

Trio of Trails in Sitka

Trail work funded by the Great American Outdoors Act Legacy Restoration Fund



Top: Before and after view of the Shelikof Trail hardening project.

Bottom: Before and after of the Harbor Mountain Trail project.



The Tongass National Forest is the nation's largest national forest, spanning nearly 17 million acres and comprising the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world. Home to world-class recreation experiences, the Tongass has a lot to offer not only to locals but to tourists from across the globe. From hiking and biking to hunting and wildlife watching activities, the Tongass evokes passion among its many users.

Sitka, a city of about 8,500 people, has a very well-developed trail system. Much of the trail system is managed by multiple agencies, with the U.S. Forest Service managing approximately 135 miles of road- and boat-accessible trail within the Sitka Ranger District.

For many years, several trails on the Sitka Ranger District have needed maintenance and improvements. Recognizing the importance of ensuring access to these trails, district recreation staff seized the opportunity of the Great American Outdoors Act funding to make some specific projects happen.

Funding allowed for significant improvements to Shelikof Trail, Lower Cinder Cone Trail and connectors, and Harbor Mountain Trail.

Shelikof Trail underwent trail hardening allowing for improved access to a remote cabin that is used almost daily from May through October by backcountry travelers. The Lower Cinder Cone Trail, an off-highway vehicle trail used for recreation and hunter access, and its connectors received improvements including hardened stream crossings, new drainage dips and tread repair. Used primarily for hiking, running, bird watching, and backpacking, Harbor Mountain Trail's failing boardwalk was replaced by durable gravel and rock steps.

Successful completion of work on these trails was made possible through collaboration with the Student Conservation Association, Outer Coast College volunteers, Forest Service trail crews and local contractors. The upgrades improve visitor access and experiences and create long-lasting, sustainable improvements.