

February 8, 2015

To: North Star Community Council

From: Schools on Trails Program of Anchorage Park Foundation Trails Initiative

Re: Request for approval of a Resolution supporting Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail Rehabilitation Project

- Whereas, educating kids outside in the natural environment has health, academic, behavioral, confidence-building, and many other positive benefits;
- Whereas, Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail is within easy walking distance of seven ASD schools - North Star Elementary, Steller Secondary, Central Middle School, Chugach Optional Elementary, Inlet View Elementary, Romig Middle School and West High;
- Whereas, the Schools on Trails program of the Anchorage Park Foundation Trails Initiative strives to:
 - Identify and raise awareness of trails, parks, streams and natural habitat near Anchorage schools;
 - Connect schools and families to these nearby public spaces and encourage outdoor educational opportunities;
 - Engage staff and students in creation, planning and implementation of improvement projects;
 - Leverage school interest for project fundraising and long-term success;
 - Involve students in each step of the process as real-life lessons in civic engagement and project management;
 - Provide continuing education incentives to school staff and other volunteers for professional participation;
- Whereas, project champions in five neighborhood schools have expressed interest in making Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail a more accessible and flexible outdoor space for learning all subjects;
- Whereas, staff and students will work with local landscape design professionals, community organizations and leaders, and entities such as the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and UAF Cooperative Extension Service;
- Whereas, the improvement project will encourage staff and students of neighborhood schools as leaders in the stewardship and advocacy of Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail as a neighborhood and community resource;
- Whereas, students and staff at neighborhood schools will activate families, neighbors, visitors and commuters near Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail with the need for improved safety in, extended ownership of, and responsibility for, the Nature Trail area;
- Therefore, be it resolved that the NSCC supports the proposed Westchester Lagoon Nature Trail Rehabilitation Project that includes trail improvements, interpretive signage, outdoor learning space and safety upgrades for broad community use and educational functions.