

VALLEY MOUNTAIN BIKERS AND HIKERS



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University of Alaska System
Board of Regents
2025 Yukon Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99775

Dear University of Alaska Board of Regents Members,

We are writing to oppose the test pits being dug and the prospective gravel pit at the UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm & Extension Center (MEFEC) in Palmer.

As a local community advocacy group, we are extremely disappointed that there was no public process regarding the associated decisions made on the state-owned land. The community in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley reaches far beyond the UAF Farm, and avoiding input from those who will be directly affected is an act of neglect that we have always believed to be beneath the University of Alaska. As supporters of the University, we certainly do not wish ill upon our fantastic, higher education institutions. However, the decisions made to dig test pits and prospectively develop a gravel pit for short-term gain will leave scars—physically in the land as well as in the trust from the community—and have a significantly longer-lasting impact.

The MEFEC sits upon and is adjacent to land that holds a great deal of local history. The destruction of this farmland will therefore also be destruction to our heritage. Additionally, this land contributes to the largest, uninterrupted public space in the core of the Mat-Su Valley, shared harmoniously with Borough land (accessed by the Crevasse Moraine Trail System) and State land (accessed through Kepler Park and the Matanuska Lake State Recreation Area). The trails, including those along the farms of the MEFEC, provide unfettered access to over 33 miles of year-round trails for walkers, runners, mountain bikers, equestrians, skiers, snowshoers and wildlife. There is already damage done on some of these trails as the result of digging the test pits. Our community and organization has put tens of thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of volunteer labor to build and maintain these trails, and the University managed to damage that value in just one week.

In short, please know that we, representing a vast community of active users of the greenbelt and supporters of higher education, are against the digging of test pits, the development of a gravel pit, and we are incredibly disappointed in the University for not consulting those of us who will be negatively affected by these long-lasting and harmful decisions.

Sincerely,

Nelson Crone, Mike Danz , Rene Dervaes, Josh Hejl, Erin Korn, Steven Merrit,
Bill Mohrwinkel, Pat Owens, Anne Thomas, Matt Swalling

Board of Directors, Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers