



**PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING AGENDA
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2022
5:30 P.M.
ZOOM WEBINAR**

This meeting will take place virtually via **Zoom Webinar**. To join the Zoom Webinar, go to <https://juneau.zoom.us/j/94184441385> or call: 1 253-215-8782. **Webinar ID: 941 8444 1385**. Members of the public wishing to provide public comment during the meeting can do so by clicking the “Raise Hand” button (online Zoom Webinar) or press *9 (telephone).

Agenda Item	Presenter	Action Requested
I. Call to Order	C. Mertl	
II. Approval of Agenda Agenda Changes	C. Mertl	<i>If no changes:</i> Motion to approve
III. Approval of Minutes Meeting of December 7, 2021 Meeting of January 4, 2022		
IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items	C. Mertl	
V. New Business Juneau Nordic Ski Club Planning	Juneau Nordic Ski Club	
VI. Unfinished Business Fish Creek Park Master Plan	Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition	
VII. Staff Reports 2019-2029 Parks & Rec Master Plan	M. Elfers	
VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports Chair Report Liaison to the Assembly Board Member Liaisons Other Board Member Business	C. Mertl Alicia Hughes-Skandijs Liaisons All	
IX. Adjournment	C. Mertl	



TO: Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
FROM: George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director
DATE: January 28, 2022
RE: February 1, 2022 Meeting

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Please find enclosed the information supporting your agenda topics for this meeting. The meeting is anticipated to last 60 minutes and will take place via **Zoom Webinar**. To join the Zoom Webinar, go to <https://juneau.zoom.us/j/94184441385> or call 1-253-215-8782. **Webinar ID:** 941 8444 1385.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Juneau Nordic Ski Club Planning – Presented by Juneau Nordic Ski Club [Page 11-33]

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) recently completed a Nordic Ski Trails Development Plan that proposes future improvements and infrastructure for cross-country skiing in Montana Creek Natural Area Park and the surrounding area. JNSC will present their plan to the Committee at tonight's meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Fish Creek Park Master Plan – Presented by Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition

The Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition (SAWC) facilitated a public outreach and planning process for the Fish Creek Area. CBJ contributed funding to the effort and has worked with SAWC since Fall 2021 on the plan. The project area includes Fish Creek Park and part of the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge, managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. SAWC will present the plan to the Committee at tonight's meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

A. Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2019-29) – Presented by M. Elfers

The Parks & Recreation Master Plan was adopted by the Assembly and helps guide the development of municipal parks, programs, and recreation facilities. Staff will provide an overview of the plan for new members of the Committee, and note areas of progress and future focus. The plan is available at <https://juneau.org/parks-recreation/projects>

The following summary of projects, programs, and activities over the last month is provided at the request of the Chair:

- **Shéiyi Xaat Hít** – Since opening in July, Shéiyi Xaat Hít has provided hundreds of nights of shelter to youth experiencing homelessness, and has helped several clients secure permanent housing. Youth Services Division staff are continuing to seek additional funding opportunities, and the Department is proposing to add additional staff to the facility in FY23.
- **Aquatics** – Bids for replacement of the pool deck at the Dimond Park Aquatic Center have been opened and the contract awarded. Installation of the new slip-resistant surface is planned for later this spring, and will coincide with the facility's annual maintenance closure.

Only one firm bid on the RFP for renovation of Augustus Brown Pool, and the base bid was more than 60% higher than the available funding. The bid was cancelled and staff are working to repackage the project to complete critical repairs with the funding available, including replacement of the facility's boiler. A new RFP will be announced later this spring.

The Assembly approved regulations adopted by the Aquatics Board for commercial use of municipal pools, including private swim lessons. The new regulations and permit system will go into effect on July 1, 2022.

The Aquatics Division projects that FY22 expenditures will be approximately \$490,000 below the approved budget, primarily due to an ongoing shortage of staff and resulting savings in personnel services. Revenues, on the other hand, are expected to mostly meet expectations, thanks in part to strong Winter Pass sales.

- **Community & Recreation Programs** – The adult Coed Volleyball league will be launching on February 8 with 38 teams and 300 players registered for the season. The season will run through mid-April.

Our popular DIY Activity, Clue will be returning to three trails in February. Be on the lookout for promotion rolling out soon.

- **Treadwell Arena** – Treadwell Arena continues to be busy, hosting several high school hockey games and tournaments in recent weeks.

The roof replacement project is in the design phase, with an RFP planned for later this spring. The rink will close for the season at the end of April.

Dimond Park Field House – The Dimond Park Field House reported over 9,000 visits in December, and the schedule is packed with multiple user groups until summer. The Department is proposing to add additional staff to the facility in FY23.

- **Parks & Trails** – A large landslide occurred on the Perseverance Trail during the recent storm event. The slide is directly above the Ebner Adit and impacted the compressor and shelter building. A large avalanche has also buried a portion of the upper access trail and blocked Basin Road near the CBJ wellfield. Park Ranger Dale Gosnell and others trained in

avalanche terrain inspected the area and determined that it is too unstable to attempt repairs at this time. We will develop a plan and evaluate options as conditions improve.



*Above: Looking North from Mt. Roberts Trailhead; avalanche across upper Perseverance Trail access and Basin Rd.
Below: Looking West from Last Chance Mining Museum; Perseverance Trailhead is at left.*





PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2021 – 5:30 PM

Zoom Webinar

I. Call to Order at 5:32 p.m. – C. Mertl, Chair

Present: Alex Beebe-Giudice, Edric Carrillo, Makayla Chappell, Ron Crenshaw, Kirk Duncan, Emily Haynes, Chris Mertl, Will Muldoon

Absent: Josh Anderson

Staff Present: George Schaaf, Director; Michele Elfers, Deputy Director; Lauren Verrelli, Recreation & Public Services Manager

II. Agenda Changes – C. Mertl adds welcome & thank you to board members under New Business and Master Plans Update under Information Items.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes –

- A.** From June 1, 2021 – E. Carrillo moves to approve minutes; no objection. ***Minutes adopted.***
- B.** From July 6, 2021 – E. Carrillo moves to approve minutes; no objection. ***Minutes adopted.***
- C.** From September 7, 2021 – E. Carrillo moves to approve minutes; no objection. ***Minutes adopted.***

IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items – None

V. New Business –

A. Welcome & Thank You

C. Mertl: Mr. Crenshaw resigned from PRAC due to time constraints. Thank you to Mr. Crenshaw for serving on PRAC as well as Mr. Bryson who was a great Assembly Liaison. Welcome to Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, our new Assembly Liaison.

B. Capital Improvement Program (FY23-29)

G. Schaaf: This is the third year that parks staff has brought our six-year CIP plan to the PRAC. It is an opportunity for the PRAC to see what staff has been working on, what projects we've identified as priorities for the park system, trails and our recreation facilities. We are grateful to get your input on this list and talk about what you think we might be missing.

M. Elfers: Typically, for the department, we have three funds: park & playground improvements, sports field & court repairs and then trails. Then we have some special request based on public interested and user interest.

W. Muldoon: Can you touch on parks & playground deferred maintenance and in specific, I am looking at what funding will be going towards Sigoowu Ye?

M. Elfers: That \$100,000 is a request to add to an existing CIP. Currently, it is pretty well funded since we have many bond projects. In this coming year, we are going into design into the Eagles Edge Playground at Lemon Creek. We will see how that project goes and if there, any remaining funds we could put it towards Sigoowu Ye.

W. Muldoon: Why is Sigoowu Ye not being prioritized again?

M. Elfers: It is a priority for us. That, S'it' Tuwan and Steelhead Park are all small neighborhood parks that need some work. We are working on getting to them.

A. Beebe-Giudice: Is there a specific site in mind for the public use cabin funds items?

M. Elfers: There is not a specific site as of now. We are starting the process of evaluating potential locations for another cabin.

E. Haynes: I have a question about item number nine, the block grant. It says design and construction will occur in 2022-2023. Has those funds already been appropriate for 2022?

M. Elfers: Not yet, we are just signing the memorandum of agreement with Western Federal Lands. They confirmed we could get FY22 federal funds. Once it is signed, it will be sent to the Assembly they will appropriate the funds and work should begin quickly.

C. Mertl: What has been pushed to FY24/25?

M. Elfers: The way we approached this years CIP list, which has a lot of bond funding projects right now, was a combination of capacity and what projects we can execute. We took this into account because there is a lot of work going on.

W. Muldoon: I move we amend the CIP priority list to strike #50 (Twin Lakes ice skating lights) and move all the items behind it up one.

C. Mertl: Would you like to speak to your motion?

W. Muldoon: I understand that this item (#50) has had some conservations recently and that there is some safety concerns. But these concerns are all equally valid for Sigoowu Ye Park which suffers from a lack of lighting. Since the mid-90's families have asked for lighting in this park. It does not make sense to me that the Department priorities adding new lighting when we have not added lighting at Sigoowu Ye.

C. Mertl: Are you trying to make a statement that Sigoowu Ye deserves the same recommendation or can we insert a line item that provides lighting for Sigoowu Ye that is equal or a higher priority item than Twin Lakes?

W. Muldoon: No, my intention is to just strictly remove the Twin Lakes item.

E. Haynes: I would like to add that I support we add a new line item for Sigoowu Ye. Twin Lakes lighting is not proposed until FY26. There is not any reason why we cannot add another line item for Sigoowu Ye and prioritize it higher.

E. Carrillo: I'm in favor of what Ms. Haynes is suggesting.

C. Mertl: I would like to speak to the Twin Lakes lighting. When they were around they were an asset in the wintertime and they're sorely missed. I would be opposed to removing a line item but in favor of adding a line item.

M. Elfers: I want to speak about adding a line item for Sigoowu Ye. The park and playground CIP is dedicated to playground and park improvements. So this type of request could come out of that CIP. Instead of adding a line item, the PRAC could make a motion that states prioritizing Sigoowu Ye lightning.

W. Muldoon: Why do we not just fold the Twin Lake lighting into the parks & playground CIP?

M. Elfers: For Twin Lakes Park, it is expensive to add this type of lighting. We have been shifting our CIP and how it is organized; instead of listing separate projects that are small, we have been grouping them into these three categories. Like I mentioned earlier, it is a priority and we have these three small neighborhood parks that need improvements.

K. Duncan: I would suggest we approve the FY23 CIP and addressing Mr. Muldoon's comments we can insert something about Sigoowu Ye.

C. Mertl: Mr. Muldoon has a motion before the PRAC striking item #50 (Twin Lakes lighting).

Yay: Muldoon

Nay: Beebe-Giudice, Carrillo, Chappell, Duncan, Haynes, Mertl

Motion fails.

K. Duncan: I move the PRAC recommends to the Assembly the adoption of the FY23 CIP and PRAC will submit with staff input future years scheduling.

E. Carrillo: I would like to add an amendment to the motion that the PRAC recommends that Sigoowu Ye Park lighting is prioritized as a project.

K. Duncan: I am concern by naming this one project will box us in.

C. Mertl: We will look into the FY24-29 CIP requests further in a CIP Subcommittee and will refine the list. Let us take a vote on Mr. Duncan's original motion.

Motion passes unanimously.

C. Legislative Priorities

Katie Koester (Director of Engineers & Public Works): Last year were asked by Senator Kiel to receive a list of state legislative priorities. I like to think of this list as more of a visioning document for some of those larger, more aspirational projects. We're asking committees to pick two projects from the existing list that was approved by the Assembly last year or propose a new project that is a high priority for the community.

C. Mertl: Can we get you these comments in January or do you need them today?

K. Koester: I actually need to present the list of projects to the Public Works & Facilities Committee at their January 5 meeting so I need comments today.

G. Schaaf: The Lemon Creek Multimodal Path is a project that the department has identified in supporting; the improved services to the Lemon Creek Area by connecting neighborhoods to parks and non-motorized access in the area.

E. Carrillo: This list is to benefit the whole community and I would suggest the Lemon Creek Multimodal Path, North Sate Office Parking and then the Civic Center. These are great projects that would get good community use.

C. Mertl: I agree on the Lemon Creek Multimodal Path, we know this is an underserved area. OHV park is also needed in this town, I would like to add it to the list. We can build off what Mr. Muldoon is asking, illumination of parks, all parks in town need lighting.

E. Hayes: From the CIP list, I like the Auke Lake/Montana Creek/Brotherhood Bridge trail

K. Duncan: The most used facility we have is trails. If we are asked to do something tonight, I would ask for \$5 million in trail development. I know it's aspirational but it is also vague enough it could encompass many aspects.

C. Mertl: Is everyone on PRAC in agreement that we would like to request \$5 million in trail improvements? *[Everyone agrees]* What is the second item we will ask?

K. Duncan: I think we should just put forth the one recommendation for the trails.
[Everyone on PRAC agrees]

VI. Unfinished Business – None

VII. Information Items –

A. Operations Update: Included in the Directors Report.

K. Duncan: What is the plan for AGB?

W. Muldoon: We are currently wrapping up the bid process; we are having some issues with funding due to the pause related to COVID.

G. Schaaf: Once the bid process ends, we will have a better understanding of the project budget and if it make sense to move forward with a complete project that will require more funding than we have available. That would have to go through the Assembly process.

B. Master Plan Updates

M. Elfers: Fish Creek Master Plan is moving along with a public meeting scheduled for December 16 to discuss conceptual options for the park that were developed. We are still working through the Montana Creek Master Plan; check out the website, which now includes a GIS map for the whole area. We are working on management information and a motorized use map across all land managements, which is one of the biggest questions from the survey. Then Capital Park Construction is currently in winter shutdown. We have a completion date for August 2022.

VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports

A. Chair Report— None.

B. Liaison to the Assembly Report— The Assembly is aware of the AGB funding, I feel confident that additional funding will be received.

C. Liaison Reports—

Aquatics – W. Muldoon: We already discussed the AGB renovations; just completed the Commercial Use regulations for the pools that passed unanimously.

YAB – J. Anderson: None

Eaglecrest – A. Beebe-Giudice: None

Jensen-Olson Arboretum— E. Carrillo: None

Lands, Economic Developing, Housing – C. Mertl: Lots of discussion on housing now.

Park Foundation— C. Mertl: None

Treadwell Arena Board – K. Duncan: None

Trail Mix— E. Haynes: None

1% for Art— J. Anderson: None

Other Member Business – None

Adjournment – 7:18 p.m. *Having no other business before the board.*

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Verrelli, Recreation & Public Services Manager 1/4/22



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2022 – 5:30 PM

Zoom Webinar

I. Call to Order at 5:33 p.m. – C. Mertl, Chair

Present: Josh Anderson, Alex Beebe-Giudice, Makayla Chappell, Ron Crenshaw, Emily Haynes, Chris Mertl, Will Muldoon

Absent: Edric Carrillo, Kirk Duncan

Staff Present: George Schaaf, Director; Michele Elfers, Deputy Director; Lauren Verrelli, Recreation & Public Services Manager

II. Agenda Changes – None

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – None

IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items – None

V. New Business –

A. 2021 Annual Report

C. Mertl:

VI. Unfinished Business – None

VII. Information Items –

A. Projects Update

M. Elfers: I wanted to give a quick update on some projects the department has going on. In December, we held a public meeting via Zoom on the conceptual plans for the Fish Creek Master Plan. There is a comment period, which is wrapping up shortly after we will review the comments and make any revisions. We should have a final master plan to show you at our next meeting.

On the Montana Creek Master Plan work, we have been gathering data and inputting it into our new GIS website. We are still in the data-gathering phase for the project but we are starting to move into the design phase. We have delayed the in-person design meetings due to the Omicron variant. I have been working with DNR on motorized use maps for the area, which has been difficult.

On the 35 Mile ORV project, we are going to have a joint Parks & Rec and Juneau Off-Road Association public meeting in about a month on Zoom. We will present the work we have been doing, concept layouts, data information and we will collect people comments. If things go well at the public meeting, then we will take it to the Assembly to review as a resolution and then to the Planning Commission for a conditional use permit. We have a process laid out with a rough timeline, which takes us through early summer.

Hank Harmon Public Range has \$200K of voter approved bond funding. We have a

designer on contract to do some scoping and application for a Hunter Access Program Grant that is through Fish & Game. We should hear about the grant by this summer. We are working up a project either based on just the bond funding or bond funding plus grant, likely to be constructed in fall 2023.

Trail Mix & Parks & Rec applied for a Federal Lands Access Program Grant for the Jumbo Trailhead in South Douglas. The current trailhead off 5th Street has no parking and that part of the trail is in bad shape. With the grant, we received \$265,000 with about \$28,000 in match. That funding will go towards relocating the trailhead to Savikko Park so folks will be able to use the parking lot and other facilities in that area. We might see construction starting this fall.

J. Anderson: Thanks for all your work on the Mile 35 project. Have you spent any money to date yet on this project planning? Also, any other locations being tossed around?

M. Elfers: No, we have not yet spent any funding besides my staff time. Nothing is moving along like the 35 Mile site.

VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports

A. Chair Report— We have 2 vacancies on the PRAC.

B. Liaison to the Assembly Report— The COW is discussing COVID mandates and Finance is discussing CIPs.

C. Liaison Reports—

Aquatics – W. Muldoon: AGB reno will be discussed at Finance Committee; wrapping up budget.

YAB – J. Anderson: Gearing up for 2022 grant season; discussed changes to grant application.

Eaglecrest – A. Beebe-Giudice: None

Jensen-Olson Arboretum— E. Carrillo: None

Lands, Economic Developing, Housing – C. Mertl: None.

Park Foundation— C. Mertl: None

Treadwell Arena Board – K. Duncan: None

Trail Mix— E. Haynes: None

1% for Art— J. Anderson: None

Other Member Business –

G. Schaaf: We're planning on having a PRAC retreat in March. We will talk about the values and goals of the PRAC and how that translates into resources and CIPs.

Adjournment – 6 p.m. *Having no other business before the board.*

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Verrelli, Recreation & Public Services Manager 1/10/22



January 03, 2022

Michele Elfers
Deputy Director
CBJ Parks & Recreation

Subj: JNSC Nordic Ski Trails Development Plan

Dear Michele:

Happy New Year! Thank you for the invitation to participate in the “in-person design meeting” you are hosting at the Dimond Park Fieldhouse on **January 12, 2022 from 10am to noon**. We appreciate this opportunity to take part in the CBJ master plan process for the Montana Creek watershed and look forward to offering our input.

As a prelude to our participation, we are transmitting our Juneau Nordic Ski Club’s (JNSC) “Nordic Ski Trails Development Plan” for the CBJ region in general, and specifically in the Montana Creek watershed. These trails are described in the attached PDF. Our vision for future trail development includes as a centerpiece creating new trails and interconnections between three regions as depicted in Figs. 3 and 10. The proposed trail system would extend from the Mendenhall Glacier Visitors Center, through the Montana Creek watershed, and up into Spaulding Meadows. The trail system, segments of which are described in the plan, would include following: 1) trails proposed in the Mendenhall Glacier Recreational Area (MGRA) Master Plan; 2) a connection to the current Montana Creek trail; 3) creation of a McGinnis Meadows trail; 4) rehabilitation of the Montana Creek to Windfall Lake trail to Nordic ski standards; 5) connector trails to access Spaulding Meadows; and 6) a road to access Spaulding Meadows. Together, these trails would constitute the Mendenhall – Montana Creek – Spaulding Meadows Intertie (MMS), a world-class trail system for Nordic skiing and hiking.

We hope that this document will educate readers about Nordic skiing and also about JNSC as well as inform CBJ, USFS, ADNR and other land managers, and the general public of JNSC’s current efforts and its vision for the future. We hope that you will gain a better understanding of what trails the JNSC grooms, the level of use these trails receive, the need for new trails and kilometers to accommodate the increased numbers of Nordic skiers, and our need to prepare for a warming climate by adding new and extending existing trails at higher elevation or colder locations.

We would appreciate posting this document on your project website. We are looking forward to discussing our vision and presenting our maps when we meet January 12th. We also plan to offer spiral-bound copies of the report to interested agencies, such as USFS and ADNR. Please let us know where best to drop off the printed document.

In conclusion, we really appreciate your efforts in developing this master plan and look forward to fruitful discussions and planning sessions with all the various government agencies and interested parties involved.

Sincerely,

Frankie Pillifant, Pres, JNSC
Roman J Motyka, Chair, JNSC trails subcommittee

Cc: Ed Grossman, USFS; Megan Hillgartner. ADNR



Nordic Ski Trail Development Plan for Juneau, Alaska

January 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Juneau is home to world-class outdoor recreation opportunities, including Nordic skiing. The number of Nordic skiers in Juneau has been rapidly increasing with memberships in the Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) expanding from 125 members in 2016 to nearly 1000 members by 2021. We attribute much of this growth to the regular and consistent trail grooming efforts of Juneau Nordic Ski Club; demand now often exceeds trail capacity - especially on multi-use trails. The warming climate also means that over time the trails at sea level are becoming less reliable due to diminished snowfall, requiring trail development at higher elevations to meet the local interest and demand for Nordic skiing.

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC), in collaboration with partners, is working to realize its mission of “Getting more people on skis more often on more connected kilometers”. We realize that in order for others to understand the growing needs of Nordic skiers in Juneau, our planning efforts would benefit from a systematic and accurate list of existing Nordic trails and grooming information, and a thoughtful list of five and ten-year trail development goals for Nordic skiing. The JNSC thus proposes the following:

- Five-year goals include the addition of 15 km or more of ski trails by 2025, largely through the development of new trails and the interconnection of Mendenhall Lake/Campground, Montana Creek, and Spaulding Meadows (MMS) trail systems for continuous skiing (and bicycling and hiking). Some trails, such as the Mendenhall Lake shoreline trail and a West Glacier ski loop trail, are already in preliminary design phases, while others, such as the new connector trails in the Montana Creek Natural Area Park and Spaulding Meadows, need land manager support through planning and design. Improved ski access on the Amalga Trail, aka Eagle Glacier Trail, is also under redesign by the USFS. Find a suitable location for a biathlon facility
- Ten-year goals include a road to Spaulding Meadows that would include a shared trailhead where motorized and non-motorized users can park and go in separate directions. We also envision the completion of a world-class system of interconnected trails along with warming huts and recreational cabins. Other long-term opportunities identified are hardening ski loops in Gastineau Meadows and McGinnis Creek and building a biathlon facility.

PREFACE: This is a living document, a framework for discussion with membership and decision makers on future Nordic ski trail development. More detail will be added as information on new trails, their locations, and designs become available.

INTRODUCTION

The Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) is a 501c3 non-profit membership organization with a mission of “Getting more people on skis more often on more connected kilometers”. The club accomplishes these goals through grooming Nordic ski trails, developing youth skiing programs and offering events for members and the public. In this document, we define Nordic skiing as free-heel skiing on trails that are groomed for classic and/or skate skiing (Fig. 1). (see more definitions in the appendix)



Figure 1. Nordic skiers on groomed trail, skate skiers on left and classic on right.

More than 30 years ago JNSC adopted several public trails that were receiving little or no winter use and began grooming them for Nordic skiing. The groomed trail creates a compacted snow surface that allows additional use by dog walkers, fat bikers, snowshoers, school groups, hunters, fishermen, archers, teams, and motorized vehicles. JNSC has formal permissions in place with local government land managers for this grooming and trail maintenance.

We hope that this document will help inform the JNSC membership; CBJ, USFS, ADNR and other land managers and decision makers; and the general public of JNSC’s current efforts and

its vision for the future. All will gain a better understanding of what trails the JNSC grooms, the level of use these trails receive, the need for new trails and kilometers to accommodate the increased numbers of Nordic skiers, and to prepare for a warming climate by adding new and extending existing trails at higher elevation or colder locations and to implement snow making where feasible.

MOTIVATION: INCREASED DEMAND AND WARMING TRENDS

Locations of Nordic trails in the Juneau region are shown in Figure 2. This overview map includes trails that are currently groomed on a regular basis, trails that are occasionally groomed (“pop-up trails”), and trails that we propose be developed to meet increased skier demand. As a result of JNSC’s advocacy, grooming efforts and long-term trail maintenance, local interest in Nordic skiing has exploded over the past two decades. For example:

- The JNSC membership has increased by an order of magnitude, from 125 in 2016 to nearly 1000 in 2021.
- Youth participation in skiing programs has increased from 30 in 2016 to over 100 in 2021 at the high school, middle school and junior Nordic levels.
- Trails groomed have increased from two, the Mendenhall Campground and Montana Creek, to upwards of five at times, including the Pioneer Road, Salmon Creek and Mendenhall Lake. Accordingly, so has volunteer grooming efforts.
- Since its inception the JNSC has continually increased the events it sponsors, including races, waxing clinics, master classes, community events, and more. In a typical winter season, the club hosts at least 15 such events.

This increase in the popularity of Nordic skiing has now put a strain on our currently available groomed trails, especially at the easily accessible Mendenhall Campground and Montana Creek trail systems, where weekend skiers and other trail users can sometimes number in the hundreds.

An aggravating factor is that most of Juneau’s current groomed Nordic trails lie at a low-elevation and are typically about 3 to 5 km in length. As a consequence of climate change the number of skiable days on these trails has been declining on average over the years. For example, despite refrigerator effects from the Juneau Icefield (which typically keeps Mendenhall Valley a few degrees cooler), warmer and wetter winters in recent years have significantly reduced skiable days on the groomed Nordic trails at the Mendenhall Campground (elevation 65 ft). The trail system at the Eagle Beach State Recreation Area (EBSRA) is likewise being affected.

The reliably colder and popular Montana Creek Trail has also had thinner snow packs in recent years, often requiring skiers to walk the upper road before reaching skiable conditions. An additional complicating factor is the CBJ allowance of motorized use during the winter grooming season on the Montana Creek Trail groomed snowpack. The effect of motorized use is two-fold: the first is safety issues between skiers and ATVs on a narrow, winding trail; the second is

rutting of the groomed trail that requires additional grooming to smooth ruts before being safe for skiers.

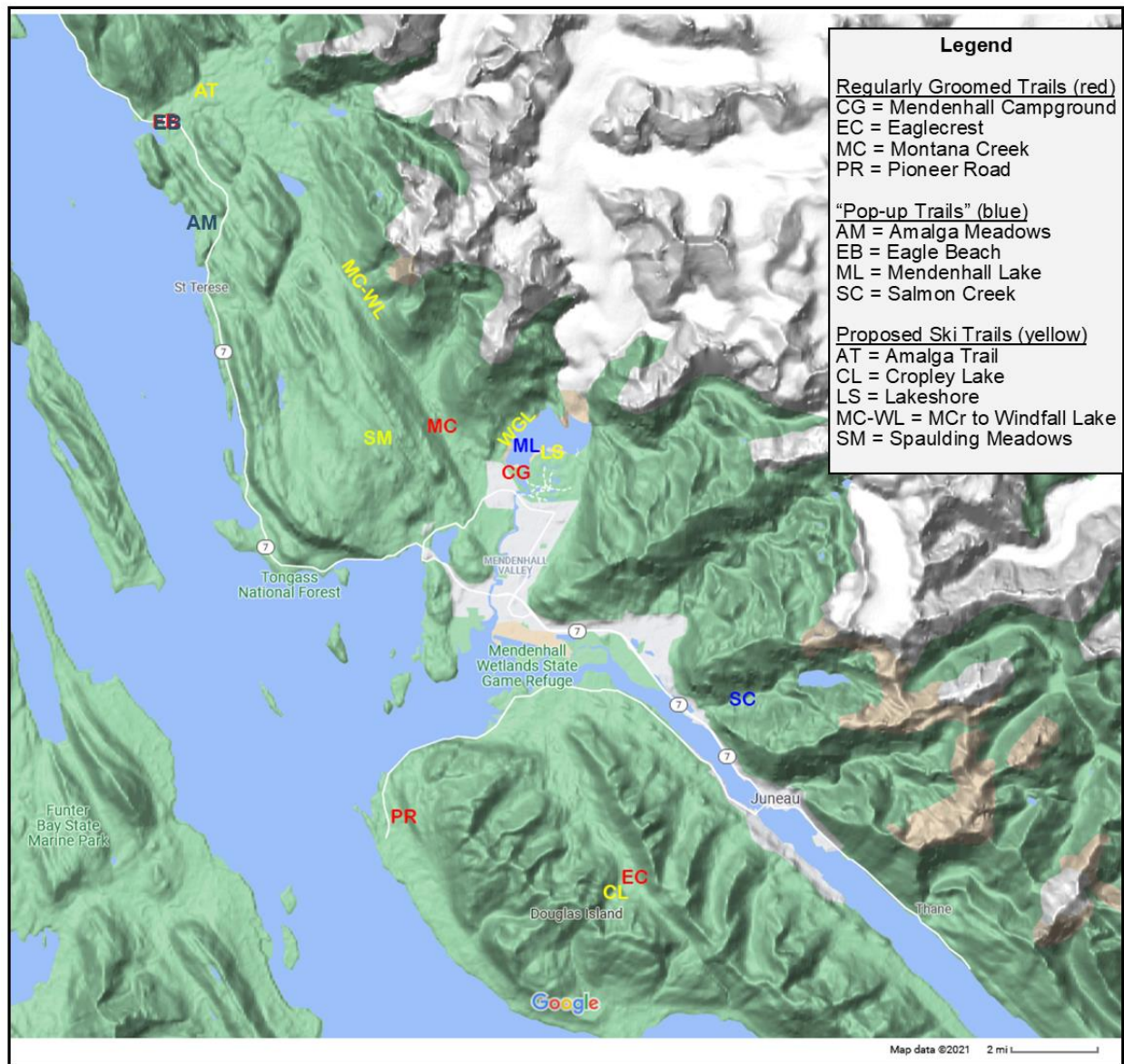


Figure 2. Approximate locations of Nordic ski trails in the Juneau Region: regularly groomed trails (red); "pop-up" occasional trails (blue); proposed new trails (yellow).

Warming temperatures also affect trails at higher elevations, such as the Eaglecrest Lower Loop Trail (1100 ft), where a thinner snowpack and more frequent rain limited the number of skier days in recent years despite the fact that 35% of the trail is hardened.

Unfortunately, despite the high snowfalls in 2020-21 and 2021-22 seasons, the prediction for our region is for warmer and wetter winters in coming years.

INVENTORY OF NORDIC TRAILS IN THE JUNEAU AREA

Regularly Groomed Trails

Montana Creek and Mendenhall Campground trails are the anchors for trails regularly groomed by JNSC and more recently, Pioneer Road. All three have hardened surfaces (gravel or pavement) and are groomed through agreements with the land managers at CBJ, USFS and by regulatory concurrence with ADNR. Grooming equipment and fuel are staged onsite near the trailheads, which facilitates grooming on a regular basis. An overview of the currently groomed trails as well as proposed new trails and connector trails in the Mendenhall Glacier Recreational Area (MGRA) and the Montana Creek watershed (MMS) (known as the MMS- Mendenhall Montana Spaulding) is shown in Fig. 3.

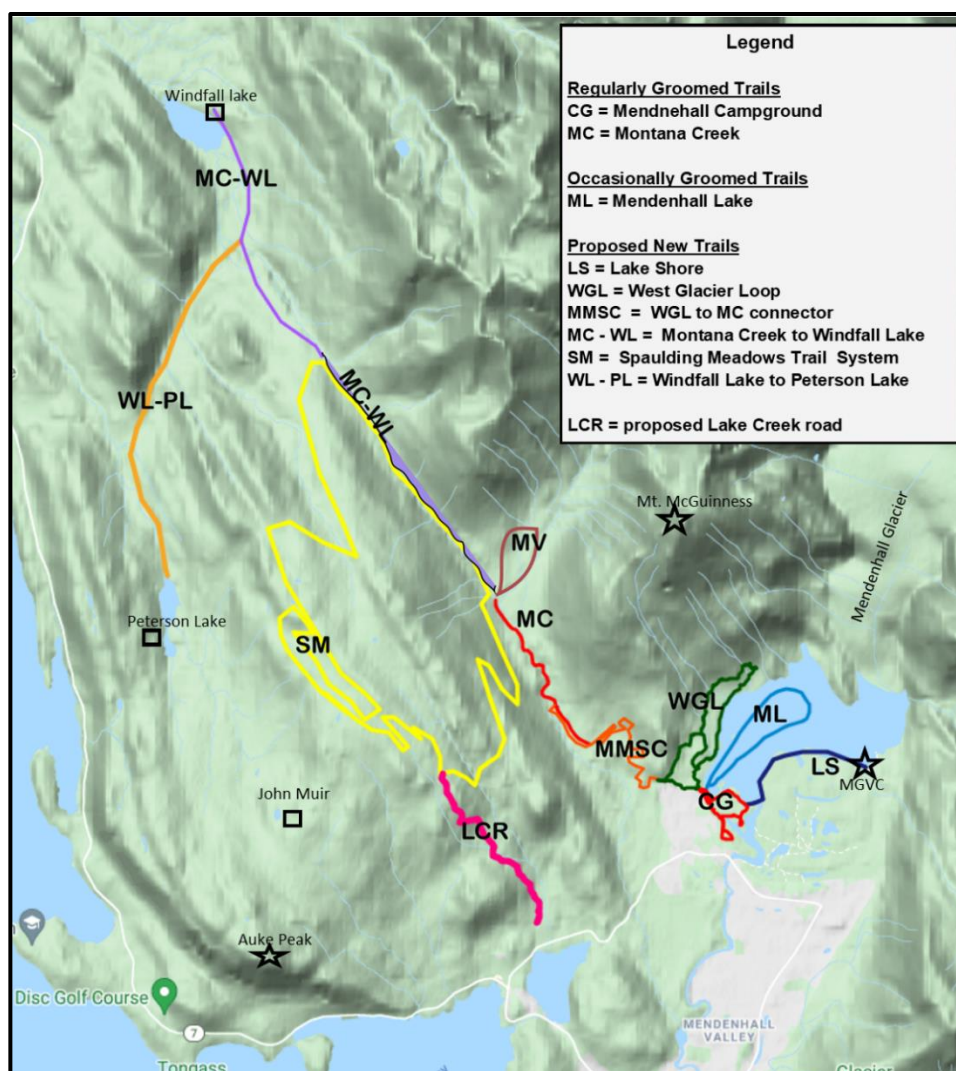


Figure 3. Overview of the MGRA and Montana Creek trail system, including currently groomed trails and proposed new trail development.

1. **Mendenhall Campground:** JNSC grooms ~3 km of novice -friendly relatively flat trails in the campground, normally providing 30-90 days of skiing per year (Fig. 4). Perhaps the most popular Nordic groomed trail in Juneau, the campground can draw from one to two hundred skiers and other users on any weekend day. Parking lots are typically full.

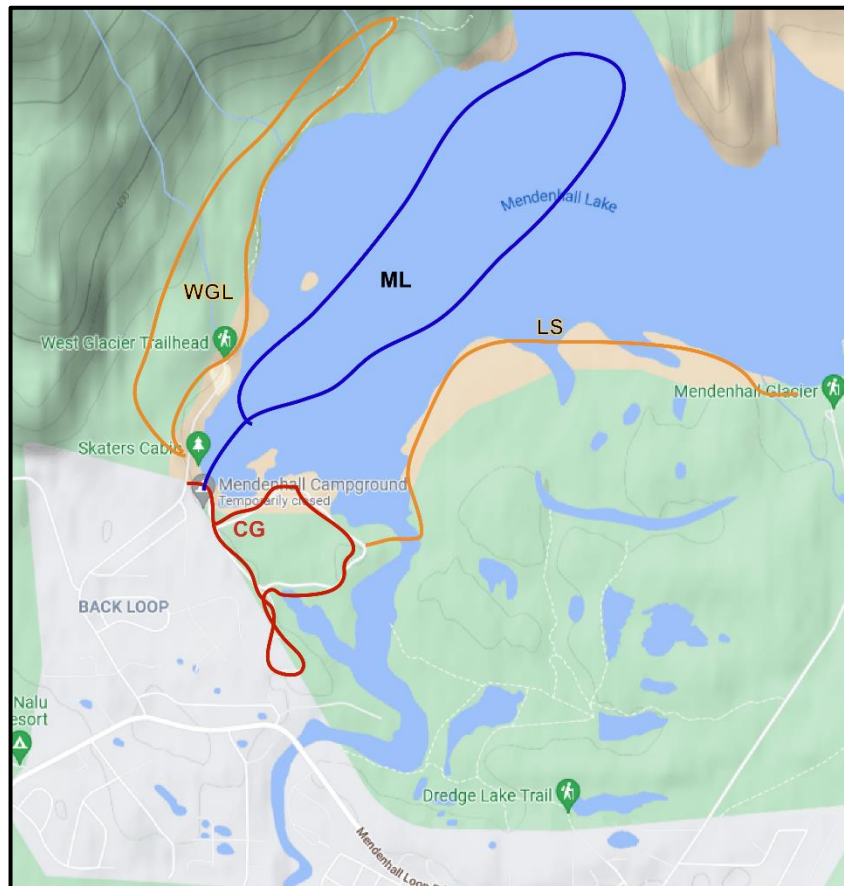


Figure 4. Nordic trails in the Mendenhall Glacier Recreational Area (MGRA): the currently groomed Mendenhall Campground trail system (CG, red); “Pop-up” Mendenhall Lake trail (ML, blue). Two proposed new trails are also shown: The Lake Shore trail (LS, orange) and the West Glacier Loop Trail (WGL, also orange).

2. **Montana Creek (Kaxdigoowu Héén):** JNSC grooms 3.1 km of trails from the Hank Harmon Rifle Range to the turnaround at the end of the road, normally providing 100-180 days of skiing per year from early November to May (Figs. 3, 4). The trail features a gradual ascent of about 100 m. Montana Creek is one of Juneau’s most popular trails because of its dependable snow conditions due to cooler temperatures and sheltered aspect. Often a hundred or more skiers will use the trails on weekends, causing parking problems at the trailhead that can aggravate users of the shooting range. Allowance of motorized traffic on the trail is a concern of the JNSC because of safety issues.

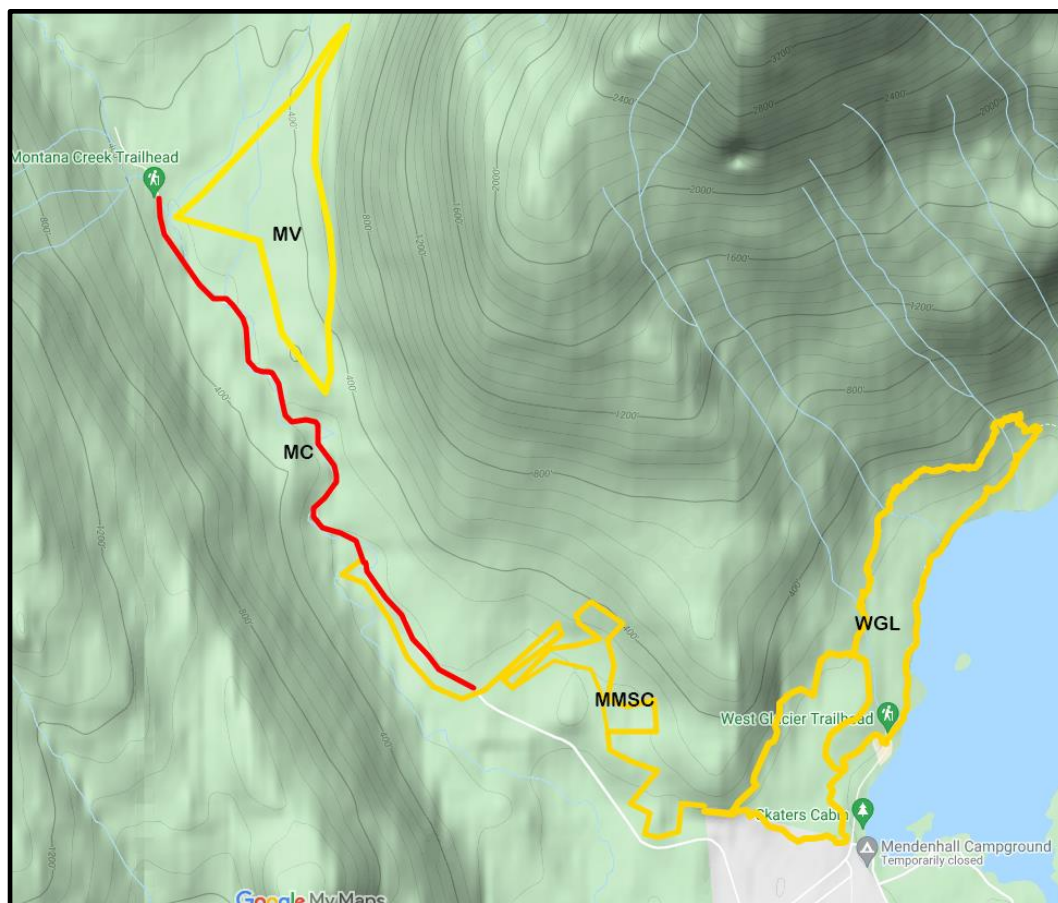


Figure 5. Current Montana Creek groomed trail (MC, red). Also shown are several proposed additions and connector trails (yellow). WGL = West Glacier Loop; MMSC = MMS connector trail; and MV = McGuinness Valley trail

3. **North Douglas Pioneer Road:** This scenic 5.5 km dirt road provides gradually ascending and rolling terrain ideal for Nordic skiing (Fig. 6). JNSC has periodically groomed this trail since 2017 under an agreement with CBJ. JNSC volunteers routinely clear downed trees and encroaching saplings as needed. The Pioneer Road has become an increasingly popular Nordic trail, especially for Downtown and Douglas Islanders. However, future use for Nordic skiing will be curtailed by the next phase of road construction and development on the back side of Douglas Island.

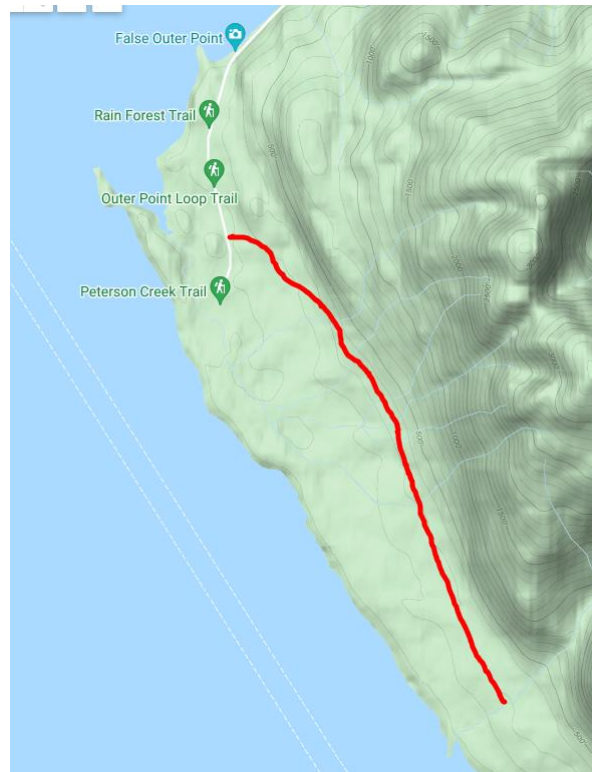


Figure 6. Pioneer Road (red) 5.5 km (one way) trial on North Douglas Island.

‘Pop-Up’ Groomed Trails (when snow conditions allow)

4. **Mendenhall Lake:** Nordic trails are groomed on the lake with a connector to the campground whenever lake ice thickness is at least ~9", as tested in multiple locations (Fig. 4). This thickness allows for safe use by grooming equipment. Insufficient ice thickness in the past five years has reduced and limited the number of skiable days on the lake to 0-30 days per year. When groomable, trails on the lake add several kms of Nordic skiing to the campground system that attracts numerous skiers, especially on clear, blue sky days.
5. **Salmon Creek:** This road is close to downtown and has a good base for a groomed Nordic trail, but the very steep initial 500 meters segment is a deterrent to novice skiers (Fig. 7). The remainder of the 3.2 km upper section consists of gentle gradually ascending terrain. JNSC first used this road in 2020. Erosion and landslides forced months-long closures of the road over the years, including in 2021.

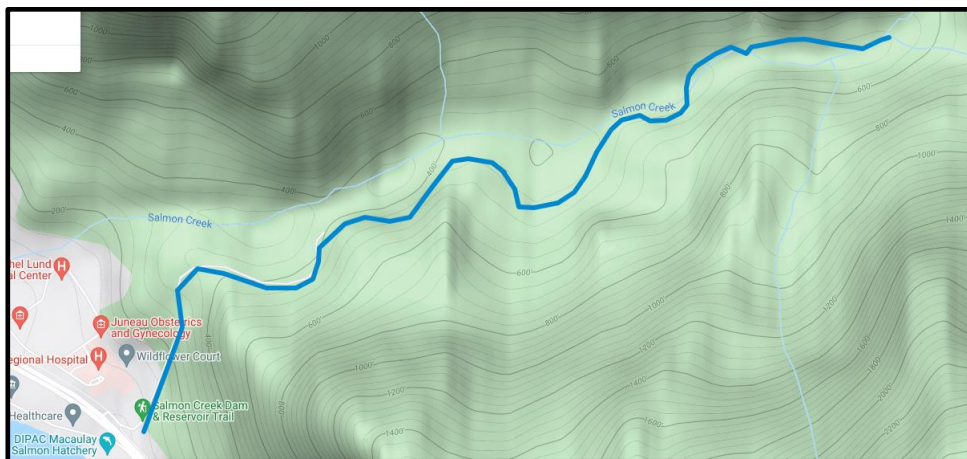


Figure 7. Salmon Creek Road (blue) 3.2 km trail (one way) to powerhouse.

6. **Spaulding Meadows** (Fig. 3, 10): although not currently groomed, JNSC hopes to begin setting classic tracks in the meadows using light weight, more portable grooming equipment as early as winter 2021-22. The meadows are also listed here because of their current and future importance to Nordic skiing in Juneau. Access currently requires a 2+ mile hike and 1500 ft ascent via one of three trails: John Muir, Spaulding Meadows, or Lake Creek, with the latter so-called “snowmobile” trail the most popular. The ascent is well worth the effort as these trails access a winter wonderland of lightly wooded rolling meadows (several thousand acres) with an abundance of snow at an elevation of ~ 1500 ft. The meadows are thus a premier location for hardy cross country and Nordic skiers throughout the winter and spring.

Nordic Trails Groomed by Other Organizations:

7. **Eaglecrest Ski Area:** Generally groomed 5 days a week by Eaglecrest staff, snowpack permitting, both the Lower Loop and the Upper Loop have desirable Nordic skiing terrain (Fig. 8). Changing climate has closed or delayed grooming the Lower Loop in recent years due to a thinning snowpack and the mostly marshy muskeg base. However, completion of trail hardening should assist in maintaining the snowpack in low snow years. The Upper Loop has excellent terrain but can be difficult for beginner and intermediate skiers to access, requiring a hike up and down one of the downhill trails. The Upper Loop does not have a hardened surface that helps hold snow. This can delay grooming until well into winter, often not until January or February, because creeks, downed trees, bushes, and hummocks require a deeper snowpack for grooming. JNSC assists Eaglecrest groomers on the route and direction of grooming whenever requested. JNSC also assists with grooming in the pre- and post- season, as well as during low snowpack conditions, when a Pisten Bully is too heavy for the unhardened marshy terrain.

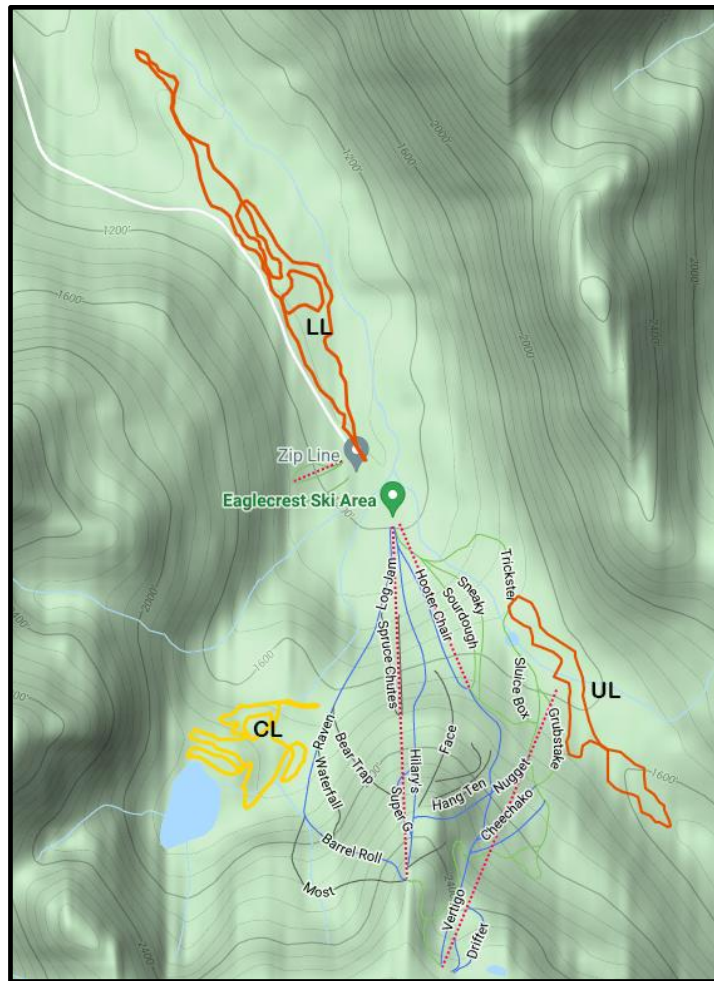


Figure 8. Current and proposed Nordic trail system at Eaglecrest ski area: lower (LL) and upper (UP) loops (red); and proposed Cropley Lake system (CL, yellow).

8. **Eagle Beach State Recreation Area:** JNSC volunteer groomers and Alaska State Parks staff use State Parks equipment at this “out-the-road” seaside campground although grooming is inconsistent (Fig. 9). Temperatures are frequently lower at this farther north location and the 2-3 km of campground trails are relatively flat, thus a good venue for beginners and park users. The snowpack can be inconsistent making grooming more sporadic over the last few years. A trail from the campground leads under the Glacier Highway bridge and connects to a ~ 1.5 km delightful forest loop, groomed for classic skiing only.



Figure 9. Eagle Beach State Recreational Area (EBSRA) trail system (EB, blue) and proposed Amalga Trail (AT, yellow). The EBSRA is located about 45 km (28 mi) from downtown Juneau.

CURRENT CAPACITY CHALLENGES

1. **Crowding on trails and at trailhead parking.** JNSC currently has nearly 1000 members (March 2021). The JNSC membership, as well as numerous other users, including Juneau school groups and the Juneau Nordic Ski Team, access and use the groomed trails regularly to ski, snowshoe, walk, dog walk, hunt, fish, archery practice or fat bike ride. Because of the 'drive up' accessibility of two of our main trail systems, Montana Creek and the Mendenhall Campground, they are often crowded, especially on weekends, lunchtime and after work hours. Skier-dog collisions and skier-skier collisions have occurred. The allowance of motorized use of Montana Creek by CBJ has increased the potentially dangerous encounters on that narrow and winding trail.
2. **Multiple sets of equipment.** Currently JNSC has 3 sets of rollers, Ginzu groomers, and snow machines at its three primary locations, plus an additional set for use elsewhere as needed, such as regular equipment failure or when snowpack is available for 'pop-up' grooming. By interconnecting several trails (e.g., Mendenhall and Montana Creek) we can maximize efficient use of our current grooming equipment by consolidating grooming operations, providing logistical and cost benefits.

OUR VISION FOR FUTURE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

The Mendenhall – Montana Creek – Spaulding Meadows Intertie (MMS):

Our vision for future trail development includes as a centerpiece creating new trails and interconnections between these three regions to create a world-class system of Nordic skiing and hiking trails as depicted in Figs. 3 and 10. The proposed trail system would extend from the Mendenhall Glacier Visitors Center, through the Montana Creek watershed, and up into Spaulding Meadows. The trail system, segments of which are described below, would include following: 1) trails proposed in the Mendenhall Glacier Recreational Area (MGRA) Master Plan; 2) a connection to the current Montana Creek trail; 3) creation of a McGinnis Meadows trail; 4) rehabilitation of the Montana Creek to Windfall Lake trail to Nordic ski standards; 5) connector trails to access Spaulding Meadows; and 6) a road to access Spaulding Meadows. Together, these trails would constitute the ***Mendenhall – Montana Creek – Spaulding Meadows Intertie (MMS)***, a world-class trail system for Nordic skiing and hiking.

5 Year Goals: Add 15 kilometers, or more, of groomed trails by 2025, preferably at higher elevations and/or colder regions.

A. Near-term Opportunities:

1. **Mendenhall Lake Shoreline Trail.** The first portion of the MMS would follow the Mendenhall Lake shoreline with a new trail from the visitor center to the Mendenhall Campground via a connector bridge across Mendenhall River (Fig. 4) as described in the MGRA Master Plan. Trail and bridge width will allow Nordic grooming for skate and classic skiing tracks. Trail development could start as early as 2022.
2. **West Glacier Loop Trail.** The current MGRA Master Plan includes the West Glacier loop trail, as proposed by JNSC to the USFS and mapped by volunteers. This six-kilometer loop trail (Fig. 4) would connect and extend the existing Mendenhall Campground trail system using grooming equipment already stationed there. Development of this trail has received broad support from the JNSC membership, the USFS, and Trail Mix. Trail development could be as early as 2022.
3. **Mendenhall Campground to Montana Creek intertie.** The two trail systems would be connected by a new trail following the Tolch Rock trail and then turning northwest towards Montana Creek following the topography at the ~200' elevation (Figs. 4, 5 and 10). The trail would bypass uphill of private property and be routed to avoid the Hank Harmon Rifle Range. Development of a Master Plan for this region has been initiated and is being facilitated by CBJ.
4. **Restoration and upgrading of the Montana Creek to Windfall Lake primitive trail.** This option, as proposed by the USFS, would potentially add ~ 8 – 10 km to the Montana Creek system (Fig. 10), but is currently stalled until competing user and government agency issues are resolved. Trail restoration would qualify for GAOA

funding. Development of a Master Plan for this region has been initiated and is being facilitated by CBJ. Separating motorized vs. non-motorized users is a JNSC prime goal. An opportunity to separate these users could include a shared trailhead leading to segregated user zones. This may include a bridge over Montana Creek to access the lower McGinnis slopes for Nordic skiing.

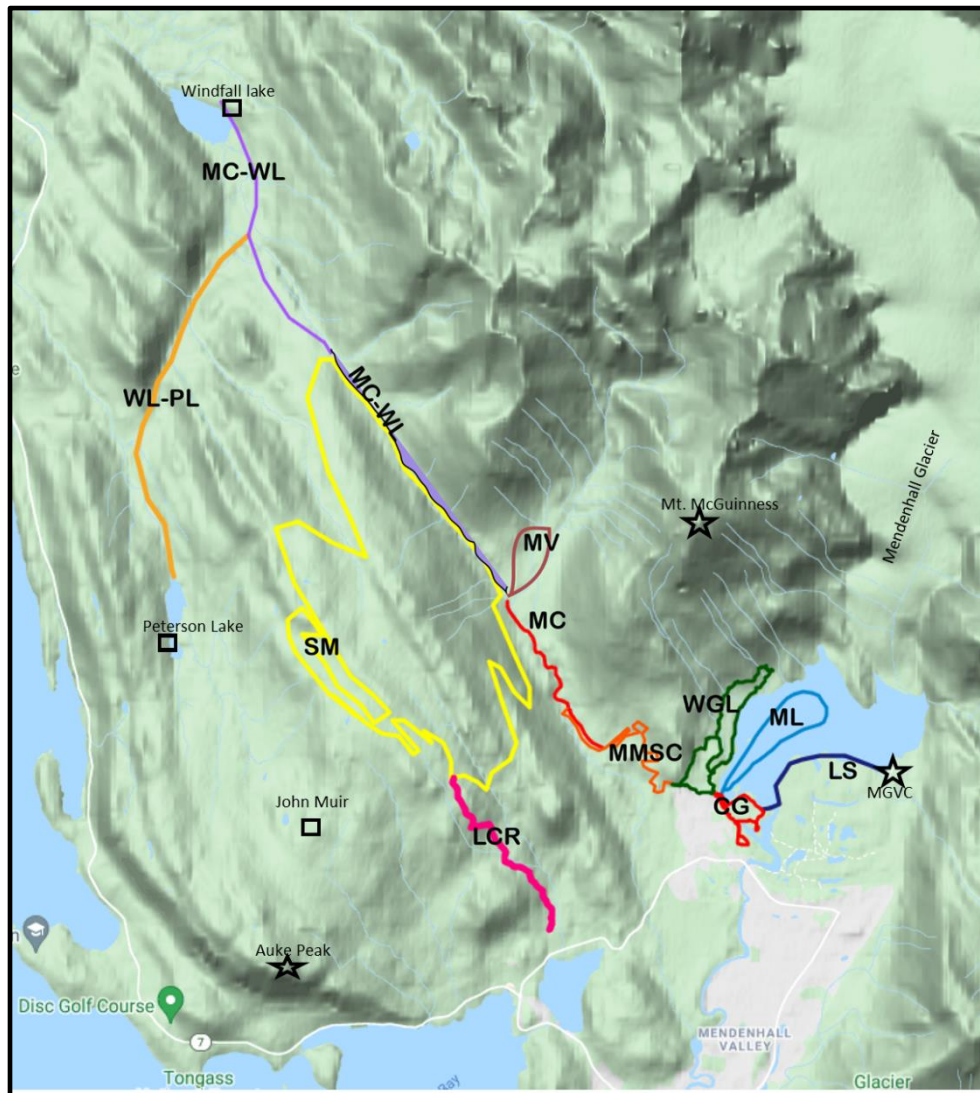


Figure 10. Mendenhall – Montana Creek – Spaulding Meadows Intertie (MMS) proposed Nordic trails: Spaulding Meadows (SM, yellow) and interconnects to Montana Creek; connector to Windfall Lake (MC-WL, purple); Lake Creek Road access (LCR, magenta); Windfall Lake to Peterson Lake connector (WL-PL, orange). MGRA trails and other connectors also shown. Together, these trails would constitute the Mendenhall – Montana Creek – Spaulding Meadows Intertie (MMS), a world-class trail system for Nordic skiing and hiking.

5. **Connector trails to Spaulding Meadows.** Two connector trails are envisioned (Figs. 3 and 10). The first would start at the end of the current Montana Creek trail turnaround,

then climb westward and switch back up to Spaulding Meadows. The second trail would originate near the juncture of the Montana Creek primitive trails with the Windfall Lake trail and ascend a shoulder southward to Spaulding Meadows. Development of a Master Plan for this region has been initiated and is being facilitated by CBJ.

6. **Amalga Trail upgrade.** Although not part of the MMS, we list it here because it would add kms to the existing EBRA trail system described above. The USFS has submitted a proposal to the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) initiative for the restoration and rerouting of the Amalaga (Eagle Glacier) Trail system (Fig. 9). The first 1.5 km lies within the Eagle Beach SRA. Plans call for an 8-foot-wide trail over this section of the trail, wide enough to extend a classic track to a viewpoint on the river, and is a logical extension of the present EBSRA Nordic Trail system. The next 3 kilometers lies on USFS land. In discussions with USFS staff JNSC expressed its desire that the new trail alignment be wide enough to groom for classic skiing, and perhaps even farther to reach the Eagle Glacier cabin. If GAOA funding is approved, work is slated to begin in 2023.

B. Additional 5-year Goals:

7. Develop a pop-up grooming spot as a regular daily grooming spot (Salmon Creek, Gastineau Meadows, Horse Tram Trail).
8. Own and maintain sufficient grooming equipment to take advantage of snow at all elevations and groom pop-up locations. Transition to electric powered snow machines.
9. Install lighting at Mendenhall Campground for night skiing.
10. Implement portable or permanent snow-making at Mendenhall Campground and Montana Creek. (Note: Sweden has perfected the small, portable snowmakers).
11. Work with Eaglecrest management to improve and refine the grooming program, and advocate for the Juneau Nordic community that use the Eaglecrest trails. Support Eaglecrest plans to complete hardening several sections of the Lower Loop and encourage future hardening of the Upper Loop as well as installing snow-making at the Upper Loop.
12. Encourage and assist Eaglecrest in developing and grooming a traverse ski trail to Cropley Lake region, including a day-use cabin facility as well as developing a Nordic trail system there (Fig. 8).
13. Establish a site for a biathlon facility. The JNSC Biathlon Subcommittee is working on a multi-season, multi-sport facility located in a yet-to-be-determined location. Siting ideas and grant funding applications to accomplish this are in development.

C. 10 Year Goals: Add multiple kilometers of groomed trails by 2030, preferably at higher elevation and/or colder regions.

1. Develop a road to Spaulding Meadows that would create a trailhead at higher elevation, approximately ~ 460 m (~1500 ft), where snow falls earlier and remains longer (Figs. 3 and 10). JNSC sees construction of a road to Spaulding Meadows as an important opportunity for maintaining accessible Nordic ski trails for the general public as climate change continues. JNSC seeks to partner with the Juneau Snowmobile Club to make this improved access and equity to Spaulding Meadows a reality for both user groups.
2. Along with (1) above, expand the Nordic trail system in Spaulding Meadows to Auke Mountain. (Figs.3 and 10).
3. Harden additional trails and accesses such as a new loop on Lawson Creek/Gastineau Meadows.
4. Build new Nordic trails along McGinnis Creek, including a new bridge across Montana Creek (Figs. 3 and 5). These trails would cross State (DNR) land, USFS property, and access CBJ property (formerly patented mining claims on flanks of Mt. McGinnis).
5. Develop a system of warming huts and recreational use cabins along the MMS trail system.
6. Develop a biathlon facility.

SUMMARY

Growing demand for cross country skiing in Juneau warrants increased trail development, including connectors between existing trails and improved access to higher elevation trails. Developing Nordic trails at higher elevations and/or at colder regions, as well as implementing snow-making, is critical to a successful future Nordic skiing in Juneau as we adapt to a changing climate with warming temperatures. New trails should be non-motorized and be multi-use, multi-seasonal. Many agencies, funders, land owners, and volunteers will need to work together to make these goals a reality. The JNSC encourages the CBJ, USFS, ADNR, and other public and private landowners to use the information and goals in this Juneau Nordic Ski Trail Development Plan in their development plans.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This planning document was prepared by members of the Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) Trails subcommittee: Michael Hekkers, Tim Blust, Odin Brudie, Frankie Pillifant, and Roman Motyka.

Our trails wind through Lingít Aaní. Gunałchéesh to the T'aak̓u Kwáan and A'akw Kwáan, people who have inhabited and cared for the lands within and around Anax Yaat Andagan Yé (Douglas) and Dzantik'i Héeni (Juneau) since time immemorial. We invite you to join us in using the traditional names of the places we stride, alongside a commitment to better understanding the rich and complex history of this place we call home. Ski respectfully. Gunałchéesh.

APPENDIX

[MMS- Mendenhall Montana Spaulding](#)

DEFINITIONS and VOCABULARY

NORDIC SKIING: is defined as free-heel skiing on trails that have been groomed for classic tracked and skate skiing techniques.

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING: is defined as free-heel skiing on terrain that may or may not have been groomed.

TELEMARK/AT: is defined as free-heel uphill/downhill skiing that takes advantage of natural terrain and snow conditions. AT style usually requires special boot bindings that are used to connect the heel to the ski for a downhill ski.

CLASSIC SKIING: diagonal stride-and-glide skiing when skis are sliding in a grooved track.

SKATE SKIING: a side to side forward gliding method for skiing on a smooth wide compressed track.

ROLLERS: an attachment to the motorized grooming vehicle with compactor (Fig. A1). A Roller is 6+ ft wide. The Yellow Stone Track (YS) HDPE Roller Compactor is built for fast preparation of ski trails regardless of new snow depth. The combination of roller and finisher in one-unit compacts and finishes snow in one pass. A lightweight track setter can be attached to the rear crossbar to compact, finish and set track in one pass.

- Weight: 330 lbs
- Roller width: 66"
- Roller diameter: 28"
- Compactor width: 72"
- Compactor Comb width: 80"



Figure A1. Roller used for compacting fresh snow.

GINZU: Ginzu is an attachment to the motorized grooming vehicle that comes in 7' and 5' widths (Fig. A2). The Ginzu groomer is used for skate skiing and a single classic ski trail preparation. There are 2 rows of double knives that provide accurate, progressive cutting of the snow surface to loosen it and create a corduroy track for a skate lane and to mold a classic track.

- Weight: 205 lbs
- Knife cutting width: 30"
- Outside frame width: 37"
- Overall mat width: 60"



Figure A2. JNSC snowmobile towing Ginzu.

CAN AM: is a motorized tracked vehicle that takes the attachments of Ginzu and Rollers and can compress and groom up to 51" wide (Fig. A3).



Figure A3. Can-Am 4-track with plow.

SNOWMOBILE or SNOWMACHINE: an electric or gas-powered sled for grooming attachments. Generally, needs 48" wide bridges for access (Fig. A2).

GROOMING: the general term regarding the effort to compress and form snow into a longer lasting surface useful for skiers.

HARDENED SURFACE: A compacted dirt, gravel, or rock base that better allows grooming equipment to compress snow cover for a longer lasting groom.

The bridge widths needed with current (2021) equipment needs to be 84" wide plus 12" + for clearance = 96" to accommodate for skate and classic grooming. For classic only grooming a bridge of 5' width is necessary.