

Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance

Working with communities to build a network of protected rivers, trails and interconnected open spaces that promote a better *quality of life* and link Alaskans to their natural and cultural heritage.



National Park Service

Alaska Region

U.S. Department of the Interior



Helping communities realize their vision.

Knowing what you want isn't always the same as knowing how to get it. The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), helps you decide what you need to conserve natural resources and create outdoor recreational opportunities.

Working where *invited* by local groups, local and state government agencies, nonprofit organizations, or by Alaska Native groups, RTCA can help turn your community's *ideas into action*.

Alaska is full of natural and cultural treasures. Many of these gems lie in our community's backyards. The Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance is a program of the National Park Service that works with communities outside park boundaries. Drawing on the Park Service's expertise in managing America's premier park system, RTCA extends this *wealth of knowledge* to local communities wanting to build a trail, care for a river, or preserve natural areas.

Each project is unique, and we work with you to determine the best strategies for your project's success. Our goal is to *empower* you and your community to get the job done. Some of the ways RTCA might serve your project:

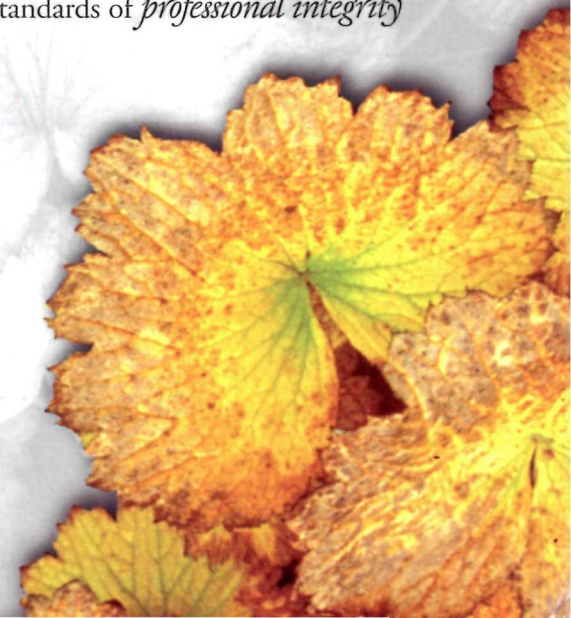
- Facilitate community discussion
- Build relationships with partners
- Decipher bureaucratic systems
- Survey and identify community outdoor recreational needs
- Develop strategic and conceptual plans
- Identify funding sources for your project
- Offer technical expertise and assistance
- Teach "hands-on" conservation skills

In addition to providing direct assistance to communities, RTCA also supports statewide outdoor recreational and conservation efforts. Often *working behind the scenes*, RTCA staff coordinates meetings and workshops, conducts training demonstrations, helps plan for community-based hands-on trail work, and distributes "how-to" and other information resources.



*The National Park Service, through
RTCA, offers professional assistance on
projects across Alaska.*

- *Empowering people* to conserve natural areas and creating outdoor recreation opportunities
- Championing *close to home conservation and recreation* for multiple benefits, including the health and well-being of all Americans
- Embracing a *spirit of entrepreneurship* and strategic thinking
- Working where we are *invited*
- Sharing our partner's commitment to *resource stewardship*
- Supporting *community-led projects* through planning, partnerships, and capacity building
- Teaching *technical skills* to produce real conservation results
- Providing high *quality service* to communities throughout the nation with the highest standards of *professional integrity*



Partnership Success Stories - What We Do

CARING FOR RIVERS AND WATERSHEDS

Local involvement key to conservation success

With increased visitor use, the risk of adverse human encounters with bears and damage to culturally important Native sites along the Chilkoot River was rising. RTCA was invited to help resolve these potential conflicts by a Working Group composed of local residents, conservation groups, agencies, and businesses. RTCA worked with the group to identify threats to the river corridor from anglers, bear viewers, traffic congestion, and insensitivity to Native sites. RTCA helped the group work with multiple state, federal, and private landowners in the area to develop better visitor management policies through the Chilkoot River Corridor Plan. One of the plan's key strategies—the placement of corridor monitors to educate visitors and reduce negative impacts—was partially funded through a National Park Foundation grant that RTCA assisted the group in finding. Educational efforts focus on sending clear messages about staying safe in bear country and honoring Native graves and cultural sites.

Chilkoot River Corridor Plan Partners:

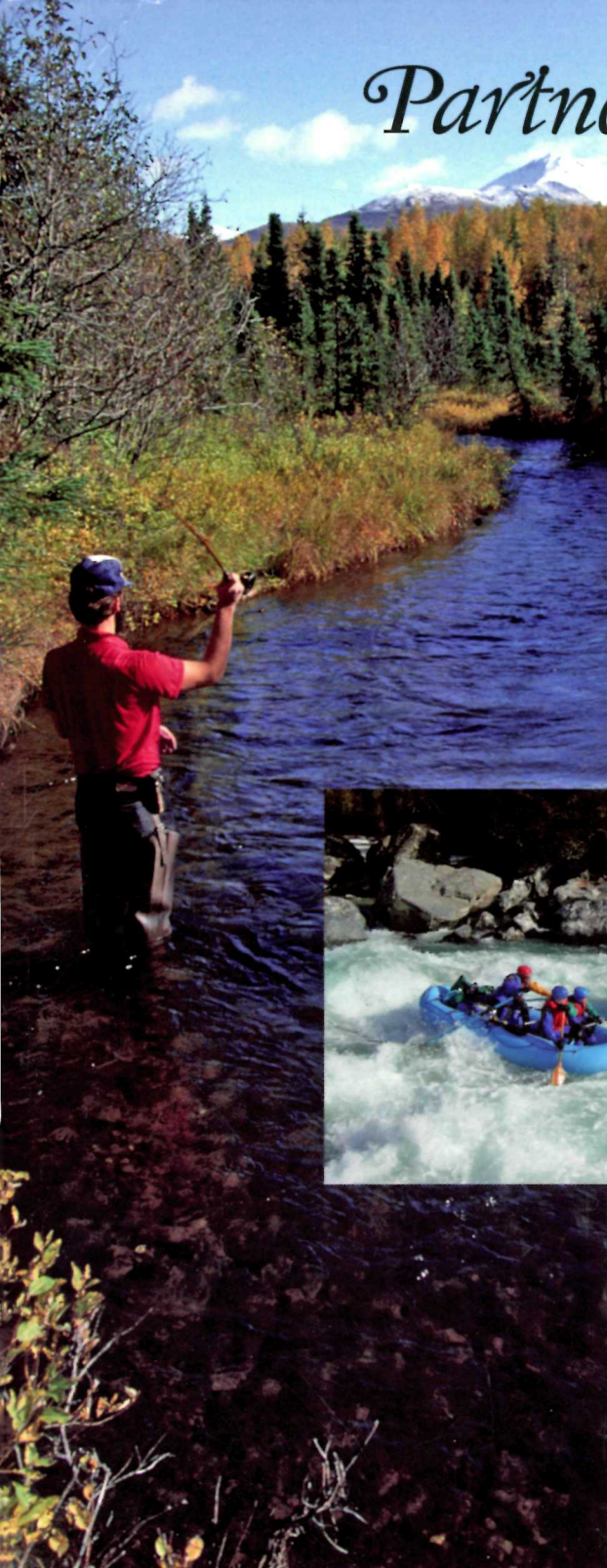
Haines Chamber of Commerce - Chilkoot Indian Association - Lynn Canal Conservation, Inc.

Outdoor recreational opportunities are important to Alaskans

Accessible to Alaska's major population, the lower Deshka River is a prime recreational area for fishing and boating. Recognizing the pressure on this choice watershed, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough sought RTCA's assistance in the development of a long-range plan to manage and improve recreational access consistent with protection of conservation values. RTCA helped the borough conduct a survey of users of the Deshka River area to identify issues of concern and attitudes toward management alternatives. Building on this information, which indicated strong support for resource conservation by Mat-Su residents and visitors alike, RTCA helped the Borough develop plan options for preventing further damage to water resources and to protect recreational uses.

Deshka River Management Plan Partners:

Matanuska-Susitna Borough - Land Design North



PROTECTING NATURAL AREAS

Trails are gateways into community values

An initial plan for road system trails on Kodiak Island evolved into the community looking at its outdoor recreation needs for the long term. Working with Kodiak Island Borough's Parks and Recreation Committee, RTCA provided technical assistance with a trail user survey, GPS mapping, and facilitating committee visioning workshops. This work grew into a three-day conference for communities like Kodiak's that, as entrance points to public lands, face increasing pressures. The Gateway Community Workshop provides people the opportunity to learn more about these pressures and methods to manage growth, balancing the natural resources that draw people with economic development opportunities. Information learned at these meetings inspires community-based decisions on future trails, parks, open space, waters, and natural areas. See more information at www.kib.co.kodiak.ak.us

Kodiak Island Trails and Gateway Community Project Partners:

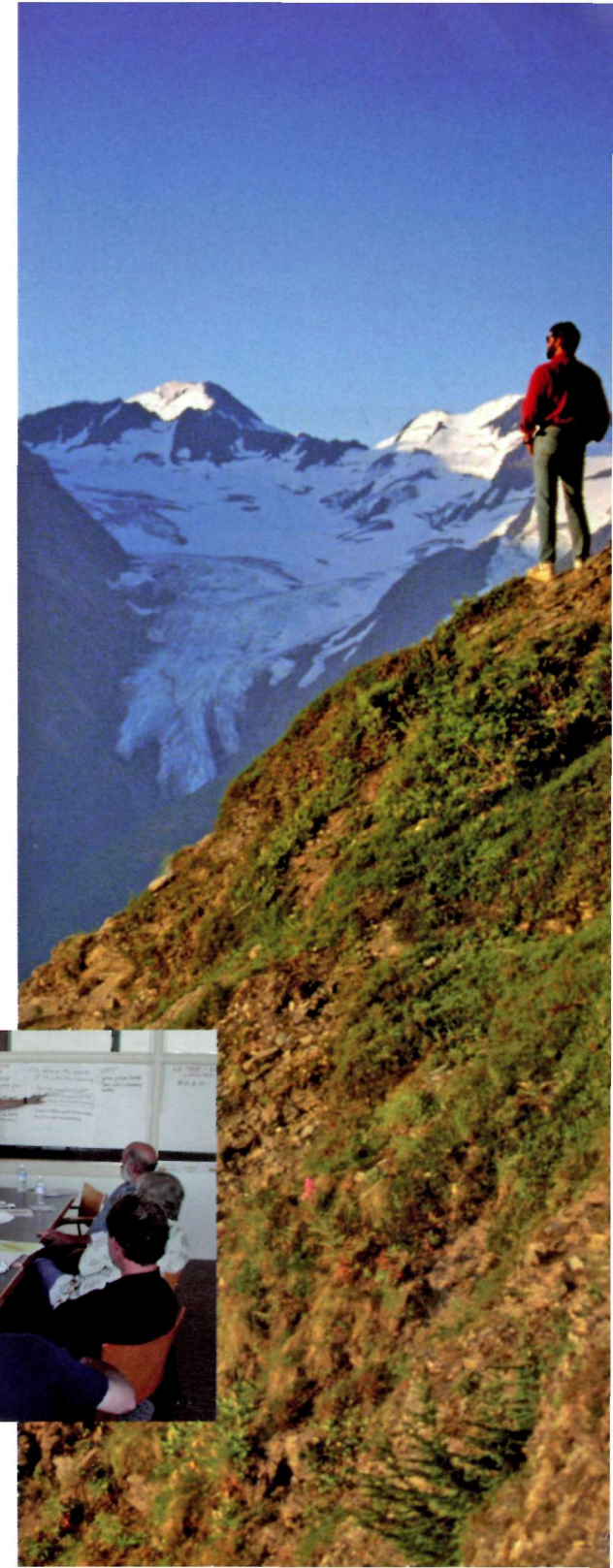
Kodiak Island Borough - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - The Conservation Fund - The Urban Land Institute

Building infrastructure for community conservation programs

RTCA helps many communities and grassroots organizations traverse new territory in establishing nonprofit status to enable them to produce their own on-the-ground natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation successes. Assisting fledgling conservation groups, like the Great Land Trust and Alaska Trails, with expertise in developing dynamic public processes, organizational structure, building a board of directors, and other essential information needed to operate a nonprofit program are other services offered by RTCA. Conservation and recreation organizations dedicated to conserving waters and lands are essential to a better quality of life and good economic health of our communities.

Nonprofit Partners:

Great Land Trust - Alaska Trails - SEATrails - Trail Mix





BUILDING A TRAIL

School children add natural and cultural values to walking path

The small town of Glennallen sits at the crossroads of two of Alaska's highways. With the help of RTCA, the community's vision of a summer walking trail located away from these busy roads is now a reality. School children, residents, and visitors can enjoy the new trail that winds through natural habitats. Trail interpretive displays designed by local 5th and 6th graders show native plants with information on their traditional cultural uses and health-related values. RTCA's work on this pilot trail project united eight different private and public entities in a partnership that can serve as a model for future expansion of community trails throughout the Copper River Valley.

Glennallen Community Interpretive Trail Partners:

Copper Valley Development Association - AHTNA Corporation - Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce - Alaska Bible College/SEND - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment - Bureau of Land Management - Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve

Building partnerships, linking communities through common focus

It began with one community wanting to connect their trails into a local network. Now 17 of Southeast Alaska's communities have joined in the efforts of the grassroots organization to build a regionwide network for outdoor recreation. SEATrails takes an array of pathways, on land and water -- hiking, kayaking, underwater diving, and biking - connecting them into one package. Easy access to these recreational opportunities contributes to a better quality of life for residents, boosts economic development and improves transportation systems to attract independent travelers. RTCA participated in the creation of SEATrails by helping facilitate an active public meeting process and nurturing partnerships between citizens and agencies, and across communities. RTCA staff also provided advice on building an organization to ensure broad regional support. More information is at www.seatrails.org

SEATrails: Southeast Alaska Trail System Partners

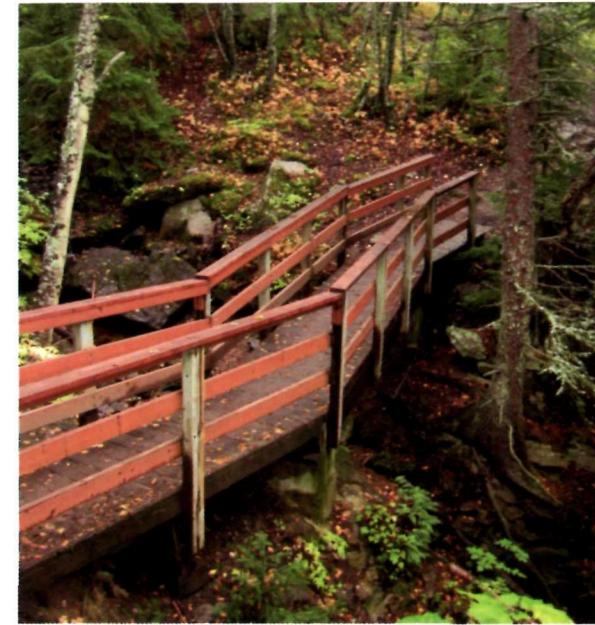
Alaska State Department of: Commerce and Economic Development; Transportation and Public Facilities; and Natural Resources - Alaska Marine Highway System - Bureau of Indian Affairs - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Communities of: Angoon, Coffman Cove, Craig, Gustavus, Haines, Hydaburg, Juneau, Kake, Ketchikan, Naukatik West, Pelican, Petersburg, Sitka, Skagway, Thorne Bay, Whale Pass, Wrangell

Rebuilding historic route, a walk through time

The Iditarod Trail, well known to the world by the sled dog race from Anchorage to Nome, historically began in Seward. A new effort is underfoot to reconstruct and reconnect the 120-mile route from Seward north to Girdwood. The new route will link into existing hiking trails, railroad systems, and historic sites, and offer mixed outdoor recreational use through four-seasons. With multiple landowners and communities along the route, RTCA's role as facilitator is engaging representatives across a broad public and political spectrum in reaching mutual goals. RTCA staff break down the mysteries of bureaucracy in applying for grants, complying with regulations, and participating in governmental public processes. Sharing best practices from RTCA's toolkit of experience helps citizen groups take their passion from planning to the long-term results of a fully linked Iditarod trail. Learn more at www.iditarodnationalhistorictail.org

Iditarod National Historic Trail Partners:

Seward Ranger District, Chugach National Forest - Girdwood Board of Supervisors - Girdwood Trails Committee - Seward Iditarod Trail Blazers - Kenai Peninsula Borough, Trails Advisory Commission - Communities of Girdwood, Seward, and Moose Pass



Through Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance, the National Park Service as of 2004 has helped local governments and non-profits protect 9,814 miles of trails; 5,101 river miles; and 446,121 acres of open space over the 1997 totals.

Vision

A network of parks, rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces that promotes quality of life and links people to their natural and cultural heritage.

Mission

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the country and the world.

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service in communities across America.

Five-Year Goals

1. RTCA will help create local, regional and state networks of parks, rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces by collaborating with community partners and National Park areas in every state.
2. RTCA will hold itself and project partners accountable through measures that demonstrate success and maximize the impact of program financial and human resources.
3. RTCA will be recognized and sought out as the community assistance arm of the National Park Service for conservation and recreation.



Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) is a program of the National Park Service that works with local communities to conserve natural resources and create outdoor recreational opportunities. Information on the national program is available at: www.nps.gov/rtca

More information on RTCA's activities in Alaska is available at: www.nps.gov/akso/riversandtrails

Or contact us at:

The National Park Service
Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance
240 West 5th Avenue, Room 114
Anchorage, AK 99501

907-644-3586 phone
907-644-3807 fax

Applications for technical assistance are reviewed annually. It is advised to call first to discuss your project ideas before submitting an application. Deadline for the one-to-three page application is August 1st of each year. Learn more about the technical assistance program on the web at: www.nps.gov/akso/riversandtrails/assistance.htm



The National Park Service advances cooperative conservation with RTCA through cooperation, communication and consultation.

Our responsibilities lie at the confluence of people, land, and water.
Our programs touch the lives of millions of people across the nation.
We are stewards of what endures –our land and its resources.