

Figure 6 - Proposed trail map





# Sitka Trail Works, Inc

801 Halibut Point Road, Sitka AK 99835

Phone: 747- 7244 email: [trail@sitkatrailworks.org](mailto:trail@sitkatrailworks.org)

3/28/19

Re: US Forest Service Application for FLAP Funds for Gavan Hill Trail, Sitka, Alaska

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sitka Trail Works Board of Directors passed a motion unanimously at their 3/28/19 meeting to support the US Forest Service's application to FLAP for the survey/design and construction for the Gavan Trail. Sitka Trail Works is a non-profit MOU partner with the Forest Service in the Sitka Trail Plan. Our organization has as our mission to develop, maintain and promote Sitka trails.

The Gavan Hill Trail is one of Sitka, Alaska's most highly used trails since it connects to two other major trails, one of which is Sitka's non-motorized transportation route and the Harbor Mountain Recreation area. The trail passes through old growth forest before emerging in the alpine. Wonderful vistas of Sitka Sound, the volcano Mt. Edgecumbe, and numerous mountains and islands can be seen from the alpine portion of the trail.

The new trail design will reduce maintenance costs, drastically improve safety, be much more popular with hikers and improve winter access to the alpine. The new trail will be constructed on a more gradual 2.1-mile-long route with gravel and a minimum of steps. The proposed route would reduce the trail steepness from average of 29% to a more sustainable 16% and have fewer switchbacks. Current wooden structures and stairs will be eliminated with trail surfacing replaced with aggregate and stone pitching. Replacing slippery or rotten boardwalk and stairs with aggregate will improve safety considerably and will be low-maintenance and durable, reducing long-term costs significantly.

Thank you for considering this cost-effective project and for funding this worthy, important project.

Sincerely,

Lynne Brandon, Executive Director  
Sitka Trail Works



Christine Marie Horan, Race Director  
Alpine Adventure Run  
christinemariehoran@gmail.com  
PO Box 2003  
Sitka, Alaska 99835

April 5, 2019

Mike Mullin  
Natural Resource Specialist  
Forest Service  
Tongass National Forest, Sitka Ranger District  
2108 Halibut Point Road  
Sitka, AK 99835

Sent Via Email: Michael.Mullin@usda.gov

Subject: Letter of Support for FLAP Funding - Final Phase of the Harbor Mountain/Gavan Hill Trail.

Dear Mr. Mullin,

This letter supports your request for funding from the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) that would cover survey/design/contract preparation and construction to complete the final phase of reconstruction on the Harbor Mountain/Gavan Hill Trail.

The Alpine Adventure Run will be holding its 26th consecutive annual run this year on a 7 mile course, which starts in town, traverses the 6.25 mile Gavan/Harbor trail, and ends a half mile from the mountaintop trailhead at a scenic picnic spot. Starting as an Eagle Scout project in 1994 with 15 runners, this race has grown to permit 85 runners a year, but is severely constrained, due in part to the condition of the Gavan Hill portion of the trail under consideration for reconstruction. This is the only permitted use of this trail, and has gained in popularity each year. A minimum of 40 standby runners are pre-paid within days of opening of registration, eager to get a coveted spot. At this point we stop taking standby registration, turning away many requests.

This increased use of the trail has caused minimal wear and tear to the rebuilt Harbor Mountain portion as evidenced by the annual photo surveys we provide to the Forest Service. The lower portions of the trail (Gavan Hill), rugged as they are, present a joyful challenge to the adventure runners. Although the Forest Service does the best they can to maintain this older trail, major reconstruction would increase the user group, especially for hikers of moderate ability. The running community, however, has cleared trees and rebuilt steps on occasion to keep the trail safe and passable.

Approximately 20% of the runners are from out of town, and as independent travelers are spending hundreds of dollars a day to stay in Sitka, plus transportation to get to Sitka. Many

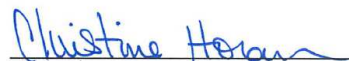
standby runners from out of town dropped out, because the ability to acquire discount airfares evaporate as time goes on. Most of the top runners in the Alaska mountain running community have participated in this run, challenging others to do the same. It is on the statewide mountain race calendar. We have had runners from across the country come to make this their vacation destination. Frank Shorter, the 1972 Olympic Marathon gold medalist, ran one year remarking on the trail's beauty, but also the fact that the winner waited till the last runner came in before having the group photo taken. Others have run as cruise ship passengers on a stop at Sitka.

The final reconstruction segment of this trail will connect the beautifully finished, durable Harbor Mountain alpine trail to the Sitka Cross Trail, which in turn connects to other trails and feeder neighborhood access points along the base of the mountain. This forms a continuous 15 mile loop, including Harbor Mountain Road. In turn the Sitka Cross Trail connects to the Forest Service's Indian River Trail to the east, and soon to connect to the Forest Muskeg (Ben Grussendorf Trail)/Mosquito Cove Trail to the west, a system of nearly 25 miles. These trails connect to nearly every neighborhood in town, extending to the Alaska Ferry System terminal 7 miles from downtown. This completes a very important non-motorized transportation corridor in this small community, which only has 14 continuous miles of public highway along its narrow coastal shelf.

The Gavan Hill trail reconstruction is the final phase of this trail system and recreational infrastructure, which the Forest Service has already spent millions of dollars on. The community, through the efforts of Sitka Trail Works, the City and Borough of Sitka, and its other partners has spent millions of dollars on the Sitka Cross Trail, as well as other lower connecting trails. The Gavan Hill view shed forms a backdrop of our community, which has been a landmark since before the Russian era. Completion of this last piece of the system would be a wise way to leverage limited Federal dollars. This would benefit short term hikers who seek to get a view of town, local residents who extend their healthy recreational opportunities, and the thousands of dollars that can be generated by the Alpine Adventure Run's ongoing popularity.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like more information on an area I didn't address. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Christine Horan