



Photo Credit: Lee House



THE FALL 2022 ISSUE

ON THE PAPER TRAIL

News for Sitka Trail Works Members

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2023 SITKA TRAIL PLAN UPDATES

Sitkans love trails. That was made clear when over 800 Sitkans answered our comprehensive survey, attended an open house, or were involved in other outreach this spring. In our sample alone, hundreds of Sitkans reported using trails several times a week and virtually everyone, 94% of respondents, stated they use trails at least several times a year. Based on the demands we heard from the community, we're assessing the maintenance backlog on existing trails, to take care of what we have, while also identifying gaps in the trail system that would benefit from new development. Throughout the process we've been meeting with the City of Sitka, State Parks, the National Park Service, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, and the US Forest Service, honing ideas to ensure they represent a jointly held vision for the future of our public lands. Building off of public input, GIS analysis, and field reconnaissance, we've identified over two dozen priority trail projects. Take sneak preview at a few exciting trail proposals under consideration on the next page and look out for the distribution of our Draft Plan!

YOUTH STEWARDSHIP PILOT PROGRAM

The pilot week of our Youth Stewardship program was a success! The one-week summer camp was hosted by Sitka Tribe of Alaska and Sitka Native Education Program, with Sitka Trail Works staff leading stewardship projects on trails and public lands. For a week in July, middle school age students learned about Native place names and stories, while getting their hands dirty in taking care of our shared lands. Students repaired non-skid material at Gájaa Héen (Starrigavan), cleared trail-side drainage on Kaasda Héen (Indian River), and brushed viewpoints at Shís'gi Noow (Totem Park).

We're looking forward to continuing the program, serving more local middle school youth for a full season next year, with support from the National Park Service, USDA Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy, and the Sitka Legacy Foundation.



Photo Credit: Nick Brown

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WE ARE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SITKA'S TRAILS

The following proposals are a few among many concepts under consideration for the in-progress Trail Plan. A full list of potential trail projects will be widely distributed for public review later this month. Visit SitkaTrailWorks.org for more information.

SITKA HIGH LOOP

The Trail Plan Survey revealed that loop trails are in high demand. A few connections between existing segments of the Cross Trail could create multiple walking loop options and provide a 5K training course for SHS Cross Country, avoiding conflict with the lengthening tourist season at Sitka National Historical Park and improving walking and biking access to Sitka High School.



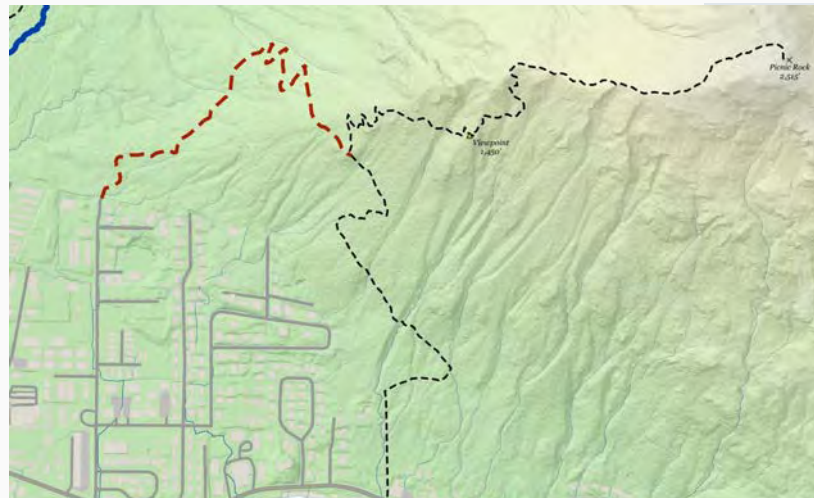
LAKE SULOIA

This trail that starts just north of Salisbury Sound is in very rough shape and subsequently has very little use, despite arriving at a beautiful lake in the West Chichagof-Yakobi Wilderness. A reconstruction could allow more Sitkans to hike up and paddle to the seldom used Suloia Lake Cabin on the far shore, creating more opportunities for hike-in cabins as requested in the Trail Plan Survey.



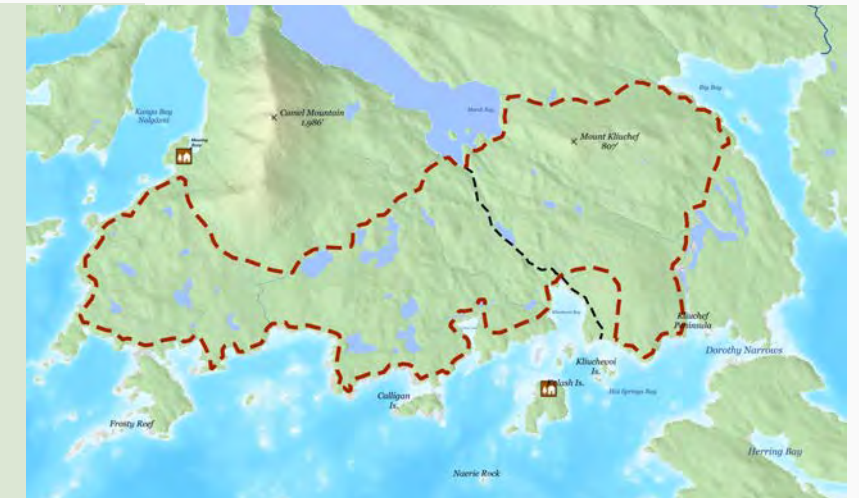
VERSTOVIA REROUTE

You know how limited and dangerous the trailhead parking is, but did you know that the beginning of the trail is actually on private land? Rerouting the Verstorvia trail has long been a Forest Service priority, but the details are up for consideration. Would you prefer a short, steep ascent from Price Street or a longer, south facing climb from Thimbleberry Lake?



SOUTH SOUND COASTAL TRAIL

This idea was originally proposed in the 2003 Trail Plan as a way to improve access to an epic coastline, linking existing cabins and providing a multi-day backpacking opportunity between Kanga Bay, Big Bay, Redoubt Lake and Goddard. Sitkans requested more backpacking opportunities in the Survey, and this would be a world class destination.



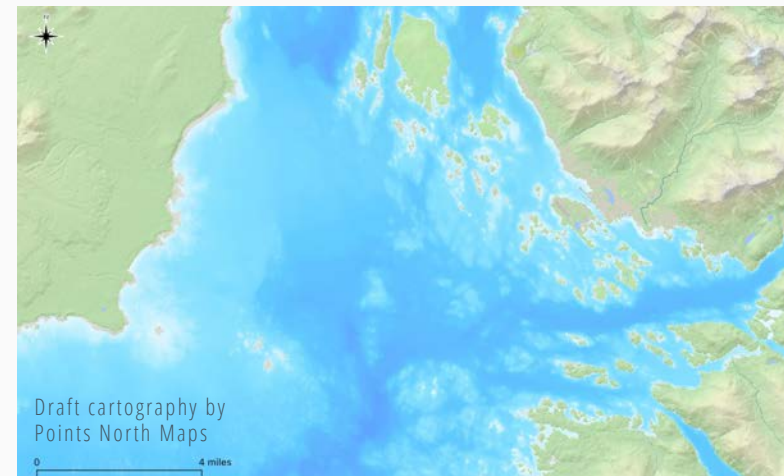
FLUME TRAIL

In the center of Sitka is a beautiful stretch of river that most Sitkans have never seen. A pipeline carrying water to the Science Center etches a gravel pathway through the forest, from Flume Circle off Indian River Road down to Sawmill Creek Road. If an underpass could be designed for the highway bridge, people could walk from Indian River Road down into Sitka National Historical Park without the hassle and danger of negotiating traffic on Sawmill Creek Road.



MARINE TRAILS

The majority of respondents to the Trail Survey thought that Sitka would benefit from marine trails, designated routes linking safe landings, water sources, and overnight sites for paddlers. Future planning efforts could identify single and multi-day itineraries for kayakers and boaters to more easily explore our incredible marine landscape.



ON THE TRAIL WITH SITKA TRAIL WORKS



SEA LION COVE

Trail Works tackled some much-needed repairs to the Sea Lion Cove Trail this fall, the first significant attention the trail had received since 2006. We stretched limited funding for a temporary crew from the state Recreational Trails Program with tremendous community support. The Coast Guard contributed helicopter transport of lumber and gravel, which was then spread by local volunteers, allowing us to accomplish far more than originally planned. Captain Erik de Jong provided the S/V Bagheera as a base for the crew for nine days in Kalinin Bay as the crew addressed the most dangerous sections by rebuilding staircases, repairing washouts, and replacing boardwalk. Much deferred maintenance remains, but hopefully our efforts will keep this spectacular destination accessible for years to come.

STW ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING

THURSDAY OCTOBER 27

5PM-7:30PM

AT CENTENNIAL HALL

Join us to discuss trail planning and the future of Sitka's Trails!



CROSS TRAIL UPDATES

Sitka Trail Works has secured funding to complete the trail! Work was largely paused over the summer as escalating construction costs pushed the project beyond the remaining budget. Fortunately, the Denali Commission was convinced by the widespread community benefit, and with matching funds from Royal Caribbean and Shee Atiká, we'll be able to wrap up this Phase 6 extension of Sitka's most popular walking and biking route.

Overall, the project is almost 90% complete, we just need to lay a top cap of finer gravel on the mainline and construct the connection to the 4800 Block of Halibut Point Road.

SALMON LAKE TRAIL

With funding from the National Forest Foundation, Sitka Trail Works coordinated the helicopter transport of gravel and lumber to the Salmon Lake Trail in early September. To share the cost, we partnered with the City of Sitka and NSRAA, who also had transportation needs in Silver Bay. A huge thanks to our volunteers Elena and Reid who helped Ben unhook and direct loads through the old growth canopy, and to the ADF&G crew that stayed late to lend a hand to crewmember Trent Bayne, who expertly rigged loads from the Green Lake Road. The US Forest Service crew will repair large washouts from recent flooding and build a new bridge with the transported materials next season.

