

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF PARKS

JAY S. HAMMOND, GOVERNOR

619 WAREHOUSE DR., SUITE 210
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501

PHONE: 274-4676

May 11, 1982

RE: Iditarod Trail-Knik to Susitna River
File #2424-14 (8251.1)

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH	
Date Rec'd:	5-17-82
Noted By:	

Mr. Gary Thurlow
Borough Manager
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Box B
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Dear Mr. Thurlow:

This letter is in response to your letter of March 30, 1982, regarding the Iditarod Trail. As you are aware, the Bureau of Land Management and the Alaska Division of Parks have combined efforts to provide a single contact point for Iditarod National Historic Trail Matters. Consider this letter a response from the joint Federal/State Trail Office.

The coordination efforts in the Knik-to-Susitna River segment will be particularly critical if we are to ever reestablish the historic trail. The State and Federal governments, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and several private land owners will have to work closely and in concert in order to finally establish and protect the Iditarod Trail for public use and enjoyment. The recent conversations and correspondence between the Borough and this office is certainly a major step toward this goal.

As you are probably aware, the route between Knik and Susitna River was established about 1910 and maintained by the Alaska Road Commission until 1921. Because of this relatively short period of routine maintenance and the fact that no detailed surveys or maps of the segments have been found, the original alignment has been difficult to verify. We do know that one intermediate point between Knik and Susitna Station, the Little Susitna Roadhouse was a definite location on the Alaska Road commission's "Seward to Nome Trail." This fact helps to eliminate several of the trails referred to as the "Iditarod Trail."

The fixing of the route has been a continuous process since the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation published a general route in The Iditarod Trail (Seward-Nome Route) and other Alaskan Gold Rush Trails in September 1977. That route between Knik and Susitna Station was refined somewhat by the BLM's Iditarod National Historic Trail Office in 1981 in working with Joe Redinson, Sr. and Dick Mackey in fixed-wing reconnaissance flights. And the portion of the trail between Little Susitna Roadhouse and Susitna Station was located more precisely by the Alaska Division of Parks (Ron Crenshaw), Division of Land and Water (Bill Betlach), and Joe Redington, Sr. on April 21, 1982, using a helicopter. The solid line on the attached map is the route accepted by this joint trail office as the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

If the Matanuska-Susitna Borough concurs with this alignment, then we have an agreement between the three levels of government. At that point, we can investigate possible private land/historic trail conflicts. Possible solutions could include cooperative agreements, acquisition of rights-of-way, or minor relocation of trail. Each situation will have to be handled on a case-by-case basis.

As you have requested, we will discuss the two sections of the Knik to Susitna River Segment separately:

1) Knik Arm to Little Susitna River.

The segment between Knik Arm and Little Susitna River is one of the priority areas to establish the historic route. We are currently plotting the trail on 1:25,000 scale orthophoto maps and should, within a month or so, have a final location for the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

The Bureau of Land Management (Peninsula Resource Area) is currently researching the right-of-way situation near Knik. The BLM is first looking into the ANCSA easement identification process across Knikatnu, Inc. lands and trying to determine why an easement was not retained for this portion of the Iditarod Trail. The BLM and State of Alaska will also determine if the public retained a right-of-way through other appropriate land laws. As soon as this research is completed, I will notify the Matanuska Susitna Borough of the outcome and we can discuss possible actions. Acquisition and rerouting of the trail would be possible alternatives if the State of Alaska fails to prove a case that the right-of-way still exists. We can discuss specific alternatives with the Borough at that time.

No negotiation regarding acquisition of rights-of-way has taken place with Knikatnu, Village Corporation, or any other private land owner.

It is unlikely that the Federal government will either purchase a right-of-way or a trail corridor across private land. The public law which designated the Iditarod as a National Historic Trail specifically prohibited such an acquisition. It would take a Congressional Act to acquire any private land along the Iditarod Trail. Once the State of Alaska has passed a State Trails Bill, and the Iditarod becomes a unit of the State Trails System, the Division of Parks would be in a better position to acquire critical trail segments. The Borough and the State can probably work most efficiently in obtaining necessary rights-of-ways across private land.

The first few miles of trail out of Knik certainly have a high potential for summer use. Once we have a clear picture of the right-of-way situation, this office would be prepared to look at appropriate routing and design standards for the trail in this location.

Ron Crenshaw can discuss trail width, building setbacks, non-cleared areas, etc., along specific sections of the trail with you. A draft document on the establishment of recreation corridors along trails, waterways and roads is included with this letter.

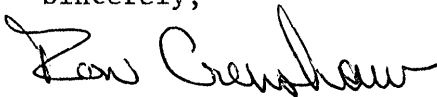
2) Little Susitna River to Susitna Station

On April 21, 1982, Joe Redington, Sr., Ron Crenshaw (DNR-Division of Parks) and Bill Betlach (DNR-South Central District Office) located and mapped the Iditarod Trail using a helicopter. Though this location differs from the previous lines plotted by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in 1977 and the Iditarod National Historic Trail Project Office in 1981, I feel confident that the original historic route has been located at last. They found trail blazes, a new historic site and sections of abandoned trail. This location is currently being used by the DNR-SCDO planning staff as a basis for laying out farming plots in the Fish Creek Agricultural Project. The location is shown both on the Mat-Su Borough Trail System Map and 1:63360 scale map attached to this correspondence can be considered final.

Using this trail location as the centerline, I agree with the October 1981 Management Guidelines for the Iditarod trail (Land Use Plan for Public Lands in the Willow SubBasin). The 1000' corridor with the flexibility of reducing it to 600 feet in certain places is a good guideline. Since there is no development between Little Susitna River and Susitna Station, I agree with Trails Committee recommendation (March 4, 1982) of preserving the historic alignment and reducing the corridor width where necessary, rather than "moving the trail."

I hope this response has answered most of your concerns about establishment at the Iditarod Trail. I have enclosed this currently accepted alignment and the edited xerox of "Recreational Values" of the Iditarod. Please call Ron Crenshaw when you are ready to establish appropriate corridors along the Iditarod Trail.

Sincerely,



Ron Crenshaw
State Trail Coordinator

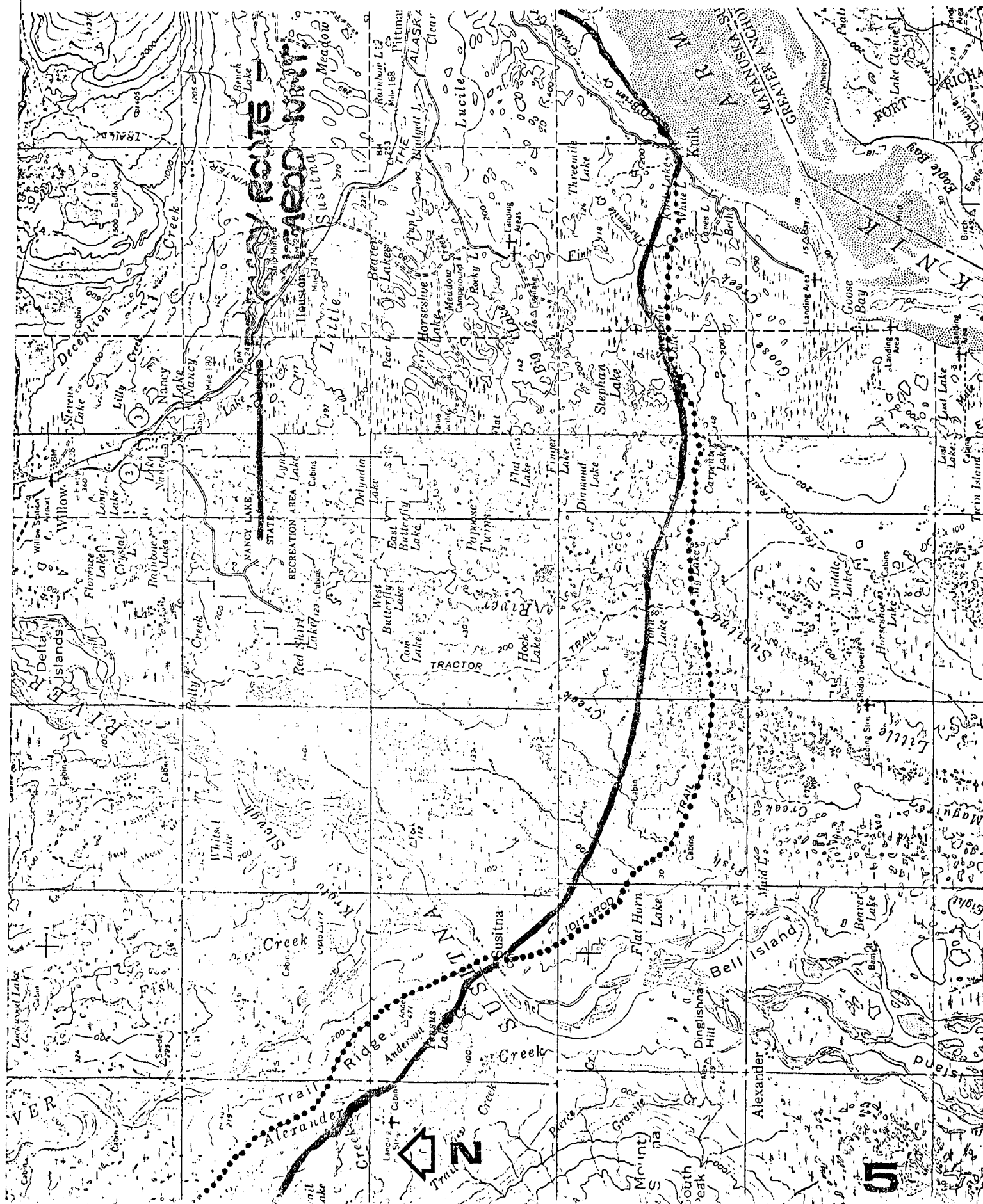
By: Terry O'Sullivan 
Trail Coordinator
Joint Federal-State Iditarod Trail Office

Enclosures:

cc: Richard Tindall, District Manager, Anchorage District Office
Bureau of Land Management, 4700 E. 72nd Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501

TO'S:ces

EDITORIAL





Matanuska-Susitna Borough

BOX B, PALMER, ALASKA 99645 • PHONE 745-4801

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

March 30, 1982

Terry O'Sullivan
Division of Parks
619 Warehouse Ave., Ste. 210
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Terry:

Subject: Iditarod Trail

David Vernola prepared the attached description of the Iditarod Trail about a year and a half ago.

Attached also are our copies of maps which show the alignment of the first portion of the Iditarod Trail as we understand it to be--according to the latest thinking.

We would like to bring together into one publication in 8½ x 11 size all the current information we have on trails in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough that we would like to preserve or establish.

I would very much appreciate it if you could help us nail down as much as is known about that stretch of the Iditarod Trail from Knik Arm to the Susitna River. Where there are differences of opinion as to the correct route to be pursued, we would appreciate your advising us as to what you think would be the preferred route. If the trail as shown on our attached maps do not show the preferred route of the trail, I would appreciate your indicating on these maps the preferred route.

It might be helpful to break out this first portion of the Iditarod Trail into two sections as follows:

1. Knik Arm to Little Susitna River.
2. Little Susitna River to Fish Creek Agricultural Project to Susitna River.

I believe that there are right-of-way problems with the first part of the Iditarod Trail as you leave the Knik Road. Is there a recommended route which would either involve right-of-way acquisition or which would avoid acquisition problems?

If there is a preferred route for this first portion of the trail, are there any design standards for this first portion of the trail, such as width, building setbacks, non-cleared area on both cleared areas on both sides of the trail, etc. which should be taken into consideration in the right-of-way acquisition process or the final routing process?

Division of Parks
APR 01 1982

Although the Iditarod Trail is a winter trail, are there any design standards for this first portion of the trail which should be taken into consideration to make possible a year-round trail so that the trail would also have some summer uses? If so, what are these design considerations?

Do you know of any specific property owners we would have to deal with for the first stretch of the trail, such as Cook Inlet Region, Inc., or the Knik Village Native Corporation? Do you have any idea what their position would be on conveyance of any required rights-of-way?

On that stretch of the trail between the Little Susitna River to the Susitna River, do you agree with the trail that our Trails Committee has recommended? Do you agree with the standards they have come up with? The standards are attached. Do you think that we can consider this proposed alignment through the Fish Creek Agricultural Project final for the time being? (I would assume that once the process of parcelizing the Fish Creek Agricultural area into individual farms and parcels were commenced however, there may be occasion for some shifting of a corridor for the Iditarod Trail.)

If portions of the Iditarod Trail between Knik Arm and the Little Susitna River have a potential for more than just winter use, could you describe those portions which have the potential for year-round use or multi-purpose use and describe those stretches and the reasons why they would have potential for more than just one use.

Would you change anything in the attached two-page description of the Iditarod Trail under the heading "Recreation Values"?

Can you describe the role that the BLM is asked to play at this time with respect to finally fixing the route of the Iditarod Trail from Knik Arm to the Susitna River, together with any required right-of-way acquisition? If you can describe the role BLM should be playing, has this requested role for BLM been formally communicated to BLM--BLM pursuing this part of its effort with respect to establishing the Iditarod Trail as part of the National Scenic Trails System.

I would ask the same question above, except this time make it applicable to the State of Alaska Division of Parks.

And, I would ask this same question a third time, but this time make it applicable to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.


Are there any remaining loose ends that you are aware of regarding that part of the Iditarod Trail between Knik Arm and the Susitna River that the Borough should be aware of either for purposes of pursuing

the preservation and establishment of this trail as a Borough concern, or for purposes of lobbying the BLM and the State of Alaska?

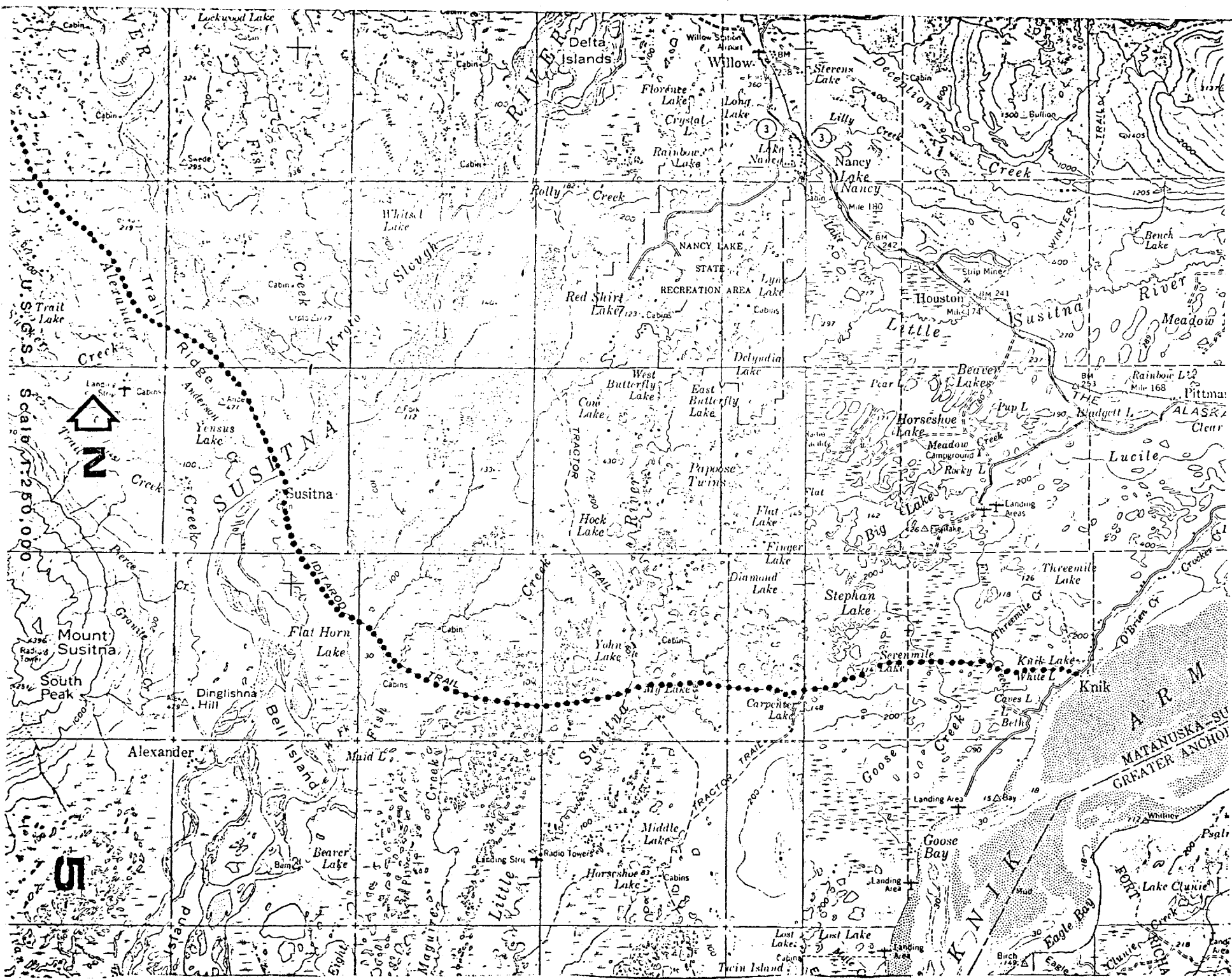
Sincerely,



Gary Thurlow
Borough Manager

er
cc: 
cc: Ron Crenshaw, Division of Parks

PS. I note that in the March 4, 1982 minutes of the Borough Trails Committee it states: "Ron Crenshaw and Joe Redington are going to map the trail as soon as Joe gets back from Nome."



IDITAROD TRAIL



DRAFT

LAND USE PLAN for PUBLIC LANDS in the WILLOW SUB-BASIN

OCTOBER 1981

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
MATANUSKA / SUSITNA BOROUGH
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES - RECREATION AND HISTORIC TRAILS

POLICY

The state and the borough will reserve in public ownership (or otherwise insure public use of) important historic and recreational trails identified in this plan.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Trail Corridors

- a. The Iditarod Trail: Those portions of the Iditarod Trail in state and borough ownership will be protected by a public ownership corridor 1000 feet wide (500 feet either side of centerline). This width allows flexibility to reroute the trails within the corridor, combine motorized and non-motorized uses on separate trails within the corridor, and include a visual and sound buffer between the recreation corridor uses and adjacent uses. To minimize potential land use conflicts or the impact of the trail's existence on adjacent land uses, the corridor width may be expanded or reduced. These width adjustments, as well as rerouting of the trail corridor may be permitted in specific instances under the direction of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Trails Committee and the Alaska Division of Parks. Example: The trails corridor width could be reduced to 600 feet or less where the adjacent land use would not adversely impact the trail experience. Such adjacent uses might include farming, grazing, personal use or commercial timber harvesting, habitat manipulation, or similar low intensity uses. A corridor wider than 1000 feet may also be desirable in certain instances to incorporate high quality adjacent land features and scenery or where adjacent land uses such as high density residential, industrial, or commercial uses would adversely affect the trail.

No structures or equipment of a permanent nature should be placed within the trail corridor which could adversely affect the trail experience. Where necessary, trail crossings may be permitted to allow access to lands on both sides of the trail. Crossings should be limited to a few discrete areas rather than random crossings along the length of the trail.

- b. Other Recreation and Historic Trails: Other trails identified in this plan shall be retained in public ownership with a width of 300 feet (150 feet either side of centerline). This distance may be modified on a case by case basis with approval of the Division of Parks and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Trails Committee. This width allows flexibility to re-route, separate motorized and non-motorized uses, and include a visual buffer. Re-routing of the trail corridor may be permitted to minimize land use conflicts with the provision that alternate routes provide opportunities similar to the original. Re-routing of trails on public land requires approval of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Trails Committee and the Alaska Division of Parks.

2. Land Management of Trail Corridors

- a. Where necessary for powerlines, pipelines or roads to cross trail corridors, crossings should be at 90° angles when feasible. An exception is when a trail corridor is deliberately combined with a public facility or transportation corridor. Land uses immediately adjacent to the trail corridor should not adversely affect the recreational enjoyment of the trail. Examples of negative effects are trees blown down within the corridor caused by removal of protective trees on adjacent land; pollution of streams that flow across or along the corridor caused by agricultural, industrial, resource extractive or residential development; and uncomfortable noise, light, dust, smoke or odor levels adjacent to trail corridor.
- b. No commercial mineral extraction may occur within trail corridors.
- c. Trail corridors are available for personal and selective commercial timber harvest only if such harvests protect or enhance the visual, sound, and other characteristics of the trail. Harvest practices, timing and transportation should be coordinated with the Alaska Division of Parks and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Trails Committee.