Parks and Recreation Committee Agenda

Tuesday, August 11, 2026, 12:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Chair Candace Rutledge, Vice Chair Steve Black,
Brandon Marx, Katherine Prussian, Manoj Battar, Ben Hughey
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. AGENDA CHANGES

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 14 & 21, 2026

VI. REPORTS

Chair:
Members:
City Staff:
Assembly Liaison:
Other(s):

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Parks and Recreation Foundation Master Plan Update

C. Discussion of the Draft Sitka Marine Trails Design Narrative

D. Discussion and presentation for a disc golf demonstration course

IX. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items ON or OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

X. ADJOURNMENT

Parks and Recreation Committee Agenda

Tuesday, July 14, 2026, 12:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Chair Candace Rutledge, Vice Chair Steve Black,
Brandon Marx, Katherine Prussian, Manoj Battar, Ben Hughey
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rutledge called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Candace Rutledge, Steve Black, Manoj Battar, Brandon Marx, Katherine Prussian (arrived 12:09 p.m.)
Absent: Ben Hughey (excused)
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher
Staff Present: Parks and Recreation Manager Kevin Knox, Grounds Maintenance Supervisor Kent Smith, and Deputy Municipal Clerk Holley Bayne
Others:

III. AGENDA CHANGES

Rutledge pulled Item B due to presenter Ben Hughey's absence.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 9, 2026

Black moved to approve the June 9, 2026, meeting minutes. Motion passed 4-0.

VI. REPORTS

Chair: None.
Members: Marx commented on the condition of upper Moller Field.

DRAFT

City Staff: Kent Smith provided an update on current and upcoming ground maintenance projects. Kevin Knox provided an update on summer programs, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Pioneer Park cleanup, and announced the Head Lifeguard position was filled.
Assembly Liaison: None.
Other(s): None.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

B. Discussion of the Draft Sitka Marine Trails Design Narrative

Item B pulled due to presenter Ben Hughey's absence.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

C. Discussion/Recommendation Off-Leash Rule Change for Keet Gooshi Heen and Vilandre Fields

Knox introduced a proposal to temporarily restrict off-leash dogs at Keet and Vilandre fields from approximately March 15 through June 30 to protect seasonal recreational use, with the final dates to be approved administratively. The proposal also included increased signage, public education, and enforcement. Members discussed whether the closure period should be extended and emphasized the need for flexibility as community needs evolve.

Kelly McElligott spoke in opposition.

Marx moved to approve the seasonal closure window at the Vilandre & Keet Gooshi Heen Ball fields from March 15 through June 30 annually. Motion passed 5-0.

IX. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items ON or OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

Kelly McElligott and Cole Haddock commented on Item C.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting would be August 11, at noon in Harrigan Centennial Hall. Hearing no objection, Chair Rutledge called the meeting to adjournment at 12:39 PM.

Attest:
Holley Bayne, Deputy Municipal Clerk

DRAFT

Parks and Recreation Committee Agenda

Tuesday, July 21, 2026, 12:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Chair Candace Rutledge, Vice Chair Steve Black,
Brandon Marx, Katherine Prussian, Manoj Battar, Ben Hughey
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

SPECIAL MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rutledge called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Candace Rutledge, Steve Black, Manoj Battar, Brandon Marx, Ben Hughey (arrived 12:01 p.m.), Katherine Prussian (arrived 12:04 p.m.)
Absent:
Assembly Liaison: Thor Christianson (alternate)
Staff Present: Parks and Recreation Manager Kevin Knox and Deputy Municipal Clerk Holley Bayne
Others:

III. AGENDA CHANGES

None.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None.

VI. REPORTS

Chair: None.
Members: None.
City Staff: Kevin Knox reported on cleanup and maintenance at Pioneer Park.
Assembly Liaison: None.
Other(s): Ben Hughey gave an update on current Sitka Trail Work projects.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DRAFT

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approve a letter of support for completion of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Rutledge provided an introduction. Committee members voiced support for the appropriation, and noted the committee initiated the project five years ago and that the additional request reflects the finalized project cost, leveraging significant outside funding. It was noted the Assembly had discussed concerns about the funding process and project ownership. Members agreed that partnering with the Sitka Recreation Foundation would streamline project management and allow the Master Plan to move forward despite limited City staff capacity.

Barbara Morse spoke in support.

Black moved to approve the letter of support for funding of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Motion passed 6-0.

IX. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items ON or OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting would be August 11, at noon in Harrigan Centennial Hall. Hearing no objection, Chair Rutledge called the meeting to adjournment at 12:21 PM.

Attest:
Holley Bayne, Deputy Municipal Clerk

DRAFT

ITEM C

Discussion of the Draft Sitka Marine Trails Design Narrative

Sitka Marine Trails Design Narrative

2026

DRAFT

SITKA TRAIL WORKS

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TABLE OF ACRONYMS

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADF&G

Alaska Department of Natural Resources
AK DNR

City and Borough of Sitka
CBS

Land Use Designations
LUDs

National Environmental Policy Act
NEPA

National Historic Preservation Act
NHPA

State Historic Preservation Office/Officer
SHPO

Sheet'ká Kwáan Sitka Tribe of Alaska
STA

Special Use Permit
SUP

Tongass Land Management Plan
TLMP

United States Army Corps of Engineers
USACE

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
USDA FS

Project Summary

The Sitka Marine Trail System is a proposed network designed to formalize access to the world-class paddling of Sitka Sound. Developed by Sitka Trail Works and a Citizen Advisory Committee, the project addresses a documented community desire for navigable water routes and low-impact coastal campsites. The system encompasses three primary routes featuring primitive improvements such as leveled tent pads, bear hangs, and navigational markers.

This design narrative is informed by research on comparable marine trail systems, on-the-ground surveys, key stakeholder conversations and public engagement.

By utilizing the water as a natural corridor, the trail provides a cost-effective alternative to traditional land-based trails while dispersing tourism away from high-use areas. The project prioritizes cultural preservation through consultation with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska and adheres to a multi-jurisdictional permitting roadmap involving federal, state, and local agencies. Implementation focuses on educational outreach, water safety, and environmental stewardship via a collaborative maintenance framework with local outfitters. This initiative seeks to foster a deeper connection to the natural and cultural heritage of Lingít Aaní by encouraging personal connection to the spectacular publically-owned coastline.

What is a Marine Trail?

A marine trail is a defined water route or a series of destinations that serves as a trip planning and orientation tool for potential users. These trails enhance access to coastal regions for recreational pursuits such as kayaking and canoeing, as well as for subsistence harvesting. By providing waypoints, maps, and information on local wildlife, habitats, and points of interest, marine trails are designed to encourage outdoor recreation, foster an appreciation of marine ecosystems, and promote responsible waterway use.

Marine Trail Examples

The Maine Islands Trail (est. 1988) and Cascadia Marine Trail (est. 1993) offer two well-known examples of established marine trail systems in the Lower 48. Kachemak Bay Marine Trail in Homer (est. 2012) and the Resurrection Bay Marine Trail in Seward provide closer-to-home case studies of how established routes can benefit locals and visitors alike. By clearly mapping pull-outs, marine trails lower a barrier to accessing public lands and assist paddlers in developing a trip plan.

Why Establish a Marine Trail?

So many Sitkans live next to world class paddling, but haven't explored their backyard waterways. The publishing of a water trail may provide the needed jumping off point for venturing into the lands and waters surrounding Sitka.

Establishing a Marine Trail in Sitka provides an opportunity to help people get outdoors, while directing use to the most suitable locations. A site suitability study was the core of this planning effort to ensure any growth in recreation activity was a net community benefit. Site selection criteria prioritized safety, avoidance of crowding, and the protection of cultural resources.

Why Sitka Sound

Nestled along the Outer Coast, Sitka Sound creates a stunning backdrop for exceptional ocean paddling. For those wanting to explore the labyrinth of islands and rugged coastline, Sitka offers towering cliffs, lush temperate rainforest, endless hidden coves, and pristine beaches. The islands within the Sound offer some protection from the open ocean, making the area often suitable for beginner paddlers. For more experienced folks looking to explore further out, Sitka is an ideal launching point to adventure along the edges of the Sound and beyond up and down the Outer Coast and into the Inside Passage.

Benefits of Marine Trails

Benefit to Locals

Developing a marine trail system will allow locals to more deeply connect with this truly remarkable place they get to call home. It will create opportunities to venture off the road system and onto public lands only accessible by boat. For people with bad knees or other mobility issues, paddling offers a lower impact way to get exercise outdoors.

Many Sitkans are already taking advantage of the beautiful boat-accessible destinations around Sitka Sound, and some nearby beaches are already over-used. The sites of the marine trail were specifically selected to avoid existing popular day use and overnight sites. Minimizing excess traffic to popular sites by using other still highly enjoyable, pristine areas will help manage conservation efforts while keeping those popular sites more available to locals. Fortunately, kayakers can access many sites that are too shallow or rocky for motorcraft to enter.

Dissemination of Knowledge

A formalized marine trail system backed by an organization will create opportunities to educate locals and visitors alike in safety and stewardship best practices as well as share local cultural, societal, and environmental information. This knowledge sharing will be possible through the materials that will supplement the online trail maps as well as by outfitters during guided trips.

Celebration of Tradition

Waterways have always served as means of transport in Southeast Alaska. Reviving an appreciation for padding provides an opportunity to celebrate traditional Lingít canoe routes and the rich cultural heritage of the people

Photo: Ryan Morse

of the tides. Much of Lingít oral history is woven into coastal placenames, offering another means of connecting locals and visitors with the stories and meaning of Lingít Aani. This draft design narrative does not capture the immense potential for cultural interpretation and education associated with traveling by canoe through Lingít Aaní. Further refinements of the marine trail concept could incorporate stories like Salmon Boy in Nakwasina that connect users to the history of the land.

Tourism Dispersal

With the increase in visitors to Sitka in recent years, a marine trails system will aid in dispersal of tourists by "expanding the pie" through increasing the number of accessible recreation options. Doing so will spread the tourists out across more trails with the goal of decreasing the number of people on any one trail. By creating more opportunities for water access, it will also open more opportunities for visitors to immerse themselves in Sitka's landscape in a meaningful way.

Through the process of seeking to disperse users, we made a conscious effort to not include already high-use Forest Service Cabins specifically along these routes. Icons for these cabins are included on our maps with the idea that they make excellent reference points. Navigating visitors to these limited cabins does not align with the goals of the project, and we are confident that locals with interest in utilizing these cabins will be able to make cabin reservations and follow these marine trail routes to navigate to them. That being said, we understand these Forest Service cabins are federally owned, and any visitors are welcome to reserve them through the Forest Service.

Financial Sustainability

Trails in the rugged rainforest are costly to develop and maintain, but a trail network over water can be rapidly extended for miles with little additional investment. Marine trails leverage Sitka's competitive advantage, offering outer coast island hopping found in few other places in the world.

Sitka Sound provides a world-class paddling haven with awe-inspiring scenery, pristine waters, and abundant wildlife.

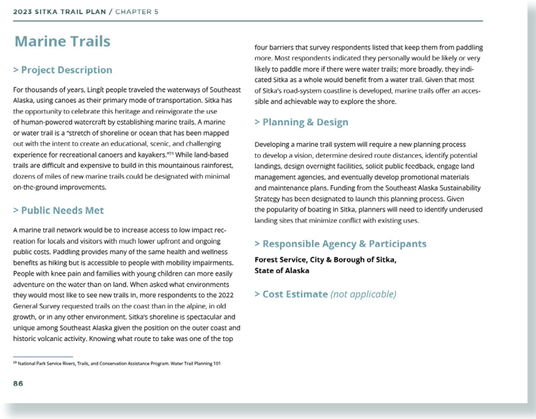
Photo by Lee House

Project Background

Addressing a Community Need

In 2022, Sitka Trail Works was developing the second edition of the Sitka Trail Plan, compiling extensive public engagement to understand the needs and desires of the community regarding outdoor recreation infrastructure. In a widely distributed public survey, a series of questions were included on water trails. The results highlighted a clear community need: nearly 20% of respondents cited identifying routes as a significant barrier to paddling more, (though below the barriers of weather and boat ownership). More compellingly, 55% said they would paddle more if a water trail existed, and 78% believed Sitka would benefit from one. Given Sitka's spectacular and unique Outer Coast shoreline and its largely developed road-system coastline, marine trails offer an accessible and achievable way to explore the shore, addressing the route-finding barrier identified by the community.

Following that public support, the 2023 Sitka Trail Plan incorporated marine trails as one of its proposed trail projects. For marine trails, the proposed plan seeks "to increase opportunities for locals and visitors to access low impact recreation with much lower upfront and ongoing public costs" (2023 Sitka Trail Plan, p. 84).



2023 SITKA TRAIL PLAN / CHAPTER 5

Marine Trails

> Project Description

For thousands of years, Lingít people traveled the waterways of Southeast Alaska, using canoes as their primary mode of transportation. Sitka has the opportunity to celebrate this heritage and reinvigorate the use of human-powered watercraft by establishing marine trails. A marine or water trail is a "stretch of shoreline or ocean that has been mapped out with the intent to create an educational, scenic, and challenging experience for recreational canoers and kayakers."[1] While land-based trails are difficult and expensive to build in this mountainous rainforest, dozens of miles of new marine trails could be designated with minimal on-the-ground improvements.

> Public Needs Met

A marine trail network would be to increase access to low impact recreation for locals and visitors with much lower upfront and ongoing public costs. Paddling provides many of the same health and wellness benefits as hiking but is accessible to people with mobility impairments. People with knee pain and families with young children can more easily adventure on the water than on land. When asked what environments they would most like to see new trails in, more respondents to the 2022 General Survey requested trails on the coast than in the alpine, in old growth, or in any other environment. Sitka's shoreline is spectacular and unique among Southeast Alaska given the position on the outer coast and historic volcanic activity. Knowing what route to take was one of the top four barriers that survey respondents listed that keep them from paddling more. Most respondents indicated they personally would be likely or very likely to paddle more if there were water trails; more broadly, they indicated Sitka as a whole would benefit from a water trail. Given that most of Sitka's road-system coastline is developed, marine trails offer an accessible and achievable way to explore the shore.

> Planning & Design

Developing a marine trail system will require a new planning process to develop a vision, determine desired route distances, identify potential landings, design overnight facilities, solicit public feedback, engage land management agencies, and eventually develop promotional materials and maintenance plans. Funding from the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy has been designated to launch this planning process. Given the popularity of boating in Sitka, planners will need to identify underused landing sites that minimize conflict with existing uses.

> Responsible Agency & Participants

Forest Service, City & Borough of Sitka, State of Alaska

> Cost Estimate *(not applicable)*

[1] National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. Water Trail Planning 101

86

Photo by Lione Clare

Locally Developed Goals

In 2024, Sitka Trail Works convened a citizen advisory committee of knowledgeable local paddlers to consult on the development of a marine trail system proposal.

Committee members agreed that a marine trail offered an opportunity for locals and visitors to access low impact, high return recreation and adopted the guiding principles from the Trail Plan. Those goals ensured that projects prioritized health, equity, economy, capacity and stewardship.

Implementing those goals in the context of a marine trail required adding the following project specific strategies:

1. Minimize conflict by identifying underused sites to disperse users and “expand the pie”
2. Disseminate knowledge to residents and visitors to expand opportunity
3. Showcase Sitka’s natural and cultural landscapes through the traditional means of travel
4. Celebrate Lingít traditional uses of waterways while protecting cultural resources
5. Leverage communications opportunity to educate users on safety and stewardship best practices
6. Create a forum for discussing appropriate commercial use

Route Selection

Implementing these strategies in the selection of a route for the Marine Trail required the development of a series of site selection criteria that could be quantitatively assessed for each potential location as a way to prioritize sites that provided the greatest value and benefit.

The following attributes were used in establishing a point system, where each site received a 0-5 rating for each attribute. Averages were calculated, with higher scores representing better suitability.

1. Underutilized (Not a site currently frequented by locals or motorized users)
2. Low visibility (Off the beaten track / not exposed to regular motorized traffic)
3. Beach quality for landing
4. Low exposure (Protectedness from ocean swell or predominant wind direction)
5. Easy freshwater access on site
6. Good developability / site potential
7. Probability of bear activity

Beyond the weighted scoring system, two specific factors served as non-negotiable filters for site viability. Cultural resources and agency approval function as go/no go assessments.

Inventory Process

Site Surveys

1. South route survey – June 3rd, 2024
2. Magic Island to Middle Island route survey - June 17th, 2024
3. Inside Taigud site check – April 3rd, 2025
4. North Krestof site check – November 1st, 2024
5. South Krestof site check – November 12th, 2025

Cultural Resources

A list of inventoried sites was shared with the USDA FS Sitka archaeological staff to cross reference with agency data identifying culturally sensitive locations around Sitka. The goal in this process was to ensure sites and corresponding potential routes were not encroaching on known cultural sites so as to mitigate disturbance of these areas.

Sitka Trail Works met with staff of Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) to review the proposed route and shoreline sites for cultural sensitivity. Based on feedback in the meeting, the route was shifted and several sites removed. A list of proposed sites was shared for STA to review in the first draft of the route, and again after public and STA feedback led to a shift in the route.

Other Inventory Process Criteria

Additional criteria were considered beyond the baseline averages for site selection including the following:

1. Cultural sensitivity / USDA Forest Service archeological info
2. Distance from town
3. Site size (group or individual)
4. Tide elevation that the landing can be assessed
5. Max or minimum tide height for landing
6. Terrain aspect of site and sun exposure
7. Other notes on site such as site attractiveness, points of interest, food gathering activities, etc.

Photo by Lee House

Proposed Marine Trail System

Key Components

Physical Trail Development

The Sitka Marine Trail system is primarily a network of safe pull-out sites for people exploring Sitka Sound by watercraft. Some sites will be aimed at providing safe stopovers for breaks while others will have slightly more developed but still primitive tent camp sites. Slight improvements such as clearing brush and leveling tent pads will make currently underutilized sites appealing stopover spots for paddlers.

In the future, if the proposed marine trail system is successful and it is desired by the community, additional site improvements to sites such as constructing shelters could be made. In addition, the community may wish to explore geographic expansion of the trail network. Because site development is minimal, adding additional sites and suggested routes along those sites can be achieved with relatively low effort compared to land trails.

Digital Assets

A website with a map of the marine trail will be the primary informational hub for the trail system. The website will house various navigational and educational information like an interactive map, downloadable charts, trip planning information, safety information, suggested itineraries, and additional resources from boating safety organizations and agencies.

Paper Assets

A printed rack card or pocket guide could be produced as a corollary to the website, providing in-person information about the marine trail network to be distributed by partners like the Maritime Heritage Society.

Trail Statistics

The proposed trail network includes the following:

3 TRAIL ROUTES

19 DAY-USE SITES

94 COMBINED MILES

10 OVERNIGHT SITES

Routes

The proposed Sitka Marine Trail system features three primary routes designed to provide a broad range of access across the diverse environments of Sitka Sound. The suggested routes start from the Japonski Island Boathouse, although launching elsewhere along the road system, e.g. Magic Island or Back Beach, will be more appealing for some users. The world-class paddling of Sitka's unique outer coast offers some more beginner friendly destinations close by, but any excursion comes with risks. Materials accompanying the Marine Trail would strongly encourage paddlers to monitor local weather and tide forecasts closely or use Sitka's professional guiding services to mitigate the inherent risks of open-water navigation.

The Causeway / Exploring WWII Relics Route

Route Length	**7 miles**
Pullouts	**5**
Duration	**Half day, full day, or Overnight (plenty to explore on the Causeway)**
Trail Type	**Out-and-back or loop**

Experience Level

Beginner/Intermediate: Novice paddlers may consider a trip to Sasedni Landing in Whiting Harbor, taking an out-and-back route to avoid the potential waves that can stack up on the outside of Mahknati Island and the south side of the Causeway. In calm water, making the full loop as a beginner is manageable.

Route Description

Paddle through Sitka's channel, past scenic harbors with sweeping views of the City and into Sitka Sound to reach a man made, World War II causeway with remaining military defense relics (ammunition magazines, lookouts, gun emplacements, and the headquarters command center), beaches, and an island-to-island hiking trail. Before seizure by the US military, the islands were important harvesting sites for Lingít clans.

Caution

In addition to the general cautions provided to all paddlers, hazards noted for users of this route will include: exposure on outside of the Causeway, traffic in the harbor channel, restrictions on airport and USCG base access, cultural sensitivity, WWII bunkhouse risks.

Stopovers

SITE	DAY SITE	OVERNIGHT	FRESH WATER
John Brown's Beach	⛩		Not present
Sasedni Landing (NE side)	⛩	⛺	*Not safe for consumption
Sasedni Landing (SW side)	⛩	⛺	*Not safe for consumption
Makhanati Island (north side)	⛩		*Not safe for consumption
Kirushkin Island (east side)	⛩		*Not safe for consumption

*While remediation of toxic contaminants in the soil along the Causeway occurred in 2016, leftover from military activity, consumption of water and plants from these Islands is not recommended. Bring your own water.

Nakwasina North Route

Route Length	**44.6 miles**
Pullouts	**9**
Duration	**Half day, full day, or 1–3 overnights for the entire route**
Trail Type	**Out-and-back or loop**

Experience Level

Beginner/Intermediate: Novice paddlers, after checking the direction, intensity and forecast of the wind, could consider either launching from Middle Island and touring the nearby islands, or launching from Starrigavan Bay and heading straight to Nakwasina, avoiding the high traffic in Olga Straits.

Route Description

Starting from the Japonski Island Boathouse or at any point north along the road system, this route weaves between dozens of minor islands toward a circumnavigation of Halleck Island via Nakwasina Passage. Paddlers will cross in and out of waters exposed to the open Sitka Sound with views of Mt. Edgecumbe volcano to the uninhabited beaches and forested old growth of Crow Island. With exposed crossings all less than a mile long, this route offers a relatively protected exploration of Sitka's inland waterways. The full Nakwasina loop overlaps with the Alaska Marine Highway in Olga Strait, a busy thoroughfare for fishing boats, but the route can be easily modified as an out-and-back to avoid those five miles of high traffic. Nakwasina's shores are dotted with rich estuaries, teeming with waterfowl, blacktail deer and brown bears.

Caution

In addition to the general cautions provided to all paddlers, hazards noted for users of this route will include: high traffic in Olga Strait, high volume tourism and cultural sensitivity in Siginaka Islands, private land holdings along the route, locations of higher swell exposure.

Stopovers

SITE	DAY SITE	OVERNIGHT	FRESH WATER
Abalone Island	⛩		Not present
Middle Island Tombolo (South)	⛩	⛺	*Nearby
Crow Island (West beach)	⛩	⛺	Not present
Little Gavanski (South beach)	⛩		Not present
Big Gavanski	⛩		Not present
Eastern Bay	⛩	⛺	Onsite
Olga Point Estuary	⛩	⛺	Onsite
Halleck Island (North shore)	⛩		Onsite
Nakwasina Sound (SE shore)	⛩		*Nearby

**Nearby* fresh water indicates a source is within walking distance; paddling is not required.

South Sitka Coastline Route

Route Length	**42.6 miles**
Pullouts	**6**
Duration	**Half day, full day, or 1-3 overnights for the entire route depending on skill level, weather, and pace.**
Trail Type	**Out-and-back or loop**

Experience Level

Beginner/Intermediate: While the southern portion of this route features constricted passages and exposed stretches, intermediate paddlers can find an excellent overnight destination in the closest campsites at Leeskoffskaia and Sandy Cove if conditions allow for a crossing of Eastern Channel.

Route Description

Weave through islands, across the Eastern Channel, and down along the rugged coastline. Spot lounging sea lions, sea otters and whales as well as river otters, black-tailed deer, brown bears, and mink. This route provides picturesque views of Mt. Edgecumbe volcano, jagged ocean rocks covered in barnacles, and sprawling kelp forests. Watch fishing vessels navigate these waters, harvesting wild Pacific salmon. Mossy open areas make for good camping and exploration inside the treelines and along the beaches at these stopover sites. On clear days, views of the horizon provide a snapshot of the expansive open ocean.

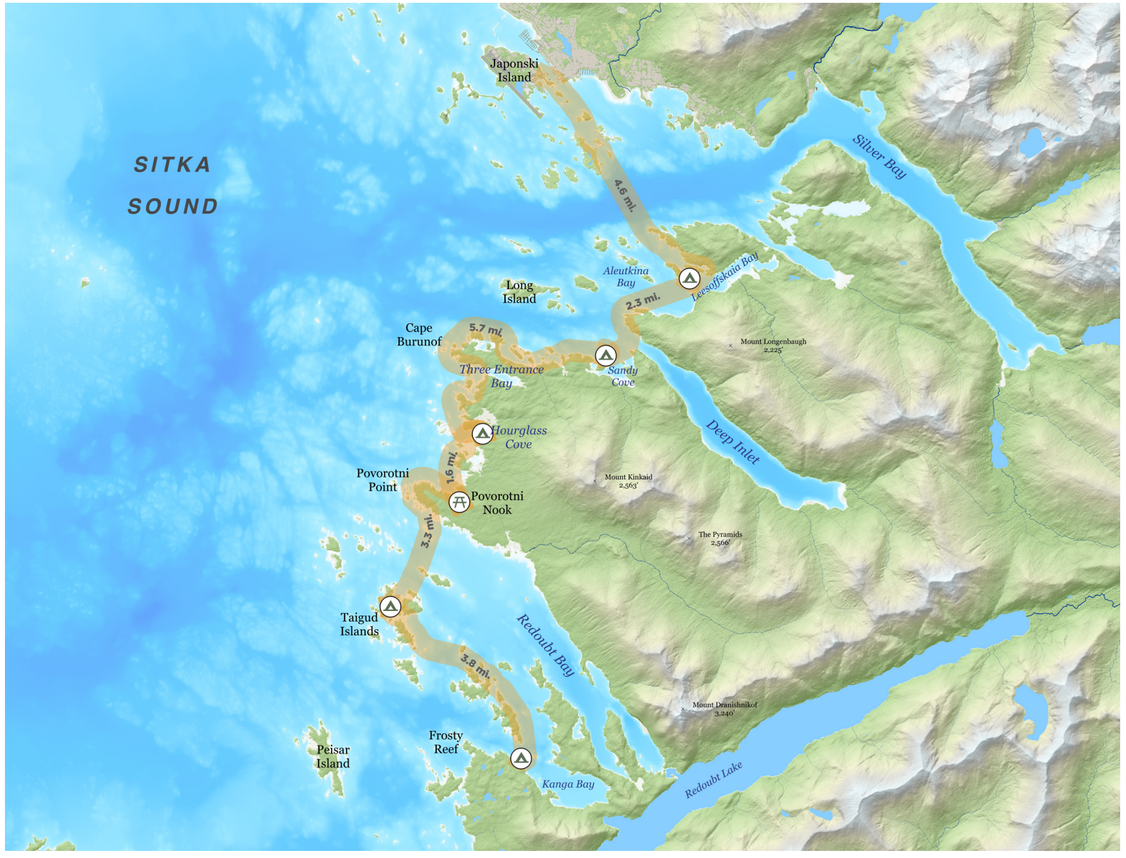
Caution

In addition to the general cautions provided to all paddlers, hazards noted for users of this route will include: high level of weather exposure and vessel traffic, with details on elevated dangers of both in constricted passages.

Stopovers

SITE	DAY SITE	OVERNIGHT	FRESH WATER
Leeskoffskaia Bay (Island at Entrance)	⛲	⛺	Not present
Sandy Cove (East)	⛲	⛺	*Nearby
Hour Glass Cove	⛲	⛺	*Nearby
Povorotni Nook	⛲		*Nearby
Northeast Taigud Island	⛲	⛺	Not present
Kanga Bay	⛲	⛺	Not present

**Nearby* fresh water indicates a source is within walking distance; paddling is not required.



Design Standards

The marine trail camping sites will be developed with a rustic, minimalist aesthetic, using native materials whenever possible. Each site will consist of a tent pad, tarp hang, fire ring, and bear hang.

Tent Pad Development

The lack of flat, well-drained ground is a barrier to camping in Sitka Sound, so the primary site improvement would be establishing tent pads.

With a goal of minimal ground disturbance or cutting of roots, a small area will be cleared of brush and leveled. Then a simple tent pad will be constructed by hauling beach logs into a rectangle and filling with beach gravel.

Sketch generated with AI

Tarp Hang

When local trees are well positioned, nylon webbing tree straps will be safely affixed to allow campers an easy tarp hang over camp, bringing their own rope or cord to tie to the permanently established anchor points.

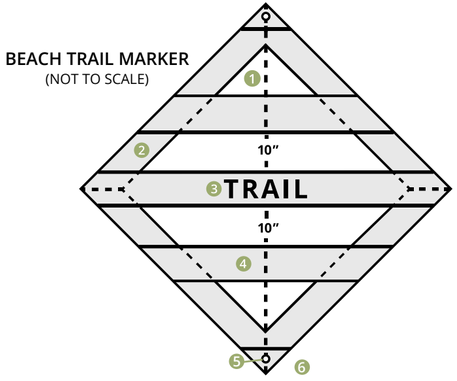
Bear Hang

A permanent and easy-to-use bear hang will be an important feature of the primitive camp sites, which users will be required to use. There are a number of ways to create simple rigging with rope, pulleys and carabiners that can be left in a tree for campers to quickly string up their food bag. The particular design of the pulley system may depend on the site's particular tree selection, but the corresponding graphic shows one easy system.

Vachowski, Brian. November 1994. Low-Impact Food Hoists. USDA Forest Service Technology & Development Program. FS-587. fs.usda.gov/t-d/pubs/pdfpubs/pdf95232809/pdf95232809Pdpi72.pdf

Signs (Diamond Pallet in a Tree)

A simple sign created from recycled pallets can be crafted in the shape of a diamond and painted to serve as a navigational guide and site location marker. This design follows the USDA Forest Service design standards for Beach Trail Marker and is found throughout the region, including on the Shelikof Trail on Kruzof Island.



Sign is designed for field construction. Mount on tree or other object at least 6′ above ground for good view of water. Paint international orange on white background with black letters.

1. ¼′ x 4′ x 4′ Plywood inserted in back. Attached with galvanized nails. Paint white.
2. 2″ x 6″ Frame 5′ on a side connected with galvanized nails, international orange
3. 6″ Lettering
4. 1″ x 8″ Cross strips, international orange
5. ¼″ Holes for mounting
6. 2″ Corner brace

Signage information borrowed from the USDA Forest Service Region 10 Trails Construction and Maintenance Guide, Chapter X, page 73.

Marine Trails Design and Construction Estimate

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	LABOR	MATERIALS	COST
Tent Pad					
	Move locally sourced logs and beach gravel. Secure them with rebar.	1	$560	$50	$610
Tarp Hang					
	Treesaver straps	2		$70	$70
	2″ Pulley	1		$60	$60
	Anodized carabiners	2		$40	$40
	Rope (60′)	1		$80	$80
Bear Hang					
	Treesaver straps	2		$70	$70
	Anodized carabiners	2		$120	$120
	Rope (100′)	1		$100	$100
Sign					
	Old pallets	2	$60		$60
	Nails			$10	$10
	Paint	1		$60	$60
	Cord to tie to tree			$15	$15
Boat Transport					
	Variable				
		Totals	$620	$675	$1295

Planning Direction and Permitting

Implementing the Sitka Marine Trail System requires a multi-jurisdictional approach. The project area spans Federal, State, and Municipal lands, each with distinct regulatory hurdles. Below is the step-by-step process for each land manager and regulatory agency.

Federal:
Tongass National Forest Service (USDA FS)

Most upland sites fall within the Tongass National Forest. The 2016 Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) dictates what is allowed based on Land Use Designations (LUDs). However, the Forest is currently undergoing a Plan revision process that will alter the following management approach.

Anticipated LUDs: Most coastal sites are likely Semi-Remote Recreation or Old-Growth Habitat. Both generally allow for primitive recreation and low-impact campsites.

NEPA Process

1. Level of Review: This project likely qualifies for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1) (construction/reconstruction of low-impact trails) or (e)(20) (restoring/rehabilitating sites).
2. Scoping: The USDA FS will conduct a 30-day public scoping period to identify “extraordinary circumstances” (e.g., T&E species, sensitive watersheds).
3. Avenues for Completion:
    - In-House: Lower cost, but subject to USDA FS staff availability (typically 6–18 months).
    - Contracted: Sitka Trail Works (STW) hires a consultant to write the CE document; USDA FS reviews and signs. Faster but higher upfront cost.

NHPA (Section 106)

1. Survey: A cultural resource survey of each proposed campsite is required to identify archaeological or historic sites.
2. Consultation: USDA FS consults with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska.
3. Timeline: Usually concurrent with NEPA; 30-day SHPO review period per finding.

Federal Nexus: If federal funding is received for construction, all sites will have to undergo NEPA and NHPA review.

Photo by Lione Clare

State:
Alaska Department of Natural Resources Resources (DNR)

Alaska DNR manages the Fort Rousseau WWII Causeway State Historic Park and the intertidal zone along the entire coast. Accessing campsites from the water involves crossing state tidelands.

Intertidal Access: Non-commercial use of tidelands is a "Generally Allowed Use" (11 AAC 96.020). Personal camping is allowed for up to 14 days without a permit.

Permitting for Improvements: A Land Use Permit is required if any structures are placed in the intertidal zone (e.g., a primitive landing ramp or signs) or in the State Park.

Step 1. Submit a Land Use Application to the DNR Southeast Regional Office.

Step 2. DNR conducts an agency and public notice period.

- Archaeological Clearance: Because the Causeway is a Historic Park, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) must approve any ground-disturbing activity (like staking a bear hang or leveling a pad) to ensure it doesn't damage hidden WWII infrastructure or indigenous cultural sites.
- Toxin Monitoring: Since parts of the park are still under monitoring for toxins (specifically the intertidal zones near Virublennoi), reviewing the proposal with DEC and the Army Corps of Engineers will ensure proposed campsites are in " cleared" zones.

Step 3. Final Consistency Review with the Northern Southeast Area Plan.

Permitting for Beach Gravel: Approval from AK DNR will also be required to use beach gravel, which is proposed as the fill material for tent pads. Improvements to sites located on CBS-managed lands will require a path of multi-committee review and Assembly approval. Development on municipal lands is governed by SGC Title 23 (Parks and Recreation).

Photo by Lione Clare

Municipal:
City and Borough of Sitka (CBS)

Staff Review: The proposal will first be discussed with staff leadership in the Planning, Parks & Rec, and Public Works departments.

Parks & Recreation Committee Review: The proposal will then be presented to the Committee for a formal recommendation. Review focuses on community alignment and the mitigation of potential conflicts with existing motorized watercraft users.

Planning & Zoning: Most coastal municipal parcels are zoned Public (P). Primitive improvements are generally compatible; however, a Site Plan Review or Conditional Use Permit (CUP) may be required if the Planning Department determines the improvements constitute significant site alterations.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Final project authorization by the Municipal Assembly will likely be contingent upon an MOU between CBS and Sitka Trail Works. This document could define maintenance responsibilities, liability coverage, and removal protocols.

Photo by Lione Clare

Technical Regulatory Agency:
US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Technical permits are required for specific environmental triggers regardless of land ownership.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): Section 404/10 Permits: Any placement of "fill" or structures in navigable waters requires a Nationwide Permit (NWP) 42 for recreational facilities. A Pre-Construction Notification (PCN) must be submitted to verify minimal environmental impact. It is unlikely that any of the proposed site improvements would require a NWP.

Technical Regulatory Agency:
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)

Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Fish Habitat Permit (Title 16): Sites located near anadromous (salmon) streams require review by the ADF&G Habitat Section. This ensures construction does not interfere with spawning or fish passage. The majority of proposed sites avoid streams and no construction is proposed in the immediate riparian zone.

Overview

AGENCY	JURISDICTION	REQUIRED ACTION
USDA FS	Uplands (Tongass)	NEPA (Categorical Exclusion) + NHPA Section 106
AK DNR	Tidelands & Causeway	Special Use Permit (SUP) & Land Use Permit
CBS	Municipal Land	Parks & Rec Recommendation; Assembly MOU
USACE	Navigable Waters/Fill	Nationwide Permit likely not required
ADF&G	Anadromous Streams	Fish Habitat Permit likely not required

Photo by Lione Clare

Safety & User Management

Paddling safety was a primary concern voiced during the public engagement process. Fortunately, if the track record of other Alaskan marine trails is applicable, the actual risk may be lower than perceived. In the last 15 years, the Alaska DNR Office of Boating Safety has reported zero fatalities on the Kachemak Bay Water Trail and Resurrection Bay Marine Trails. However, the Office reported two kayak fatalities in that time period in Sitka, both attributed to a combination of drinking, poor conditions, and a lack of a PFD.

While the cold and volatile waters of Sitka Sound do exhibit objective hazards, risk to users is primarily a question of decision-making and behavior. While merely anecdotal, the fact that Sitka, without a marine trail, has had more kayak fatalities than Seward in the last 15 years, suggests that the educational outreach paired with establishing a marine trail could actually reduce community risk.

Establishing a marine trail in Sitka will require a corollary effort in public outreach and education to ensure that any new paddlers are armed with the necessary skills and knowledge. Fortunately, a community of water safety educators is growing in Sitka. Experienced local paddlers and long-time Sitkans have joined the US Coast Guard's Auxiliary Paddlecraft (AUXPAD) program to promote water safety. AUXPAD aims to reduce accidents by educating users on safety equipment and situational awareness through on-water and on-shore outreach. The launch and growth of several local kayak guiding companies in recent years means that Sitka now hosts an impressive number of American Canoe Association certified instructors per capita. Local kayak guides have already begun supporting paddling safety education through public outreach and training events. And the locally-based Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) remains the most prolific and robust educational institution, providing regular trainings open to the public. In addition, the Alaska DNR Office of Boating Safety has offered to provide their curriculum through local training.

Safety

A marine trail initiative in Sitka offers an opportunity to raise awareness about the risks and opportunities of open water paddling. A new "trail" will precipitate public interest, which can be channeled into a variety of educational and training programs, online and in person.

An official website of the marine trail website can serve as a hub, but will not be the exclusive source of information. The website can include links to definitive sources on cold water immersion, safety equipment, trip planning and navigation, weather and tides. The website can ensure all visitors to the site are aware of the risks they face when embarking on the marine trail. A detailed disclaimer with a checklist of necessary skills and equipment can deter unprepared users from attempting ill-advised trips. But ultimately, a marine trail is about promoting inclusive use of the outdoors, so users would be directed to resources, trainings, and community opportunities to grow the skills they need to safely navigate these beautiful waters. The website and literature can also provide an easily accessible list of local guides to encourage less prepared people to recreate with professionals.

The following sample safety disclaimer and checklist could exist as a pop-up box on the website with required approval for users to access the navigational trails webpage.

SAFETY DISCLAIMER

Local knowledge and cold water boating safety is not optional. Paddlers are responsible for their own safety. First time users and inexperienced boaters should consider hiring a guide to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. Sitka Sound is remote; rescues can take hours or days. Paddlers are responsible for their own safety. You must be prepared, diligent, and adaptable. Ensure you have the appropriate level of skill, experience, and equipment for your trip. When in doubt, do not go.

- I understand Southeast Alaska waters are cold enough to cause hypothermia in minutes.
- I understand wearing a PFD and being sober while recreating saves lives.
- I have the necessary skills and safety equipment to conduct a self rescue, communicate with responders, administer first aid, and survive a night on shore.
- I have and will continue to check the marine weather forecast and tide tables for the date(s) of my trip.
- I understand I am responsible for my own rescue; help may be hours or days away.

☐ **I have read this disclaimer. I understand the risks and know I am responsible for my own safety and the safety of my group on our trip.**

For safety questions, contact the State of Alaska Office of Boating Safety at (907) 269-8400. Find information at dnr.alaska.gov/parks/boating/

User Management

In-person and online resources will establish and educate users in marine trail etiquette. A set list of guidelines will live on the website and be shared by outfitters and guides. These protocols should be adaptive, evolving to best manage use of the marine trail, and could include:

Leave No Trace: a well-known program with abundant educational resources and training, featuring seven principles:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare: Research your destination, check weather, and prepare for emergencies to avoid needing to take harmful risks or causing damage.
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces: Stick to established routes, and camp on hardened surfaces to avoid damaging vegetation.
3. Dispose of Waste Properly: "Pack it in, pack it out." Dispose of all litter, food scraps, and waste. Properly bury human waste in 6-8 inch deep cat holes 200 feet from water and trails.
4. Leave What You Find: Preserve the past by examining, but not touching, cultural or historical structures. Leave rocks, plants, and natural objects as you find them.
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts: Use a lightweight stove for cooking instead of a fire. If you must have a fire, use established fire rings, keep them small, and burn wood down to ash.
6. Respect Wildlife: Observe animals from a distance, never feed them, and store food securely to prevent habitat disruption.
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors: Respect others by keeping noise levels down, and being courteous in interactions.

First Come, First Served: There are no reservations for campsites. This trail system operates on a first come, first served basis. Respect others by only sharing a campsite when necessary during emergencies.

Maintenance

Maintenance of the Sitka Marine Trail sites will be conducted through a collaborative framework involving commercial outfitters, guides, and non-profit stakeholders. The Sitka Kayak Center, an emerging entity established to promote paddling education and environmental stewardship, could serve as a hub of organizing for local guides and paddlers.

Another collaborative tool that could serve to facilitate maintenance would be a formal protocol through the nascent Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) program in Sitka. Compliance with these standards would be a prerequisite for commercial entities seeking "Recommended Guide" status on the official marine trails website. Under this system, guides would be required to perform routine site stewardship, including debris removal and minor infrastructure repairs.

Issues requiring specialized equipment or labor will be documented and reported to Sitka Trail Works and/or the Sitka Kayak Center. While field-level maintenance is decentralized to commercial partners, STW and/or SKC would maintain administrative oversight, facilitating biannual coordination meetings and scheduled work parties for large-scale projects.

Long-term site integrity would be further supported by the Sitka Kayak Center's development of "Adopt-a-Site" and "Trail Ambassador" programs. These systems will assign specific maintenance blocks to vested parties, including local outfitters and frequent trail users, ensuring a consistent monitoring and repair cycle.

Public Engagement Planning Phase

Meetings

A steering committee was assembled in 2024 composed of local boaters, kayakers, guides, and land managers. The group held five formal, all-member meetings in the first year. The collective pooled their local knowledge and identified possible sites for the marine trail and devised a series of trail routes.

Meeting Dates

Meeting 1, 3/21/24 at the Sitka Public Library

Meeting 2, 4/22/24 at the Sitka Public Library

Meeting 3, 10/02/24 at the Sitka Public Library

Meeting 4, 10/30/24 at the Sitka Public Library

Meeting 5, 12/12/24 at the Sitka Public Library

A series of one-on-one meetings were held with other stakeholders in the community to inform them of the project and gather feedback and additional information and suggestions.

Steering Committee members met with the USDA Forest Service, Sitka Ranger District to review site selections and cross reference them with federal land management concerns including archaeological and cultural sensitivities.

A meeting with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska helped identify a number of cultural sensitivities and site selection issues. This collaboration allowed for adjustment of routes and sites to ensure cultural sensitivity concerns were properly addressed.

Steering Committee

Meghan Chamberlain – USDA FS, Sitka Ranger District, *Recreation Management Specialist; Certified Kayak Guide*

Lione Clare – Sitka Conservation Society, *Wilderness & Community Engagement Coordinator; Sitka paddler*

Michael Graney – Sitka Wild Coast Kayaks, *Owner, Certified Kayak Guide and Instructor*; Sitka Kayak Center, *Founder*

Davey Lubin – Sitka Wildlife Adventure, *Owner and Captain*

Roland Wirth – *Sitka paddler*

Mary Goddard – *Sitka paddler*

Charlie Jordan – SEAK Adventure Sitka, *Owner, Certified Kayak Guide and Instructor*

Tony Phillips – *Sitka paddler*

Rebecca Poulson – *Historian; Sitka paddler*

Paul Kortemeier – Adventure Sitka, *General manager, Certified Kayak Instructor and Trip Leader*

Donna Russell – *Sitka paddler*

Xander Allison – Tongass Troll Tours & Taxi, *Owner and Captain*

Public Survey

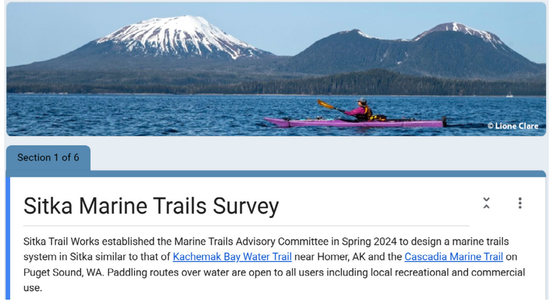
In spring 2025, an online survey and supporting project information[1], including route maps, were developed and made open to the public for 90 days. It was promoted on social media, in newsletters, and by word-of-mouth via Sitka Trail Works and Sitka Conservation Society channels. The survey asked for public feedback on three suggested routes with stopover and camping sites identified. It also asked for general comments on the project.

Almost 50 survey responses were analyzed and compiled into a review for the steering committee and other stakeholders. Follow-up one-on-one meetings took place with individuals from the public who requested more information via the survey. The survey also asked if respondents wanted to be kept up-to-date on the project's development; interested individuals' names and contact information were catalogued for the future.

The majority of responses to the survey were positive (21 of 47), in support of marine trail development. There were 16 comments with negative remarks largely expressing concern for safety and fears of over development and over crowding. Remaining comments were largely neutral.

On the northern route, much of the safety and development concerns were in the crossing to and camping on Kruzof Island. In follow up meetings reviewing the feedback, the advisory committee decided to remove the segment of the route from Middle Island to Kruzof and extending through Krestof Sound to Olga Strait.

[1]Supporting Project Information Drive Folder: drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eVKHXhoOTzXKgkbRLBTFowqkqJ-z5L1U?usp=drive_link



Conclusion

This design narrative serves as a roadmap for developing a low-impact, high-return infrastructure option to increase local and visitor exploration of Sitka's surrounding public lands and marine ecosystem through paddling. Digital navigation tools and a collective of local guides alongside Sitka Trail Works will work in tandem to maintain stopover sites while fostering a safe, cooperative paddling culture along the Sitka Marine Trails system.

Acknowledgments

Sitka Trail Works would like to thank individuals who donated their time, expertise, skills, and local knowledge to support the development of the Sitka Marine Trails Plan.

MARINE TRAILS CONTRIBUTORS & SUPPORTERS

Sitka Trail Works Board of Directors: President Mike Jones, Vice President Yeidikook'áa Brady-Howard, Treasurer Brooke Rivera, Secretary Eric Estrada, Lione Clare, Lee House, Matt Groen, Bill Spivey, Colton Holmes

Steering Committee Members: Meghan Chamberlain, Lione Clare, Michael Graney, Dave Lubin, Roland Wirth, Mary Goddard, Charlie Jordan, Tony Phillips, Rebecca Poulson, Paul Kortemeier, Donna Russell, Xander Allison

Sitka Tribe of Alaska: Jeff Feldpautch, Jessica Perkins, Annika Krafcik, Rachel Hartman

USDA Forest Service Sitka Ranger District: Meghan Chamberlain, Amanda Cochran, Becky Peterman, Corrine Ferguson, Chloe De Camara, Raeanna Wood

Alaska State Parks: Preston Kroes, Brad Garasky, SJ Downey

AK DNR Office of Boating Safety: Joe McCullough & Annie Grenier

For advice and support along the way: Rob Sendak, Washington Boating Law Administrator; Don Kluting & Denise Turley

Thank you to the hundreds of Sitkans who took time to respond to the survey or otherwise provide feedback and support!

This design narrative was produced by Sitka Trail Works in partnership with Sitka Conservation Society.

Photo by Emily Pound

Appendix / Inventory of Sites

			Underutilized (not often frequented by locals / motorized users)	Low visibility (off the beaten track / minimal regular motorized traffic)	Beach quality for landing	Low exposure (protectedness from ocean swell or predominant wind direction)	Easy freshwater access on site?	Good developability / site potential	Probability of bear activity
Site Name	Latitude / Longitude	C = Causeway N = Nakwasina S = South Sitka	0 = Popular camping / picnic 5 = No current use	0 = Visible by regular traffic 5 = Remote or hidden	0 = Very difficult 5 = Relative ease	0 = Exposed to common swell angle 5 = highly protected	0 = no freshwater access 5 = adjacent perennial stream	0 = no flat ground 5 = existing site or easy to build	1= high bear density 5 = isolated island
Sasedni Island (Main Landing)	57.046988, -135.381348	C	2	3	5	5	0	5	5
Crow Island (West beach)	57.104931, -135.480132	N	5	5	5	4	0	4	4
Little Gavanski (South beach)	57.12337, -135.43261	N	2	2	4	3	0	3	5
Middle Island (Tombolo)	57.09128, -135.46139	N	5	5	4	5	2	5	4
Abalone Island	57.0685296, -135.428385	N	4	3	5	3	0	2	5
Olga Point Estuary	57.2233, -135.537291	N	4	4	4	5	4	3	3
Halleck North (Tombolo)	57.25123, -135.4769	N	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
Nakwasina (SE shore)	57.20665, -135.37855	N	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Leesoffskaia (Island at Entrance)	57.001157, -135.283571	S	3	3	4	4	1	3	3
Sandy Cove (East)	56.979489, -135.309923	S	3	4	4	5	3	4	3
Hour Glass Cove	56.96483, -135.372616	S	5	5	5	5	3	4	2
Povorotni Nook (North Elbow Cove)	56.948684, -135.382372	S	4	5	5	3	3	4	2
Northeast Taigud Island	56.924575, -135.411210	S	5	5	3	5	0	3	5
Kanga Bay Camp	56.8881, -135.354885	S	5	5	3	5	0	5	4

SITKA TRAIL WORKS, INC.

801 Halibut Point Road
(907) 747-7244
trail@sitkatrailworks.org

SITKATRAILWORKS.ORG

ITEM D

Discussion and presentation for a disc golf demonstration course

PROPOSAL FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A SEMI-PERMANENT 9-HOLE DISC GOLF COURSE AT LOWER MOELLER PARK

Prepared for:
City of Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee

Prepared by:
Sitka Disc Golf Club

Date:
August 2026

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Purpose

The Sitka Disc Golf Club, in partnership with the City of Sitka Parks and Recreation Division, proposes installing a semi-permanent nine-hole disc golf course at Lower Moeller Park.

The course will use the four permanent baskets already purchased by Parks and Recreation. Multiple tee locations will create a full nine-hole layout while minimizing installation costs and allowing flexibility for future expansion or relocation.

This pilot project will introduce disc golf to Sitka, expand free outdoor recreation opportunities, and allow the City to evaluate community interest before investing in a larger permanent course.

Project Goals

The proposed course is intended to:

- Provide a free outdoor recreational opportunity for residents and visitors.
- Introduce the sport of disc golf to individuals and families of all ages.
- Encourage healthy outdoor activity and year-round park use.
- Expand recreational programming opportunities for Parks and Recreation.
- Evaluate community demand for a future permanent course.
- Create opportunities for volunteer involvement and community partnerships.

About Disc Golf

Disc golf is played similarly to traditional golf. Players throw specialized flying discs toward metal baskets, completing each hole in the fewest throws possible.

The sport is inexpensive, family-friendly, and accessible to all ages and skill levels. Most beginners only need a single disc to play.

Who Can Play?

One of the greatest strengths of disc golf is its accessibility. The sport is enjoyed by all ages and abilities of players, recreationally and competitively.

It does not require expensive equipment, specialized facilities, or extensive instruction before beginners can enjoy the game.

Why Lower Moeller Park?

Lower Moeller Park offers several advantages as the location for a pilot disc golf course.

The park provides:

- Convenient public access.
- Existing parking.
- Open grassy areas suitable for beginner and intermediate play.
- Adequate separation from nearby park amenities.
- Opportunities to incorporate existing trees and terrain into the course design.
- Flexibility to relocate baskets in the future if park improvements require changes.

Because the course will be free to use and located within an existing public park, it will be accessible to residents and visitors without additional fees or reservations.

Using Lower Moeller Park also allows Parks and Recreation to evaluate community interest while minimizing the financial commitment associated with constructing a permanent course.

Why a Pilot Course?

The proposed installation is intended to serve as a pilot project.

This approach allows the City to:

- Introduce disc golf to the community.
- Measure public participation.
- Evaluate maintenance needs.
- Gather public feedback.
- Host introductory clinics and community events.
- Determine whether expansion is warranted in the future.

Utilizing available baskets immediately allows the City to provide a new recreational amenity while maximizing the value of equipment already purchased.

If participation grows as anticipated, additional baskets and permanent infrastructure can be added over time, or the course can be relocated to another location if future park planning identifies a more suitable long-term site.

Basket Installation

The four permanent disc golf baskets already purchased by the Parks and Recreation Division will be installed using standard disc golf basket sleeves.

Each basket will be mounted on a removable pole system that fits into an anchor sleeve installed in the ground. The sleeve will be secured with a small concrete foundation approximately:

- 8 inches in diameter.
- 18–24 inches deep.

This installation method provides stability while allowing the baskets to be removed and relocated in the future if necessary.

Tee Areas

The initial course will utilize temporary tee areas rather than permanent concrete pads.

Temporary tee pads will allow the City and the Sitka Disc Golf Club to evaluate:

- Player traffic.
- Course layout.
- Preferred hole locations.
- Areas that may benefit from future improvements.

Temporary tee areas may include:

- Marked grass tee locations.
- Small gravel or natural surface pads.
- Clearly identified tee markers.

Signs and Course Navigation

Because the course will be designed as a nine-hole layout using four baskets, clear signage will be important to help new players navigate the course.

The project may include:

- **Tee Signs**

  Each hole will have a small sign identifying, hole number, distance and basket location.

- **Course Map and Information Sign**

  A primary information sign will be installed near the first tee area. This sign will include a map showing the complete nine-hole layout, etiquette and safety guidelines.

- **Directional Signs**

  Small directional signs may be installed where needed to help players move from one basket to the next tee location. The signage system will allow new players to navigate the course independently and reduce confusion for first-time users.

Project Costs

The Parks and Recreation Division has already purchased the four permanent disc golf baskets required for the initial course installation. This represents the largest equipment expense associated with the project.

The remaining project costs are expected to be relatively limited and include:

Item	Description
Temporary Tee Pads	Creation of marked tee areas for nine holes
Basket Foundations	Excavation and small concrete foundations for basket sleeves
Basket Installation	Installation of four permanent baskets
Tee Signs	Small signs identifying each hole and providing basic information
Directional Signage	Signs guiding players through the course layout
Course Information Sign	Map, rules, and safety information at the first tee

The Sitka Disc Golf Club is committed to assisting with volunteer labor, course design, installation support, and future maintenance efforts. There are also grant opportunities available through the Juneau Disc Golf Club to help complete course components listed above.

Safety and Course Etiquette

Safety is an important consideration when adding any new recreational activity to a public park. Disc golf etiquette closely follows many of the same principles as traditional golf, including:

- Waiting until the area ahead is clear before throwing.
- Allowing other park users to safely pass through.
- Respecting other players and park visitors.
- Maintaining awareness of surroundings.

Rules and safety information will be included on the course information sign to help educate new players.

The course layout will be designed to minimize conflicts with existing park activities and encourage responsible use of the area.

Maintenance Requirements

One of the primary advantages of disc golf as a recreational facility is the minimal ongoing maintenance required after installation.

Unlike many recreational facilities, a disc golf course does not require significant infrastructure, specialized equipment, or daily supervision. The primary maintenance needs are similar to those already performed within existing park operations.

Routine maintenance may include:

- Mowing and general park landscaping.
- Occasional trimming of vegetation around tee areas and baskets.
- Inspection of baskets, signs, and course markers.
- Repair or replacement of damaged signage.
- Monitoring of high-use areas for erosion or excessive wear.

The disc golf baskets are constructed from durable galvanized steel and require very little maintenance once installed. In the unlikely event that a basket is damaged beyond repair, replacement costs are relatively low compared with other recreational infrastructure.

The removable basket sleeve system will also allow the course layout to be adjusted periodically. This will help reduce concentrated wear in specific areas and provide opportunities to modify the course as community use patterns become better understood.

Members of the Sitka Disc Golf Club are committed to partnering with Parks and Recreation staff by providing volunteer assistance with:

- Initial course preparation
- Course clean-up events
- Vegetation management
- Sign maintenance
- Community education
- Event support

This partnership will reduce maintenance demands on City staff while encouraging community ownership of the facility.

Community Support and Partnerships

The Sitka Disc Golf Club was formed to promote disc golf as a healthy, social, and inclusive recreational activity that can benefit residents of all ages and backgrounds.

Club members are committed to working collaboratively with the City of Sitka Parks and Recreation Division throughout the development and operation of the course.

The Club's anticipated contributions include:

- Assisting with course design
- Providing volunteer labor during installation
- Helping maintain the course
- Organizing community events
- Promoting responsible course use
- Seeking outside funding opportunities for this and future improvements

Additional funding opportunities may be pursued through:

- Community donations
- Local sponsorships
- Recreation grants
- Partnerships with community organizations

The pilot course will provide an opportunity to demonstrate community interest and build support for future disc golf development in Sitka.

Future Planning and Expansion

The Lower Moeller Park course is intended to serve as a first phase in the development of disc golf opportunities within Sitka. The semi-permanent design provides the City with flexibility while allowing residents to experience the sport and provide feedback. Future improvements may include:

- Additional baskets to create a larger permanent course
- Improved tee pads
- Expanded signage
- Additional course layouts
- Development of a permanent disc golf facility at a future location

If future improvements to the Moeller Fields area require changes to the course, the baskets and equipment can be relocated with minimal cost and limited impact to the park.

This phased approach allows the City to:

- Utilize existing equipment investments
- Evaluate demand before larger expenditures
- Adjust future plans based on community use
- Expand recreation opportunities responsibly

Recommendation

The Sitka Disc Golf Club respectfully recommends that the City of Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee approve the installation of a semi-permanent nine-hole disc golf course at Lower Moeller Park utilizing the four permanent baskets already purchased by the Parks and Recreation Division.

This project represents a low-cost, high-value recreational investment that will:

- Expand free outdoor recreation opportunities
- Encourage healthy activity for all ages
- Utilize existing City resources
- Provide opportunities for community programming
- Allow the City to evaluate long-term interest in disc golf
- Maintain flexibility for future park planning

The proposed course provides an opportunity to introduce a growing recreational activity to Sitka while maintaining responsible stewardship of public resources.

Gavan St
2
6
8
venile Probation
1
Lower Moller Field
Moller Dr
Moller Ball Field
B1
7
4
5
9
Permanent basket (typ.)
3
Park
Portable basket
B2
Lakeview Dr
Lakeview Dr