber to look at a way to catalogue existing trails. Amanda will connect Linda with REI Alaska rep to bring into discussion.</p>



Initiative Action Plan Update		
Activity 1:	Review SEATrails plans and meet with SEATrails board members.	Activity Date:
	Representatives from the Tongass National Forest and the Visitor Products - Trail Initiative Team and SEATrails (Southeast Alaska trails nonprofit) met in Ketchikan to discuss common interests and opportunities to work together. Outcome: SEATrails has revised the organization's mission from funding trail infrastructure to promoting a regional interconnected trail system through a web portal providing comprehensive and interactive trail information.	9/12/11
Activity 2:	Coordinate with regional trail groups to identify and evaluate levels of interest in working on a coordinated effort.	Activity Date:
	Regional trail group teleconference held. Outcome: High level of interest in continued regional dialogue and support of a regional trails conference.	3/16/12
Activity 3:	Identify trail-based recreation opportunities that can be expanded or initiated, including longer trails (hiking, kayaking and bicycling) and cabins and other support facilities.	Activity Date:
	The initiative team convened a group of small business owners and entrepreneur to get input on the opportunities and challenges to bringing a "trails" product/package forward. Two needs emerged that the group will take action on: barriers to marketing (see activity 5) and infrastructure needs. To identify trail-based infrastructure support opportunities, the group will meet with Marti Marshall and others to explore opportunities, legalities and precedents for infrastructure development along Wilderness boundaries. The group would like to see small infrastructure amenities such as platforms for camping in Tracy Arm, a viewing deck at Pack Creek, and structures to store rental canoes or kayaks at selected sites. Jeremy to schedule with Marti Marshall in December 2012.	12/7/12
Activity 4:	Identify and catalog current trails and trail networks in Southeast.	Activity Date:
	SEATrails has a good inventory started but it may not be complete. Lynn Humphrey, Amber King and Eric Boraas (SEATrails) have begun working on this. SEATrails is looking for funding to add trails and trail information to an enhanced web application. A tour of the SEATrails website is found at: <a href="http://prezi.com/ubuceru4dq1w/seatrails-website-tour/#">http://prezi.com/ubuceru4dq1w/seatrails-website-tour/#</a>	11/2/12

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Activity 5:	Develop and market itineraries that enable visitors to experience one or more communities via local trail systems and publish (on line and in print) an artistically rendered map for visitors and area residents, with information on trails and other recreation amenities and stories of the region’s rich culture and history.	Activity Date:
<p>The initiative team convened a group of small business owners and entrepreneur to get input on the opportunities and challenges to bringing a “trails” product/package forward. Two needs emerged that the group will take action on: barriers to marketing and infrastructure needs (see Activity 3). The small operators do not have the budget or resources for promotion and are dependent on larger entities to generate information on what is available. The group would like to work with the FS to have the Tongass/Mendenhall Glacier websites provide links to the commercial opportunities available to visit the wilderness – this is a service to the public. The websites could link to all the permitted commercial outfitters and guides, in order not to be preferential. Also commercial links should be available through Seatrails and CVBs.</p>		12/7/12
<p>The initiative working group will develop a list of commercial trail operators in the region. Working with these operators, and starting with some of the trails identified in the (established) SEATrails network of trails (including trails that are open to commercial use), develop some itineraries. The group will organize a meeting for 12/7/12 to gage interest from commercial operators in building a product - coordinated trail “packages” - to market to receptive tour operators. The group also discussed presenting these itineraries to tour operators for feedback and to explore barriers to entry faced by those tour operators.</p>		11/2/12
Activity 6:	Identify and evaluate levels of interest among individuals, organizations and agencies and develop priorities for a regional trails summit and develop a plan to move forward.	Activity Date:
<p>The working group discussed participation in the Alaska Trails statewide trails conference in April 2013. Odin Brudie contacted Alaska Trails, who have not yet tied down their conference location and agenda.</p>		11/2/12

**Other Informational Items**