

***Tsalteshi Trails Association  
Strategic Plan (2021 – 2026)***

**April 2021**



# ***Introduction***

Tsalteshi Trails Association (TTA) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting healthy, trail-oriented individual and family activities including skiing, snowshoeing, biking, running and walking.

The trails are located just south of Soldotna with two managed areas. The original trails have two trailheads; behind Skyview High School and across from the Soldotna Regional Sports Complex on Kalifornsky Beach Road. There are over 25 kilometers (15 miles) of trails groomed for cross-country skiing in the winter, interwoven with 5.6 kilometers of single-track winter bike trails. During non-ski months, all trails are open for hikers, runners, mountain bikers and dogs. Over 4 miles of trails, departing from the Skyview High School trailhead, have lights.

TTA's second and newer managed location is our Slikok Multi-use Trails area. This area features about 5 kilometers of maintained trail open year-round to walking, snowshoeing, running, biking, skiing and dogs. There is a parking area across the Sterling Highway from the Central Peninsula Landfill. These multi-use trails may also be accessed from Isaak Road and from Skyview via the Owl Trail and, in the winter, a groomed bike- and walker-friendly connector trail.

Voluntary membership and donations, and city, state and federal grant funds have allowed TTA to improve and expand to meet increasing community need. There are no user fees. Our volunteer workforce has also grown to support our growing trail system and expanding school, after-school and community programs.

The TTA Board of Directors met throughout 2020 and first quarter 2021, to develop this strategic plan for the organization. The following goals are intended to help Tsalteshi Trails Association meet its core mission into the future.



## ***Our Vision***

A world-class system of multi-use trails that promote an active, outdoor lifestyle and community connection to the land, now and for future generations.

## ***Our Mission***

Actively provide and support a multi-use trail network that encourages healthy outdoor recreation.

## ***Our Values***

We believe the trails should be a friendly place, open for everyone, regardless of ability or income.

We believe in land stewardship and sustainability. Our heritage is rooted in a strong connection to the land and its cultural history. We strive to caretake the environment in which the trails are built to protect it for future generations.

We believe in preserving the culture of the North, encouraging healthy, human-powered recreational outdoor and leisure activities to last a lifetime.



## *History of Tsalteshi Trails*

In May 1987, the Kenai Peninsula Nordic Ski Club presented to the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly an ambitious plan to build a trail system in the wooded hills north of Skyview High School. Resolution 87-45 permitted the ski club to build a public trail “described as being 12 feet wide and seven miles in length,” and required the club to provide a site plan to the borough administration, to flag the trail route, and to have that route approved by the administration prior to starting construction. The club also had to provide an as-built site plan once the construction was complete. Furthermore, the resolution stipulated that: (1) the use of dog teams or motorized vehicles on the trails would be unlawful, and (2) a five-year extension to the permit could be granted by the borough mayor “if (deemed) in the best interest of the school district and community.” Professor Alan Boraas, the now-deceased anthropologist at Kenai Peninsula College and one of the key members of the ski club, recalled, “The assembly grudgingly OK’d it for us to put trails in, but they were very clear that these were not dedicated trails. (But) I knew that once we got them built — if we did it right — it was going to accelerate. And that’s what happened.”

The plan then was to create a core trail or loop that could be skied by advanced beginners without too much trouble. In 1991, the year after the core trails (then named Green, Blue and Red) were constructed, the Kenai Peninsula Triathlon Association formed to host triathlons on the trail system. In 1994, members of a more ski-oriented group, including Boraas, merged with the triathlon group to form the Kenai Peninsula Aerobic Sports Association. Then in April 1996, as the triathlon proponents began to run out of steam and skiing interest continued to flourish, the organization was renamed the Tsalteshi Trails Association, with Erin Lockwood as its first president.

Tsalteshi is a Dena’ina word meaning “Black Stone Axe Ridge,” and it is a good name because it is an ancient link to the land itself. Boraas, who came up with the name, said “What I was trying to do was help create a culture of the North, (which) means you have to embrace the landscape. And skiing, running and hiking do that. I pushed for renaming the trails and giving them more neutral names, giving them animal names and then using the Dena’ina equivalents in keeping with the place.” So the Green trail became Moose or “Dnigi,” the Blue trail became Wolf or “Tiqun,” and the Red trail became Bear or “Ggagga.”

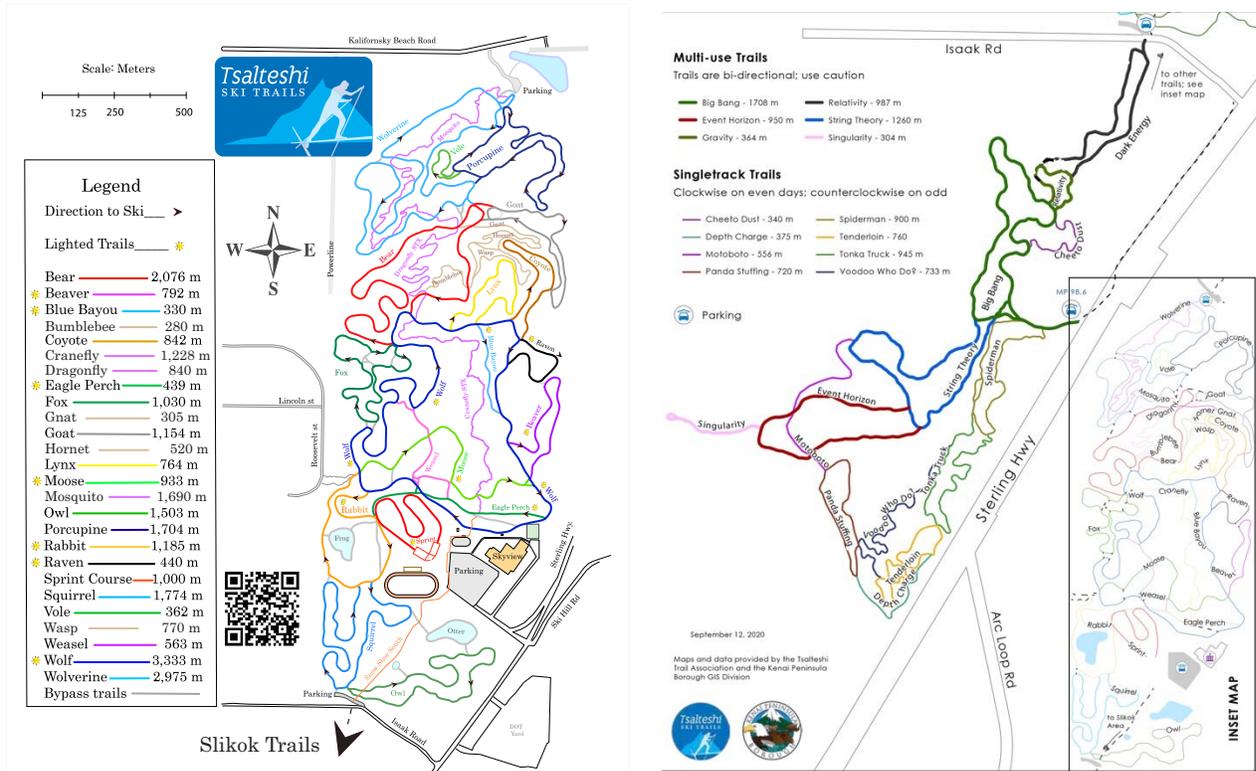
From that basic beginning, the TTA system has evolved into more than 25 kilometers of trails over sometimes widely varying terrain. The evolution of the trail system initially included a biathlon range just off the Purple Loop — a second, more official range was created closer to the school for the Arctic Winter Games in March 2006 — and then a five-kilometer lighting system originally intended for AWG events and also to improve nighttime skiing. The involvement of TTA in the Arctic Winter Games brought on the first flush of federal dollars from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and a Recreation Trail Grant, with subsequent donations or volunteer help from Homer Electric Association, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

In 2007, TTA received permission from the borough to build road access from Kalifornsky Beach Road and cut down trees in preparation for developing the Wolverine Trail. The Department of Transportation helped TTA navigate the permitting process as well as acquire gravel donated by Wilder Construction. Since then, the trail system has continued to expand with completion of Squirrel Trail at the southern end of the system, Fox Trail between the Skyline Drive subdivision and western edge of Wolf Trail, and the Porcupine Trail east of the Wolverine Trail.

In 2017, TTA began developing the Slikok Multi-use Trail systems, a 3-mile set of maintained trails south of Isaak Road, the first to concurrently allow hikers, bikers, skiers and dogs, year-round. The Slikok system also offers 3.5 miles of singletrack, with trails that increase in difficulty as they move away from the trailhead to offer engaging riding for all levels.

From the ski club's seminal vision, the TTA system has evolved into a top-level facility, used year-round by runners and skiers, walkers and snowshoeing enthusiasts, mountain bikers and a host of organizations seeking a training ground. It is a major draw for all of Southcentral Alaska as one of the state's best trail systems, and it has hosted triathlons, state events, qualifying races for the Junior Olympics, Besh Cup series races, and the Arctic Winter Games. From its humble beginnings, the Tsalteshi Trails system is essentially an institution now on the central peninsula.

*(Excerpted and edited from Redoubt Reporter articles by Clark Fair)*



## ***Tsalteshi Trails Association Core Services***

TTA currently offers several core services supporting many of the goals identified in this strategic plan. The list below is not comprehensive but strives to identify services that are either critical to TTA operations, important programs with respect to our mission and values or stand out for their popularity and/or tenure.

- Paid maintenance position — Responsible for grooming, equipment and trail maintenance and major infrastructure projects
- Paid administrative position — Liaison with community, members, volunteers and maintenance; maintains online content and pursues and supports development opportunities
- Maintain a pool of volunteers to assist in grooming, programs and events
- Practice/competition venue for high school and middle school Nordic skiing and cross-country running
- Youth Ski Program
- Youth Bike Program
- Community events and programs, including a summer running and biking series, Spook Night, Ski for Women and Tour of Tsalteshi ski marathon



## ***Goal 1: Build and Maintain World-Class Trails***

- Install lighting from K-Beach parking area to Wolf Run trail
- Develop land management plan that addresses land stewardship, forestry, invasive species, erosion and aesthetics
- Install signs on Slikok trails
- Conduct biannual sign inventory and replacement of damaged or missing signs
- Install CES/911 markers along trails
- Create trail development plan



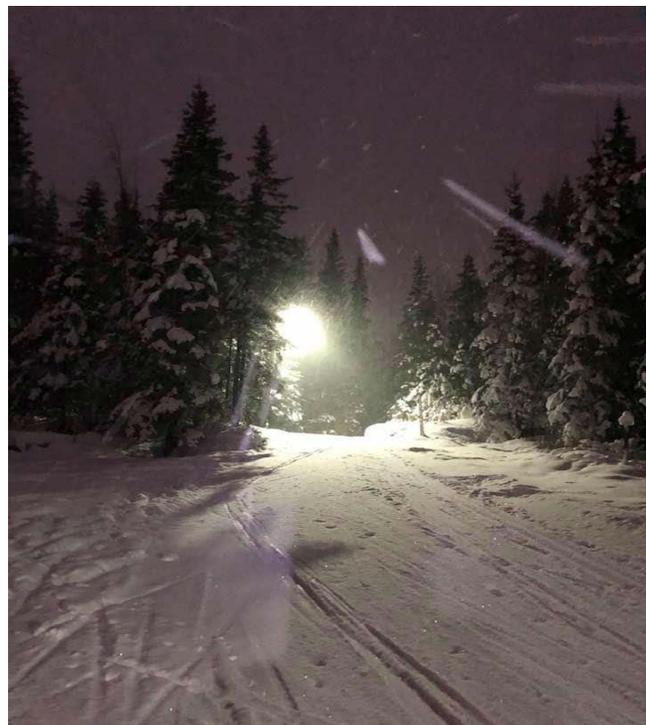
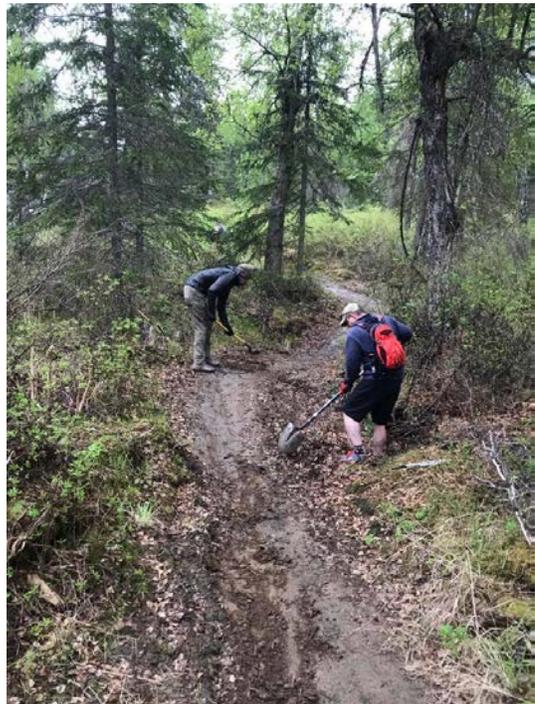
## Goal 2: Engage the Community

- Hold annual appreciation event at the trails
- Improve education along trails using new technologies, such as QR codes, to learn about Dena'ina culture
- Host adult workshops to familiarize newcomers with the trails, history of the trails or Dena'ina use of the land, and practical skills, such as ski techniques, how to change a tire or wax skis, etc.
- Integrate trail etiquette education into TTA programs and events
- Conduct membership survey of trail use every five years



## ***Goal 3: Improve and Expand Facilities***

- **Construct facility for holding events and socializing**
- **Construct maintenance building for equipment**
- **Install lights at Wolverine Trail parking area**
- **Work with partners to provide year-round restroom access at Skyview trailhead**
- **Create a youth bike skills course**



## Goal 4: Increase Organizational Stability

- Establish a prudent cash-reserve fund
- Consult an investment manager for reserve fund
- Diversify revenue sources, including more grants and donations, to preserve a sustainable budget while maintaining current organizational priorities and accomplishing goals
- Establish equipment replacement schedule and fund
- Continue to shift organizational record-keeping and operational workflows to cloud-based collaboration platform
- Develop and implement an annual operational plan



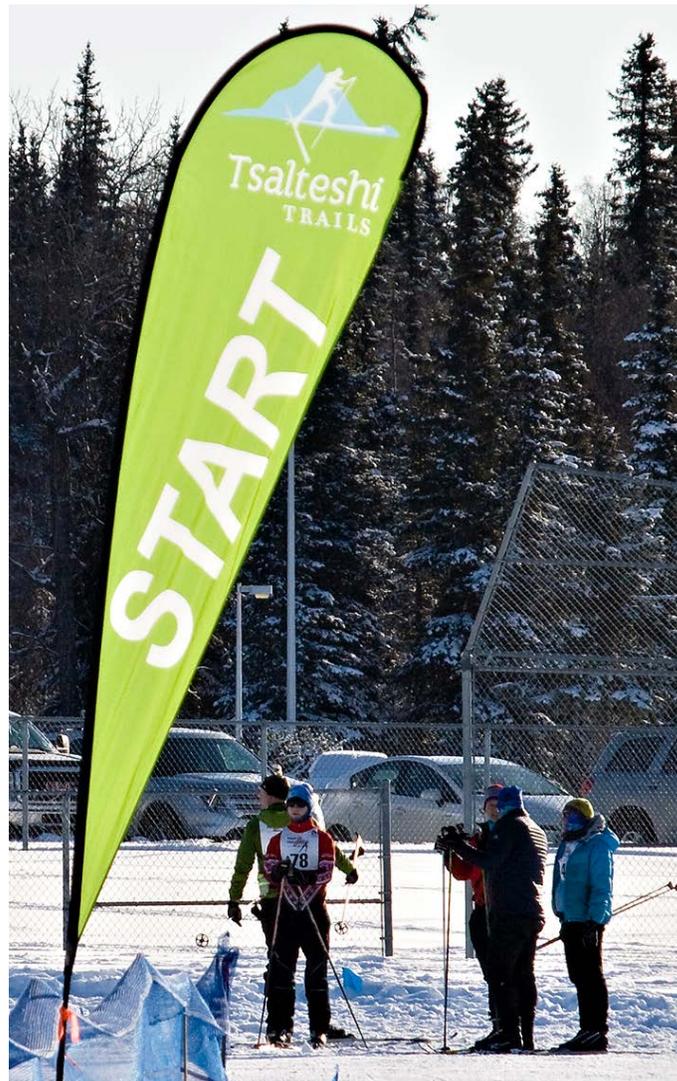
## ***Goal 5: Develop Staff and Volunteer Positions***

- **Develop written grooming standards and operating procedures for volunteers**
- **Develop written protocols for woodcutters**
- **Develop duties and responsibilities for employee positions**
- **All employees will create a continuity of operations manual**



## ***Goal 6: Develop Board of Directors***

- **Actively seek to replace departing board members with diversity in mind to maintain a well-balanced board**
- **Develop a board election packet that will include potential board member statements and photographs**
- **Develop an on-boarding packet for new board members**
- **Provide annual board training**



## ***Top-Priority 5-year Goals***

- Construct maintenance building for equipment
- Install lighting at Wolverine Trailhead
- Create a youth bike skills course

## ***Longer-Term Goals***

- Hire an executive director
- Establish an endowment
- Connect TTA system to Kenai National Wildlife Refuge trail system with pedestrian culvert under the Sterling Highway
- Connect two TTA trail systems with bridge over Isaak Road
- Establish a better pedestrian connection to Wolverine Trailhead across K-Beach Road

**TTA Board of Directors, 2020:**

Mark Beeson (Chair)  
Larissa Arbelovsky (Vice Chair)  
Jordan Chilson (Secretary)  
Lauri Lingafelt (Treasurer)  
Mike Bergholtz  
Dave Edwards-Smith  
Rob Carson  
Leslie Morton  
Joel Todd

**TTA Board of Directors, 2021:**

Mark Beeson (Chair)  
Larissa Arbelovsky (Vice Chair)  
Jordan Chilson (Secretary)  
Joel Todd (Treasurer)  
Mike Bergholtz  
Amber Kraxberger  
Kent Peterson  
Adam Reimer  
Dave Edwards-Smith

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