

**Alaska Trails - Ram Valley Access Reestablishment****FY2024 Request:****\$100,000****Reference No:****65109****AP/AL:** Appropriation**Category:** Development**Location:** Eagle River (Chugach State Park)**Impact House District:** Eagle River Valley (HD 23)**Estimated Project Dates:** 07/01/2023 - 06/30/2028**Project Type:** Economic Assistance**Recipient:** Alaska Trails**House District:** Eagle River Valley (HD 23)**Contact:** Catherine Reardon**Contact Phone:** (907)465-2506**Brief Summary and Statement of Need:**

SFLR Add 5/16/2023.

The project will produce a feasibility study to examine several options to restore access to Ram Valley, a popular Chugach State Park high alpine destination. The outcome of the study will be a recommendation made to Chugach State Park to provide feasible and legal access to Ram Valley.

| <b>Funding:</b> | <b>FY2024</b>    | <b>FY2025</b> | <b>FY2026</b> | <b>FY2027</b> | <b>FY2028</b> | <b>FY2029</b> | <b>Total</b>     |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1004 Gen Fund   | \$100,000        |               |               |               |               |               | \$100,000        |
| <b>Total:</b>   | <b>\$100,000</b> | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$100,000</b> |

|   |   |                                       |   |   |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required | <input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project | <input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new | <input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing |
| 0% = Minimum State Match % Required           |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Amendment    | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill |   |

**Operating & Maintenance Costs:**

|                      | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Staff</u> |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Project Development: | 0             | 0            |
| Ongoing Operating:   | 0             | 0            |
| One-Time Startup:    | 0             | 0            |
| <b>Totals:</b>       | <b>0</b>      | <b>0</b>     |

**Prior Funding History / Additional Information:****Project Description/Justification:****PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Ram Valley is a popular corner of Chugach State Park, located north of Eagle River and south of Eklutna Lake. The area has historically been popular with hunters, hikers, backpackers, skiers and climbers. Since 2020, access to Ram Valley has been effectively eliminated when the prior existing access, through private property at the discretion of the landowner, was revoked due to conflicts over parking and trespassing. Since then, Ram Valley and the surrounding environs have only been accessible by especially long and arduous routes - unsuitable for most users.

Providing access to Alaska's park lands is a central tenet of the Department of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Alaska State Park system. Losing access to a large swathe of Chugach State Park, Alaska's most visited public land, disenfranchises Alaskans. However, restoring access needs to be done in a thoughtful, deliberate way which is inclusive of community perspectives.

Alaska Trails, a statewide non-profit based in Anchorage, will work in collaboration with Chugach State Park and other stakeholders to produce a feasibility study that will examine access options to

this valuable outdoor recreation destination. The study will ensure that community voices are heard, incorporated and respected so that Chugach State Park access is compatible with neighborhood values and private landowner rights. The final outcome of the project will be a recommendation to Chugach State Park on the best access options and a feasible trail layout to Ram Valley.

#### **PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS**

The project has gone through a public review process. The trail which was formerly used to access Ram Valley was included in the Chugach State Park Trail Management Plan (TMP) as trail ID# 209 and thus was a part of the public review process associated with the crafting of that document prior to its adoption. While the eventual recommendation of the feasibility study could differ from this prior alignment, it will fulfill the spirit and intent of the original access trail, thus not resulting in a meaningful or significant deviation from the TMP. Furthermore, a significant task of the feasibility study will be neighborhood and community council outreach to ensure that the local community's perspectives are included in the final recommendation.

Additionally, the Chugach State Park Citizens' Advisory Board formed an ad-hoc Ram Valley Access Committee in early 2023 to assist in the resolution of the access issue in this section of Chugach State Park. The Committee will be an important partner in this process.

#### **Project Timeline:**

The feasibility study will be a one-year project consisting of field mapping of access options, ground truthing and GIS work taking place in late-summer/fall of 2023, community outreach and research completed in winter 2023-2024, and a final recommendation made on access options to Chugach State Park by mid-summer 2024.

#### **BUDGET**

Real Estate and Land Use Research - \$20,000

Community Outreach - \$30,000

GIS Mapping - \$20,000

Rough Layout of Options - \$30,000

Total Budget: \$100,000