

# Trails & Walkways

NRCS offers technical and financial assistance to help farmers, ranchers, forest managers, landowners, Tribes & other organizations install trails and walkways.

## USDA's NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

**Trails and Walkways are constructed paths with a vegetated, earthen, gravel, paved or other hard surface. They are used to facilitate the movement of people, domestic animals, and off-road vehicles.**

Trails can provide a conservation benefit in the following ways:

- » Protect ecologically sensitive, erosive, or potentially erosive sites
- » Provide pedestrian or off-road vehicle access for agricultural, forestry, construction, or maintenance operations
- » Provide or improve animal access to forage, water, working/handling facilities, or shelter
- » Provide trails or walkways for recreational activities or access to recreation site

NRCS offers technical and financial assistance to plan, design and construct trails and walkways on privately-managed lands.



Trails and Walkways project in Hooper Bay, Alaska.



**ALASKA**  
Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

# FAQ

## Am I Eligible for Financial Assistance?

**NRCS provides financial assistance for Trails and Walkways through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).** EQIP uses three tiers of eligibility - producer/participant eligibility, land eligibility, and resource concern eligibility. The best way to determine your eligibility is to speak with an NRCS Conservation Planner about your specific situation, though below are some general eligibility guidelines:

### **Producer Eligibility:**

- » Must have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS (entities require a Taxpayer Identification Number).
- » Must show control of the land (lease, deed or other agreement) for the length of the NRCS contract
- » Must have an adjusted gross income of less than \$900,000; however this requirement does not apply to Federally-recognized Tribes and Alaska Native regional or village corporations.
- » If the producer is an entity, must have signature authority to make management decisions on the land.

### **Land Eligibility:**

- » Land must have an agricultural production use such as cropland, rangeland, grassland, pasture or non-industrial private forest land. Lands used for subsistence are also considered agricultural.
- » Land must be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and wetland conservation provisions

### **Resource Concern Eligibility:**

- » There must be a valid natural resource problem on the land to receive NRCS financial assistance for the project. An NRCS conservation planner will help you determine specific natural resource concerns on your property.

## How much will NRCS pay for the trail?

The amount NRCS will pay is based on a state-specific payment schedule which is updated annually. View payment schedules online: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-state/alaska/payment-schedule>

Trails and Walkways payments are calculated per square foot of trail. The applicant must pay up-front to construct the trail. NRCS will reimburse the applicant after the project has been completed and NRCS verifies that the project meets the design criteria. Advance payments of 50 percent may be available for qualifying applicants.

## Will NRCS design the trail?

NRCS offers in-house engineering assistance and technical support to design trail projects; however participants may also wish to acquire their own designs. Designs must be approved by NRCS and meet NRCS standards and specifications to receive financial assistance.

## Will NRCS help operate and maintain the trail once it is finished?

The applicant is responsible for ensuring the trail remains operational for the lifespan of the project (10 years) and must perform necessary maintenance as needed.

## Will NRCS construct the trail?

NRCS does not provide construction services to build the trail. The applicant is responsible for constructing the trail to meet NRCS design criteria. The applicant may use their own equipment and labor to construct the trail or they may hire a third party contractor to build the trail. NRCS can provide technical advisory services to the cooperator such as construction inspection and construction layout surveys.

## Success Story: Trail Preserves Access to Subsistence Areas on Kodiak Island

On Kodiak Island in the remote community of Larsen Bay, local residents have traversed a path from the head of Larsen Bay to the Karluk River for generations. The path is a gateway for them to access historical and cultural sites for hunting, fishing, gathering and other subsistence uses. Over the years, continued use of the path caused heavy soil erosion and severe degradation of the soil, water and vegetation. The wet, rainy climate on Kodiak Island combined with repeated all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and utility task vehicle (UTV) use rendered some spots unpassable.

Koniag, the Alaska Native Regional Corporation for the area and the landowner, reached out to NRCS for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The result was a 1.6 mile trail that restores human access to subsistence areas and protects the soil from erosion.

NRCS surveyed the land and assessed the soil stability along the path. Areas deemed unstable required a helical pile boardwalk, a structure supported by thick posts drilled deep into the ground to a prescribed level of torque. The posts are evenly spaced every 8 feet and the precise post locations are mapped using GPS satellite technology. Once the helical posts are installed, treated lumber is then affixed to the posts along with side rails for human safety.

Due to changing terrain and soil conditions, another trail design called a mud sill boardwalk was used on the stretches of trail with stable soils. This design places wood planks directly on the ground after the area is prepped, similar to the way a roadbed is prepped before paving. The mud sill boardwalk doesn't require any drilling of material into the ground and is a lower cost alternative to helical pile boardwalk. When possible, trails are rerouted to reduce costs and damage to resources.

Koniag owns their own construction equipment and employs and trains their own in-house labor crew. This technical capacity allows Koniag to implement their NRCS contracts efficiently and effectively.



**The boardwalk is wide enough for a UTV.**



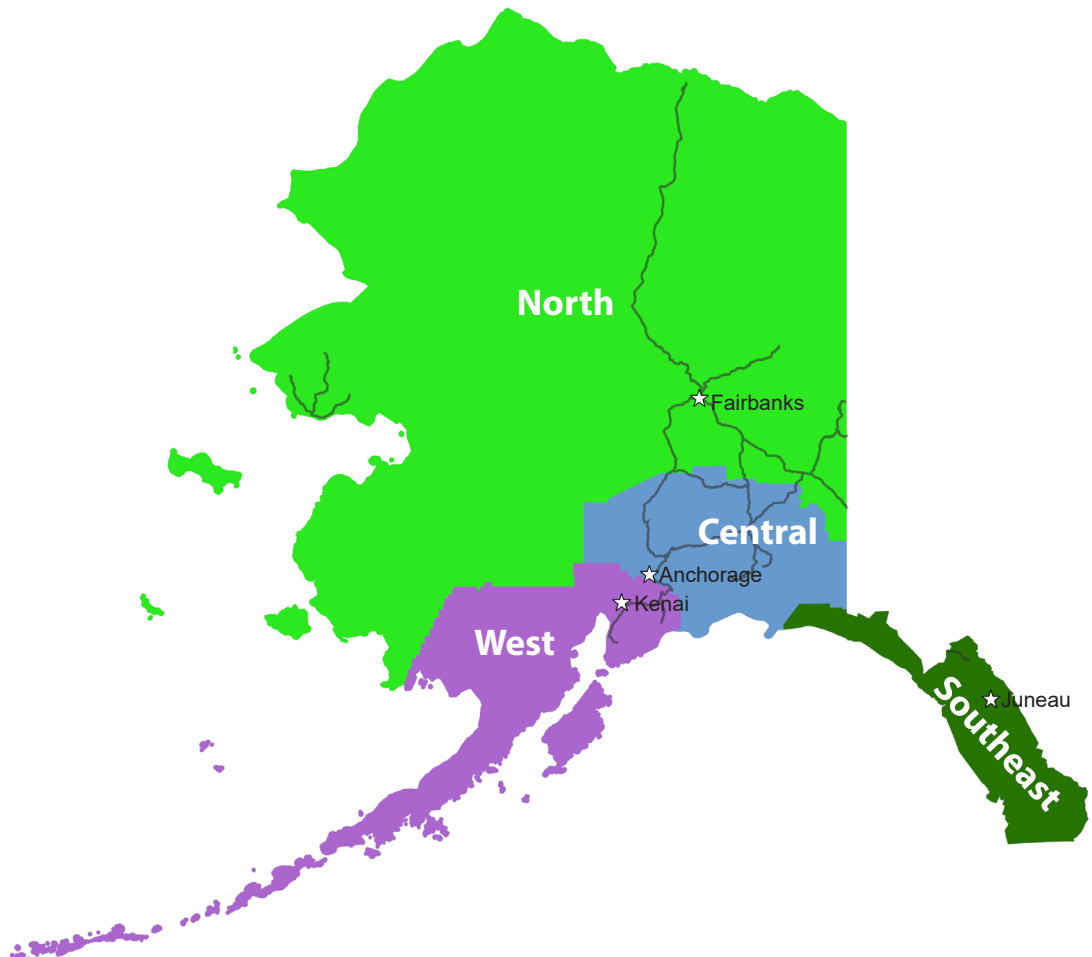
**The helical pile boardwalk has side safety railing and several turnouts for ATVs or UTVs.**



**Constructing a mud sill boardwalk.**



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