

Recreation

Goals

Continue recognizing the importance of recreation in Skagwegian’s quality of life and its influence in decisions people make to move to, and remain in, town. Maintain and expand outdoor and indoor recreation assets, facilities, and opportunities in Skagway.

Current Status

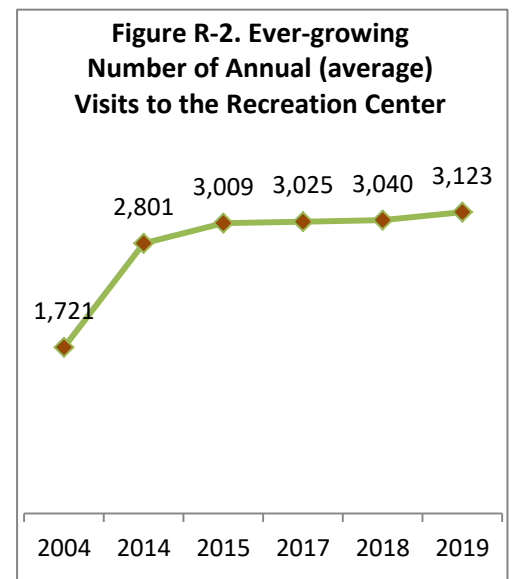
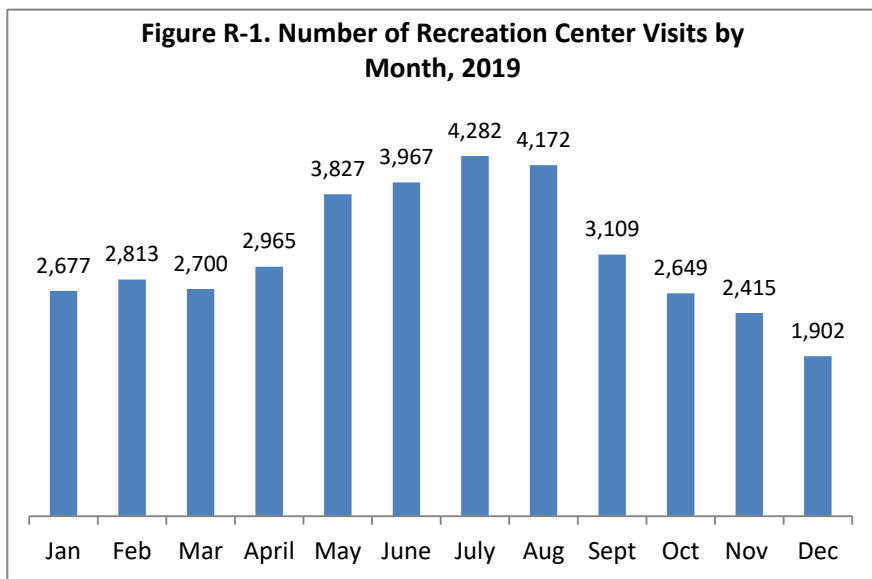
Skagway has a diversity of both indoor and outdoor recreation. When residents are asked about their quality of life and what they love about Skagway, access to recreation is at or near the top of almost everyone’s list. This is not a coincidence - both the municipality and residents work hard to support, maintain, and improve recreation facilities, assets, and opportunities.

Indoor recreation revolves around the Skagway Recreation Center (that also has an outdoor playground and skate park), and also includes the Skagway School gym, the pool tables, karaoke and trivia contests, bowling lanes (all club or bar related), socializing and playing music at the (seasonal) senior center, morning coffee klatches at local restaurants, and more.

Outdoor recreation centers around Skagway’s many trails, open spaces, and local park and field assets. Activities are wide ranging and vary from softball, soccer, and disc golf to walking, hiking, biking, and running, to back country and cross country skiing and snow shoeing, to ATV and snow-machining, to berry picking, fishing, picnicking, using swings and par courses, and much more.

The Municipality of Skagway (MOS) is a strong supporter of recreation. For example, it:

- Owns, staffs, and funds operation of the well-used Skagway Recreation Center. (In FY 20 there are 2-3 fulltime and 4-5 full or part time seasonal staff, with a budget of \$577,000 and approximately \$180,000 in membership and other revenue)



- Has Parks and Recreation staff and budget to maintain and expand trails and parks owned by the Municipality of Skagway as well as conduct landscaping, grounds and cemetery maintenance, and RV Park duties. (In FY 20 the budget is \$555,000 and includes 8 seasonal crew and \$25,000 targeted for trails maintenance; revenues include an estimated \$400,000 from RV Parks and \$1,600 from the rifle range.)
- Supported preparation of the 2004 Skagway Comprehensive Trails Plan
- To help ensure enjoyment of residents and visitors, prohibit commercial use of the city's trails and recreation property (with just a few permitted exceptions).
- Manages land within the borough for a diversity of recreational uses. This includes establishing a Recreation/Open Space and a Recreation Reserve future growth area designation in this and earlier Comprehensive Plans. This also includes developing management plans and codifying them in municipal code that completely or partly focus on recreation for Dyea ([SMC 16.10](#)), Dyea Flats ([SMC 16.08](#)), Dewey Lakes Recreation Area ([SMC 16.12](#)), Nahku Bay Conservation Area ([SMC 16.14](#)), and West Creek (not codified). Skagway also has two Area Meriting Special Attention (AMSA) Plans under the now defunct Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) that focus on recreation: the Pullen Creek and Pond AMSA and Yakutania Point AMSA. While the ACMP no longer exists, Skagway exercised municipal control and codified its coastal program for its own implementation ([SMC Title 17](#)).

MOS also owns and maintains parks in town, including:

- Skagway Centennial Park at 1st and Broadway, this park includes the city's centennial statue of a Tlingit packer leading a prospector up the trail in 1897.
- Pullen Creek Pond and Park, and the Pullen Creek Stream Walk. The Pullen Pond Park is used to picnic and fish while the new ADA accessible interpretative Stream Walk follows the creek (soon to extend to the City Museum). There is also a now unused hatchery on the creek.
- Footbridge to Yakutania Point and Smuggler's Cove at the south of the airport crosses the Skagway River to an area with waterfront trails, an exercise course, picnic spots and a Pet Cemetery.
- Mollie Walsh Park at the east end of 6th Avenue is a small play park named for a woman who befriended miners on the trail at Log Cabin.
- Gold Rush Cemetery and Reid Falls. This is a half mile past the railroad shops and the desperado Soapy Smith and town hero Frank Reid are buried there. The falls are a short walk up the hill.
- Seventh Pasture Park is located just across the Skagway River highway bridge and is reached by road or the Pat Moore memorial footbridge. This large park features two softball fields, a soccer field, a disc golf course, bike-cross area, picnic grounds, and the Dedman performance stage that opened in 2015.
- Skagway Overlook is a turnoff and platform at Mile 2 on Dyea Road that offers a wonderful view of the downtown area, waterfront, and peaks above Skagway. It was originally built by the army during World War Two.
- Nahku Bay Conservation Area (Mile 5, Dyea Road), is the home of the late Bud Matthews' cabin as well as the remains of the bark "Canada" (seen a very low tides). The area is highly valued for its historic, scenic, rustic, and recreational values.
- Dyea Flats within the Klondike National Historic Park. Dyea was a frenzied boomtown during the Klondike gold rush; all that's left now are a cemetery and the scattered remains of a wharf and

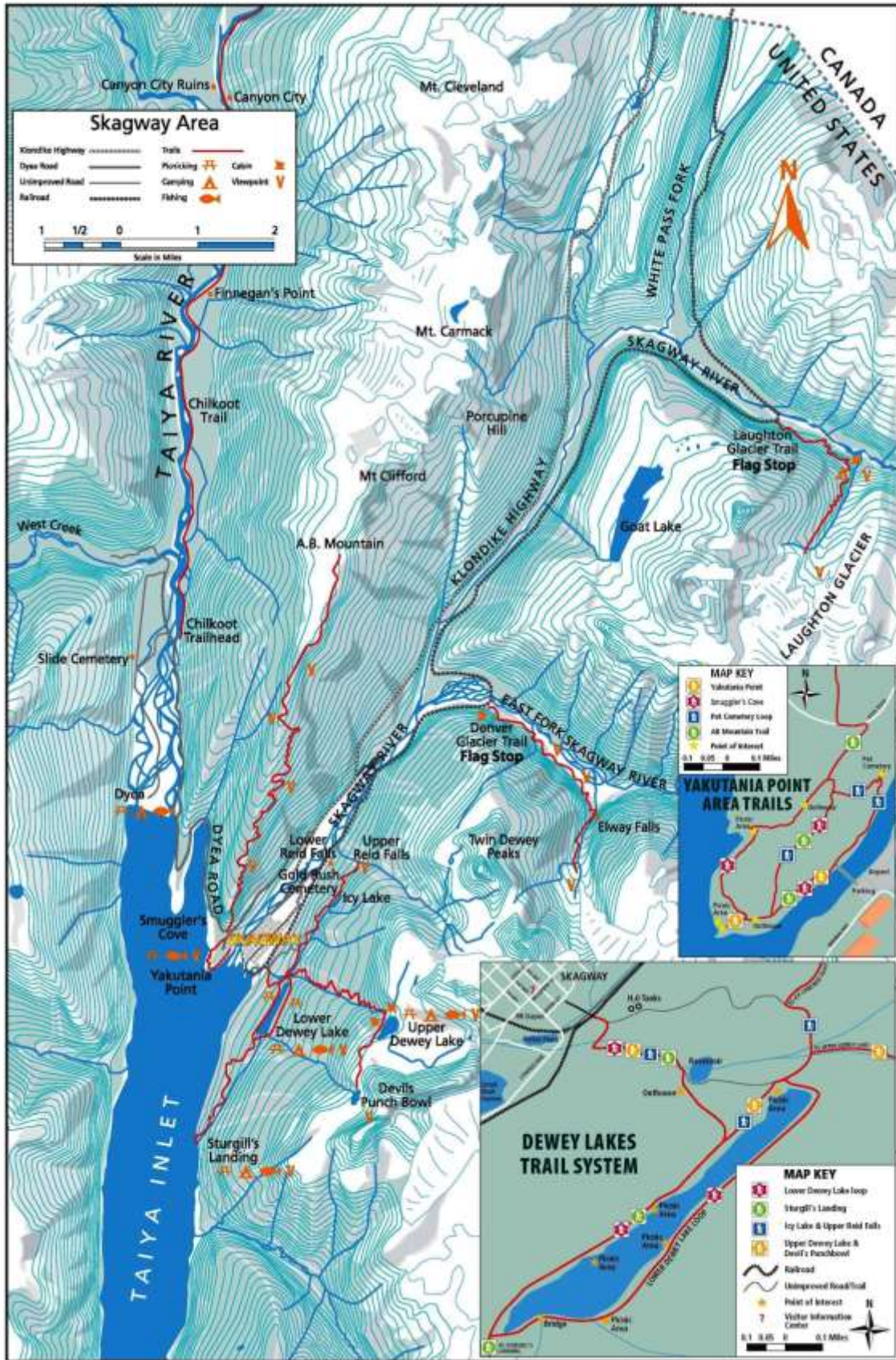
buildings in the old townsite. Favorite stops are the Chilkoot Trailhead, Dyea Flats, and Slide Cemetery. Continuing on the marked roadway leads to Dyea Flats, within the park but managed by the MOS. There is an information kiosk about the flats environment with photos of what the area looked like during the gold rush and a small campground in the trees with a self-registration kiosk with numbered sites. In addition to its historic values, the area is valued as a quiet getaway for residents during the summer.

Trails. A map of most of Skagway's trails, courtesy of the Skagway Visitor and Convention Bureau, can be seen at Figure R-3, and are as follows (*length and landowner in parenthesis*):

- Chilkoot Trail (33 miles, NPS)
- Gold Rush Cemetery and Lower Reid Falls (4 miles, MOS)
- Yakutania Point and Smuggler's Cove Trails (2 miles, MOS)
- Dewey Lakes Trail System In the last decade, a concerted effort has occurred by the MOS to improve the Upper Dewey Lakes trail system, including the trail between it and Icy Lake/Upper Reid. (MOS, includes: Lower Dewey Lake Loop-0.9 mile to lake and 3.6 miles around lake, Upper Dewey Lake -6.9 miles, Icy lake and Upper Reid Falls - 6.9 miles, and Sturgills Landing - 7.9 miles)
- Laughton Glacier and rental cabin (3-5 miles, USFS)
- Denver Glacier and rental caboose cabin (4-6 miles round trip, USFS)
- Devil's Punchbowl (9.4 miles from Upper Dewey Lake, MOS)
- A.B. Mountain (10 miles, MOS)
- Lost Lake (2.5 miles, MOS)
- West Creek Road and Trail (3 miles, MOS)
- Log Cabin Ski Area/Trails. This popular cross country/back country ski area is maintained as part of an international partnership between Skagway's Log Cabin Ski Society and the BC Ministry of Forests.

Other local recreational activities include a number of regular athletic, musical, and educational races and festivals that draw participants from all over Southeast Alaska, Whitehorse and the Yukon, and beyond. These events, funded through a mixture of private sources and municipal and other public grants, and include the Buckwheat International Ski Classic, Klondike Road Race, the Fall and Spring Festivals, Skagway Arts Council International Folk Festival, and the North Woods Writers Symposium.

Figure R-3. Skagway Trail Map



Map from Skagway Convention and Visitor Bureau's Trail Map Brochure

Challenges & Opportunities for the Future

Recreation Center Expansion

Use of and revenue from the Skagway Recreation Center has been climbing steadily since it opened in the early 2000s. While summer time use is highest due to Skagway's larger seasonal population, it is its availability and use in the long, dark, windy, winter months that is most important to year-round residents and families.



The overcrowded weight room can only hold a few people doing a workout circuit while others wait in line or out the door; or you finish one machine and may wait 10 minutes before you can begin free weights or the next machine.

If the SRC is to serve current users and the projected increase in year round and seasonal populations both safety/maintenance upgrades and more space is needed. Currently, the Skagway Recreation Center (SRC) is so popular that it cannot meet the demands of the community.

The MOS's SRC Advisory Board works to meet the varied needs within the existing building. The Assembly charged the Advisory Board with having public work sessions to determine community needs, and specifically to include options for bringing a pool to Skagway. An ad hoc pool committee was created to do this.

A SRC Expansion Plan has been crafted after several years of work sessions and meetings, for an expanded recreation center that meets the needs and wants for all age groups and user groups: children, adults, senior citizens, crew members, and seasonal residents.

Expansion plans must include childcare and children's programs, this is important for adults and families in Skagway.

- Childcare was in the gym in the evenings, but now is pushed into the netted rock climbing area as the gym is used most nights for fast-paced adult basketball, hockey, or pickle ball. Demand often exceeds capacity for children's programs too; for example, Summer Camps are filled to capacity and have waiting lists, and daily afterschool care offered for the school year from 3:15-5:00 pm is very busy. Skagway School and the SRC are discussing options for working together to meet the community's afterschool program needs while using both facilities to meet the needs of a larger group and elementary age youth needing afterschool care. The SRC Advisory Board should speak with the Skagway Child Care Council too about collaborating with Little Dippers and other childcare options/providers.

Expansion plans include a swimming pool.

- Many studies and designs have considered a pool over the years but been rejected due to costs. Between 2015-2017, two separate architect firms looked at SRC expansion space program and costs, in an effort to balance the needs and interests of the community and cost. The preferred design is space and cost efficient and includes: a) required safety/facility maintenance (HVAC, painting, electrical, restrooms); b) expanded administrative area to serve both a larger facility

and create a real office (rather than operating out of the entrance way and radio station); c) new and larger fitness rooms; d) a 4-lane and therapy/learn to swim pool with built in operational efficiency measures; and e) eliminated corridors and excessive office space to create a racquet ball court that can also serve as a meeting room and activity room for child and family programming.

- The current (2020) estimated cost is \$18.3 million if built in phases or \$17.4 million if built at once. **Proposed funding is a voter-approved 1% year round dedicated sales tax (excluding residential and commercial rent payments) that would be used to pay off bonds.**

Overuse of Trails Close to Town

Reports during summer of 2019 were that trails close to town, particularly the Dewey Lakes Trail System and Yakutania Point area, were quite crowded. This is not unexpected given the great weather that summer as well as the increasing numbers of visitors, cruise ship crew (many of whom enjoy a hike while in port), seasonal staff, and residents. MOS staff report passing 20-25 people hiking to Upper Dewey Lakes at a time that summer, a big increase that adds to wear and tear on the system and means less chance to escape the crowds.

To address this, a goal is to create new trails close to town to help spread people out. A challenge is added construction and maintenance costs, limited opportunities, and that there is essentially a single access point for the whole Dewey Lakes trails system.

Waterfront Green Space

An Assembly ad hoc Open Spaces in Skagway (OASIS) committee is working to enhance the quality of life of community residents and the experience of seasonal visitors by developing green areas - starting with the Welcome Garden and Shoreline Park - and to link them in a cohesive green belt system, which is accessible and inclusive to all. Another goal is a greater green belt system that runs through town. This Plan's Future Growth Maps on page X outlines a greenbelt system and where improvements are needed to accomplish this.

Mountain Biking

There is growing interest in mountain biking in town, not surprising given local terrain and increasing numbers of active adults and youth in town. Planned and hardened trails for this use are needed to prevent random erosion and wear and tear, and to meet this interest and demand.

Mountain bikers have pioneered a side trail off the AB Mountain. Will this become an official MOS trail, and are any improvements needed to prevent erosion and ensure safety? Is the MOS responsible for maintenance? In addition, there is long time interest in creating a mountain biking trail (maybe for ATVs too) to Dyea, either from AB Mountain (Telegraph Trail) or from Yakutania (Dyea-Klondike Wagon Road Trail). Is there a club or group to help MOS staff - or on their own - plan, survey logical routes, acquire landowner permission, construct, and maintain mountain biking trails is needed?

Partner with Skagway Traditional Council

The Skagway Traditional Council receives Tribal Transportation Program funding for trail/road/transportation projects from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs and receives other funding for recreational activities. The Municipality of Skagway and Skagway Traditional Council are finaling a Memorandum of Agreement to work together on eligible trail projects.

Trail Group

There are reports of a group of “Trail Lovers” getting together in 2019 to further trail planning and development in Skagway. The MOS or volunteers should take the lead on creating a Trails Improvement Group. It could be an appointed group that reports to the Assembly’s Parks and Recreation Committee, or a non-profit like [Trail Mix, Inc.](#) dedicated to developing and maintaining trails in cooperation with multiple landowners.

This group would take the lead on trail planning, help with fundraising and gathering volunteers for work parties, and support MOS Parks and Recreation staff and recreational staff at the NPS and USFS. Factors that forming a group like this are that: a) Skagway has trails that do and could cross land owned by multiple parties; b) there are a diversity of possible funders for recreation and trail improvements (Municipality, Skagway Traditional Council, US Forest Service, National Park Service, and businesses whose employees and crew enjoy and use trails); and c) there are passionate advocates for different types of recreational activities. A group like this could help update the 2004 Skagway Comprehensive Trails Plan.

West Creek

In 2014, the Municipality of Skagway received title to 3,040 acres in the western part of the borough in the West Creek area as part of its municipal entitlement. Access to the area is off the primitive, one-lane West Creek Road from the West Creek Bridge in Dyea, 10 miles from Skagway. The road was last brushed summer 2019 and before that in 2014. This access road and valley is a favorite among locals for easy access into the backcountry of the West Creek Valley. West Creek is remote enough that it attracts few tourists, so Skagwegians can escape the summer crowds from town and Dyea here and do a variety of recreational activities in a place that is remote, beautiful, peaceful, and quiet. Residents value the natural setting with little trace of human impact other than the road, trails, and where firewood is gathered. The area offers abundant resources and recreational opportunities.

A [West Creek Management Plan](#) was adopted into the Skagway Comprehensive Plan in 2014. It has several recommendations for future land management and code changes to assist with its implementation. For example, the area’s current zoning is Residential Conservation (RC). Because allowed and prohibited uses in the RC Zoning District do not align with the future management intent or actions described in the West Creek Master Plan, a new “Remote Recreation and Resources” Zoning District for the West Creek area developed for adoption (page 54 in West Creek plan).

There is no informational signage in the area other than the sign on the Jay Frey Recreation Bridge prohibiting motorized use. One plan recommendation is to add low key signage at West Creek and Jay Frye Bridges to let people know the rules and thus set expectations and increase safety. Signage should alert people to Pack Your Trash Out, identify level of fire danger, be a place to indicate when traplines are active to protect people and dogs, set expectations about how non-motorized and motorized users share the area, cover bear safety and tell area users that they are “Traveling at Own Risk,” and provide some area history. Trails can be identified but trail maps are *not* particularly desired in order to keep this area for local use.

Recreation and Trail Maintenance and Improvements

Many of the “Wish List” trails described in the 2004 Skagway Comprehensive Trails Plan (pages 12-13) have not been constructed, and new trail ideas and needs have developed since that time. MOS Parks and Recreation staff tends to favor improvements that will serve the highest number of people, where they can “get most bang for the buck” or that have lower maintenance costs. Many excellent trail ideas exist, but would only benefit relatively few of the fittest residents or have higher maintenance costs. The

MOS Parks and Recreation staff will conduct a Recreation Survey in late 2019 to help determine resident’s priorities for trail and recreation improvements.

Following is a list and the status of some of already programmed trail improvements or of desired trails.

Improvement	Location	Description (Status if relevant)	Lead
Pullen Creek Stream Walk- Municipal Loop	Near town	In 2019-2020, the Pullen Creek Stream Walk- Municipal Loop, from Congress Way to the City Museum at Seventh Avenue, will be completed. This hardened ADA-accessible path with overlooks and interpretive signage can be part of a Municipal Walking Loop for visitors who could walk one way on this beautiful path and the other way along the Broadway historic and shopping district. This loop will help relieve pedestrian congestion in the summer months in town.	MOS
Dyea Road-Yakutania Point Trail extension	Near town	MOS Parks and Recreation staff created a new branch trail off the Yakutania system summer of 2019 that connects with the Dyea Road. Some walkers, hikers, and cross-country runners already use it informally. It is close to town and goes through a forested, mossy, green habitat.	MOS
Lower Dewey Lake	Near town	MOS intends to install a floating dock at Lower Dewey Lake with kayak rentals.	MOS
Create a Gold Rush Cemetery to Denver Glacier Trail (also called Alaska Road Commission Trail)	Near town	This would get people off the railroad tracks, and be well used by both tourists and locals. The train tracks recently were moved to the old Wagon Road, so a portion of this trail would have to cross an area that is now cliffs. This means either blasting or a trail that goes up and over the cliffs; the former is favored as many people would not be able or would not cross up and over the cliffs.	MOS with WPYR, USFS
AB Mountain	Near town	The existing AB Mountain trail is rough in places, sometimes even requiring ropes; improvements are needed. In 2018, the MOS marked the route at the top where it is just open, which can be very confusing when fog or clouds roll in. There are usually a few search and rescues every year in this area and so far in 2019 there have been none, suggesting that this effort helped. Mountain bikers have created an informal trail off AB Mountain to Dyea Road. A new access to AB Mountain from the Moore Pedestrian Bridge is one idea to spread people out; however, the steep grade could limit the number of people that would use this. Could flagging it and adding signage suffice? Another idea is to extend the AB Mountain hiking trail to International Falls for advanced hikers.	MOS
Create a Devils Punch Bowl to Sturgills Trail, and/or a Devil’s Punch Bowl to Lower Dewey Lake Trail	Near Town	This would create several possible loops off the Dewey Lakes Trail System. Other desires are to add a shelter and outhouse at Sturgills Landing.	MOS
Extend the Upper Dewey Lake Trail to Denver Glacier Trail	USFS Trail System	In the short-term, this could be implemented with cairns but would require trail development in the future.	USFS, State
Create a Goat Lake Hiking Trail	USFS Trail System	This would require an agreement with AP&T for public access to the hydro pipeline along Pitchfork Falls.	AP&T, USFS

Extend Loughton Glacier Trail to Warm Pass	USFS Trail System	In the short-term, this could be implemented with cairns but would require trail development in the future.	USFS
Extend Denver Glacier trail to S. Glacier	USFS Trail System	In the short-term, this could be implemented with cairns but would require trail development in the future.	USFS
Dyea Flats campground area	Dyea Flats	Suggestions are for a donation box at campground to help cover maintenance fees, and to add covered areas, fire pits, and picnic tables south of campground.	MOS
New Lost Lake access	West Creek	Construct a “zig-zag” trail from Jay Frye Bridge off West Creek Road to Lost Lake. This implements a recommendation from the 2014 West Creek Management Plan. This new trail is flagged and in the design phase. Plan is for a new trail, rental cabin, and outhouse at Lost Lake.	MOS
Trail to West Creek Glacier	West Creek	Construct a trail along the north side of West Creek to the West Creek Glacier terminus, or, a trail along the north and south sides that connects at the West Creek headwaters/Back Glacier area to make a loop. These trails would enhance access to the backcountry.	MOS

Objectives

R-1 Maintain and improve the Skagway trail system and outdoor recreational opportunities.

R-2 Improve and connect pedestrian paths, parks, and green space along the waterfront and through town.

R-3 Enlarge the Skagway Recreation Center to meet current and expected future demands for its use.

R-4 Update Skagway zoning code to support and protect recreation, follow and enforce plans adopted by ordinance.

R-5 Promote the benefits of outdoor recreation and of Skagway as an outdoor recreation destination.

Recreation Objectives and Actions

Time Frame: ST Short-term (0-2 years), MT Mid-term (3-5 years), LT Long-term (5-10 years), OG Ongoing
 Funds Needed: L Low (\$0-99,999), M Mid (\$100,000-\$999,999), H High (\$1,000,000+), U Unknown, GF Grant Funded

	Objective/Action	Responsible Parties	Time Frame	Funds Needed
R 1	Maintain and improve the Skagway trail system and outdoor recreational opportunities.			
	R1 A Conduct a MOS Recreation Survey. Build off the results and update the 2004 Skagway Trails Plan.	MOS	ST	L
	R1 B Establish a Trails Improvement Group (TIG), either an appointed group that reports to the Assembly's Parks and Recreation Committee, or a non-profit to develop and maintain trails in cooperation with multiple landowners.	MOS, STC, NPS, USFS, businesses	ST, OG	L
	R1 C Develop and execute a strategy for trails funding, using expertise and resources of borough, partners, and grants	MOS, TIG, STC, NPS	ST	
	R1 D Promote the trails system as a means of population retention, population growth, and as a recruitment tool to attract businesses and families to Skagway.	MOS, CVB, Chamber, SDC	OG	L
R 2	Improve and connect pedestrian paths, parks, and green space along the waterfront and through town.			
	R2 A Design and install wider walking paths and connected green space through waterfront from Pullen Creek to Yakutania Point bridge, include trees and landscaping to better screen pedestrians from wind and dust.	OASIS, Sgy organic gardening society, STC, waterfront businesses, others	ST	
	R2 B Install Welcome Garden, better landscaping, and connected walking paths in grassy area between Pullen Pond and Centennial Park.		ST	
	R2 C Complete Pullen Creek Stream Walk and Municipal Loop. Market this part nature, part historic/shopping district Walking Loop to help relieve congestion and disperse visitors.		ST	
R 3	Enlarge the Skagway Recreation Center to meet current and expected future demands for its use.			
	R3 A Develop explanatory materials regarding SRC expansion, host community conversations and informational sessions, move vote on funding package forward	MOS, SRC Advisory Bd	ST	
	R3 B Construct Recreation Center expansion	MOS	ST-MT	H
	R3 C Develop a program to assist the business community to understand that a healthy lifestyle reduces health care costs and that a healthy workforce promotes economic growth and prosperity. Encourage businesses to offer employee memberships.	DHC, SRC, MOS, School, businesses	ST	L
R 4	Update Skagway zoning code to support and protect recreation, follow and enforce plans adopted by ordinance.			
	R4 A Create a public land and recreation (PLR) and/or Remote Recreation (RR) zoning district to provide more certainty and predictability about location of recreation and open space areas and rules therein.	MOS	ST	L
	R4 B Ensure familiarity with, and adhere to, the management intent and rules in the Dyea (<u>SMC 16.10</u>), Dyea Flats (<u>SMC 16.08</u>), Dewey Lakes Recreation Area (<u>SMC</u>	MOS	OG	L

	Objective/Action	Responsible Parties	Time Frame	Funds Needed
	<u>16.12</u>), Nahku Bay Conservation Area (<u>SMC 16.14</u>), and West Creek Management Plans as well as the Pullen Creek and Pond AMSA and Yakutania Point AMSA (<u>SMC Title 17</u>) . Codify implementation measures from the West Creek Management Plan.			
R 5	Promote the benefits of outdoor recreation and of Skagway as an outdoor recreation destination.			
	Promote the area’s outdoor recreational value to attract more independent visitors to Skagway	CVB, MOS, Chamber, local businesses, ski club	OG	L
	Develop a program to promote outdoor activity as a means of reducing the incidence of certain diseases and obesity	DMHC, School, Civic orgs., churches	OG	L
	Keep City trail maps up to date	CVB, MOS	MT	L