



New Commissioner for DNR



Commissioner Andrew T. Mack

Last month, Governor Bill Walker announced the appointment of Andrew T. Mack to fill the vacancy left by Commissioner Mike Myers. Acting DNR Commissioner Marty Rutherford had also recently informed the Governor of her plans to retire.

Commissioner Mack most recently was Managing Director of Pt Capital, the only private equity fund based in Alaska. He was born and raised in Soldotna, and has more than a decade of experience in Arctic policy and development. As advisor to multiple Alaska Native Corporations engaged in oil and gas activities on the North Slope, he helped guide regulatory drafting and implementation for drilling efforts in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.

Commissioner Mack worked as both a civil and criminal defense attorney for five years and as a legislative assistant for more than 10 years. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Concordia College in Minnesota and a juris doctor from Loyola Law School in California. He is a former member of the Resource Development Council of Alaska Board of Directors.

Governor Walker's announcement stated, "I am pleased Andy has accepted this position, given his vast experience in oil and gas issues. As we look for more oil and gas exploration and development opportunities, Andy has the vision and passion Alaska needs to aggressively chart our own path. I am grateful to Marty, who has led the department seamlessly these past four months. Alaskans owe Marty a debt of gratitude for her nearly three decades of government service."

Alaska State Parks Participates in the Bristol Bay Fly Fishing & Guide Academy



Instructor Joe McCullough discusses boating safety with youth participating in the Bristol Bay Fly Fishing & Guide Academy.

DPOR Director Ben Ellis, Park Ranger Ali Eskelin, and Office of Boating Safety instructor Joe McCullough participated in last month's Bristol Bay Fly Fishing & Guide Academy, a place-based river education source that fosters sustainable outdoor employment opportunities for Bristol Bay young people, targeting youth between ages 14 and 26.

Begun in 2008, "the academy is one week long and rotates each year to either the Iliamna Lake area, the Naknek/Katmai area, or the Dillingham area," said Tim Troll, executive director of the Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust and an academy organizer.

"Certainly, a major goal is to create opportunities for local residents in an industry that has largely been inaccessible because residents lack the basic skills of fly fishing. However, I view the Academy as a program that uses fly fishing as the medium for conveying the message and values of conservation to these young people."

You can learn more about the program at

<https://bristolbayriveracademy.org/2016/06/23/client-day-2016/>



Lead instructor Nanci Morris Lyon (left) with "client" Ben Ellis, director of Alaska State Parks, and his "guide," Travis

Photo by Rich Johnson

Interpretation and Education Program Completes Two Partnership Projects



Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz and Chugiak Sen. Bill Stoltze

Eklutna River Bridge

Interpretive panels were placed at the Thunder Bird Falls Trailhead with the Eklutna River Bridge project led by the Municipality of Anchorage. Three interpretive panel concepts were developed by committee, then edited and designed by Alaska State Parks' Graphic Designer Meg Anderson and Interpretive Manager Emily Angel. The topics include the historic original bridge, Dena'ina place names for the surrounding area, and the Eklutna River through time, told from a Dena'ina perspective.

In mid-June, a ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the completion of the new bridge across Eklutna River. Municipality of Anchorage officials, project participants, interested members of the community, and a few locals and visitors who stopped by Thunder Bird Falls Trailhead on that beautiful sunny day gathered for the ceremony followed by hamburgers and hot dogs.

The old bridge was an 81-year-old structure that, in 1935, first connected the Mat-Su Valley to Anchorage for drivers. Until then, people traveling between Anchorage and Palmer relied solely on the railroad. The original bridge was designed by A. F. "Gil" Ghiglione as a single-lane, 255-foot-long steel spandrel-arch bridge. In 1952, the bridge was widened to two lanes. The bridge was closed in 2012 due to safety concerns.

Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz and Chugiak Sen. Bill Stoltze were on hand to cut the ribbon and formally open the new bridge to public use.

According to a news article on R&M Consultants, Inc.'s website, Mayor Berkowitz thanked contributors saying, "I want to thank the folks from DOT&PF, the people who worked on this from the Municipality, the contractor and Eklutna for making this project happen and making it happen in relatively short order. It's pretty indicative of what we can do when we are all pulling the same direction and focused on achieving something."



Duplicates of the interpretive panels were put on display on the bridge and got their fair share of attention.

Cuddy Family Midtown Park

Alaska State Parks' Interpretive Manager Emily Angel and Graphic Designer Meg Anderson worked with the Anchorage Waterways Council, Department of Environmental Conservation, and Municipality of Anchorage to produce an interpretive panel intended to encourage restoration of the health of the pond in Cuddy Family Midtown Park in Anchorage and its surroundings. Cuddy Park is one of the most popular spots in Anchorage for feeding waterfowl, as people think it is allowed there. Many go to the park specifically to feed ducks and geese. This has resulted in water quality impacts, larger gatherings of waterfowl than the area could support, and potential health problems for the birds due to nutritional imbalances.

Anchorage Waterways Council Executive Director Cherie Northon was quoted in an article by Heather Hintze from KTVA as saying, "This is part of Fish Creek, a lot of people don't realize that. It's an open area of Fish Creek that runs back through the city into Spenard through people's yards with a lot of fecal coliform bacteria."

"The geese eat grass, the ducks eat pond weeds. That's all they need, adding foods like bagels and popcorn doesn't work for them."

The interactive interpretive panel with a spinning wheel, described by Ms. Northon as colorful and easy to read, is intended to deter people from feeding the waterfowl in a friendly manner. The panel was installed in four locations in Cuddy Family Midtown Park in late June. In addition to the interpretive panels, a similar message was designed for display on the back of public buses and it was turned into a coloring activity for kids and adults.



The new interpretive panel on display at Cuddy Family Midtown Park in Anchorage

Georg Wilhelm Steller

By JANET R. KLEIN, Volunteer Heritage Specialist for Kachemak Bay State Park

Two hundred seventy-five years ago a young scientist with an intimidating intellect, ingratiating personality, and passion for knowledge sailed across the North Pacific Ocean, eastward from Siberia to a land now known as Alaska. Georg W. Steller, a 32-year-old German, also served as naturalist, physician, and mineralogist on board the *St. Peter* under the command of Vitus Bering.

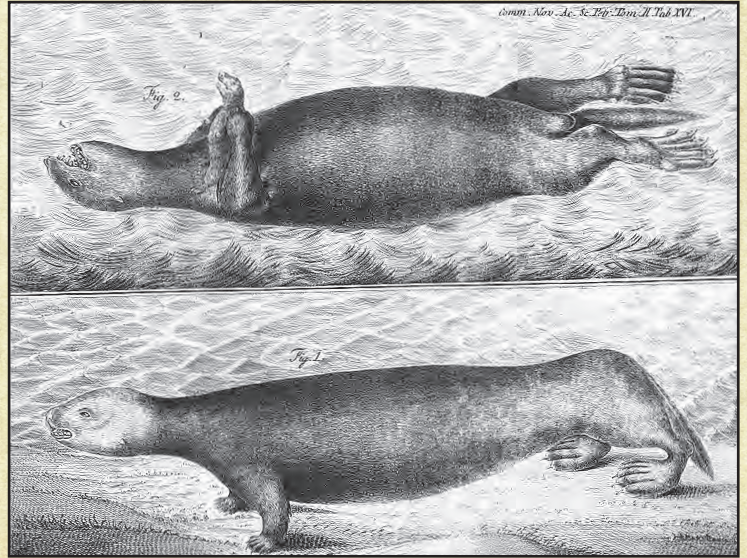
Bering made only a few landfalls along the Alaska coast, yet Steller collected and described dozens of plants and animals on the voyage. The first landfall was on Kayak Island in Prince William Sound, and Steller is credited as the first European to set foot in Alaska. While there, he collected a crested blue and black bird, today the well-known Steller's Jay. Identifying it convinced him that they were in a new land, one separate from Russia. He also described a new berry, the salmonberry. At a Native camp, from which the residents had just fled, he tasted smoked salmon and observed how the people (Chugach Alutit) used plants such as seaweed, spruce bark, and grass.

En route back to Russia, the ship wrecked on a remote island, now Bering Island. Steller spent the winter and spring studying the wildlife, especially the marine mammals as they returned to their breeding grounds. In his masterpiece, *De bestiis marinis*, published posthumously, Steller described the life histories of the sea lion, sea otter, northern fur seal, and the now extinct Steller sea cow.

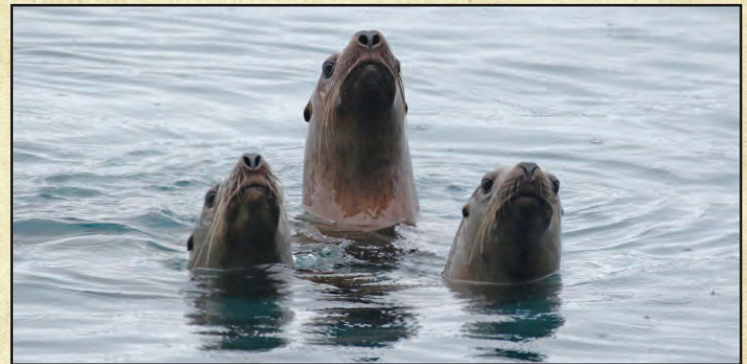
This brilliant and dedicated scientist died unexpectedly in Siberia at the age of 37. Numerous animal and plant species were named in his honor by other academics decades after his death.

The accompanying photographs by Carol Griswold, Seward State Parks Citizens Advisory Board member, show some species Steller described. Visitors can watch for them at the Seward area State Marine Parks, Caines Head State Recreation Area and Lowell Point State Recreation Site near Seward and Kachemak Bay State Park and Wilderness Park near Homer.

As for Kayak Island? The approximate landing site where the Bering Expedition landed on July 20, 1741, is now Kayak Island State Marine Park.



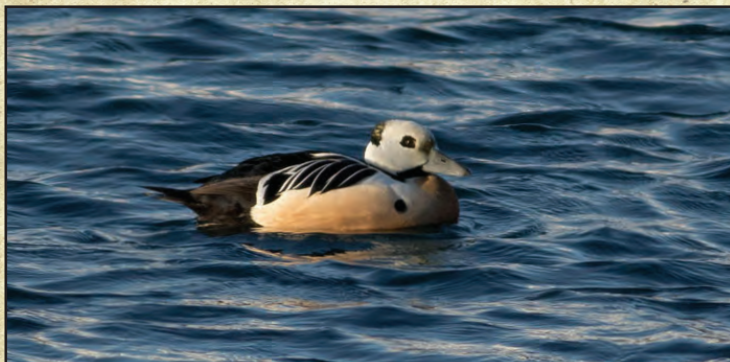
Sea Otter Illustration by Georg Wilhelm Steller



Steller Sea Lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*)



Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)



Steller's Eider (*Polysticta stelleri*)

Photos courtesy of CAROL GRISWOLD



Salmonberry fruit and flower (*Rubus spectabilis*)

Trails Day Roundup

Chugach State Park

Chugach State Park celebrated National Trails Day by hosting a volunteer event in partnership with Alaska Trails and Alaska Geographic. Over 25 people from all over the Anchorage area came out to help work on a much-needed reroute of the Middle Fork of Campbell Creek trail. More than 200 feet of new trail went in! National Trails Day was a huge success in Chugach State Park.



Natural Resource Tech Joe Hall instructs Trails Day volunteers.

Kachemak Bay State Park

Many thanks to the Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park and our hard-working volunteers for making Trails Day a success!

On National Trails Day in early June, 36 volunteers—eight trained volunteer leaders and 28 community volunteers—completed over 200 man-hours of work, clearing brush, digging trail treads, and picking up trash along some of Kachemak Bay's most beloved recreational areas. A group of 10 participants also went on a family hike to Grewingk Glacier Lake, and a small group from Homer Wilderness Leaders, known as HoWL, helped with ongoing work on the Saddle Trail. Some of the work crews saw black bears, most saw songbirds, and all saw mosquitoes.

The next day, Homer Cycling Club also hosted a Homer-side Trails Day event, where eight volunteers put in over 48 hours of work on the Diamond Creek Demo Trail.

Water taxi transportation was donated by Mako's Water Taxi, Homer Ocean Charters, Bay Excursions, True North Adventures, Ashore Water Taxi, and Red Mountain Marine, making it possible for Trails Day participants to get across the bay for only \$20.

After the event, Kachemak Bay State Park Volunteer Coordinator Hannah Bradley said, "It is always encouraging to see the continued community support and participation in Kachemak Bay State Park and our area's well-loved trails."



Grace Ridge crew, Kachemak Bay State Park

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National Trails Day, Chugach State Park

Continued from page 4

Kachemak Bay Trail Work Summary

- **South Grace Ridge:** Five downed and hazardous trees were cleared, 0.25 miles of tread work was conducted, one mile of heavily overgrown trail was brushed.
- **Coalition Trail:** Cleared brush from trail corridor and cut back 12 downed or impeding trees and logs between coalition campground and Halibut Cove Lagoon.
- **Sadie Knob:** Cleared brush and more than 12 downed or impeding trees between Otter Cove Trailhead and Sadie Knob.
- **Glacier Spit Beach Cleanup:** Gathered trash and marine debris from beach and upland between Rusty's Lagoon and the end of Glacier Spit.
- **Saddle Trail:** HoWL removed some encroaching brush along the Saddle Trail and helped remove stumps on the new Saddle Trail reroute.
- **Kayak Beach:** A six-person team built a new tent platform and made some campground improvements.
- **Diamond Creek:** Brush was cleared and significant improvements made to the Diamond Creek Demo Trail.

Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing, preserving, and protecting the resources of Kachemak Bay State Park. The Friends are involved in many programs and activities that promote the park and its resources, including the Kachemak Bay Water Trail and the new Bear Canister Loan Program through which individuals headed outdoors can borrow bear-proof food storage containers to encourage safe, clean camping. Bear canisters are available at the Homer Fish and Game office, Islands and Ocean Center, and Mako's Water Taxi.

For those who missed trails day and for those who want more, further volunteer opportunities for trail work are available! Call Volunteer Coordinator Hannah at (907) 226-4689 or email kbayvolunteer@gmail.com for more information.



Diamond Creek Demo Trail crew, getting ready for trail work, at work, and riding after finishing the trail work scheduled for the day



Savanna Bradley, Jane Dunn, and daughter Skyra hike to Grewingk glacier lake.



The tent platform crew included Amy Holman, Kris Holderied, Paul Anderson, Chris Kelly, Robert Archibald, and Dave Brann.

Trails Day Roundup Continued on page 6



Trails Day Hikers at the top of Donnelly Dome



Lapland rosebay
(*Rhododendron lapponicum*)

Delta Junction

By ELLEN CLARK, Delta Junction Trails Association

National Trails Day turned out to be a great day for a hike in Delta Junction! The weather was about as good as you can hope for—mixed sunny and cloudy, not too hot (and not cold). It was windy on top of the Dome, but it almost always is. As we were climbing, we could see scattered showers hitting various parts of the valley, but it didn't rain on us.

We had 29 adults and 10 children sign in, and we probably missed a few others—for a total of approximately 45-50 participants. Eleven were from the Fairbanks area. Several of the kids were in the four to 10 age range, and they made it all the way to the top and back!

Some folks saw caribou and, of course, moose. Lots of wildflowers were blooming, and it varied as we changed elevation. Some that we identified were tall Jacob's ladder, mountain avens, narcissus-flowered anemone, a rockcross variety, Lapland rosebay, coltsfoot, woolly lousewort, and Alaska poppy.

If you happened to be looking in the right direction at the right time, you could see the Army practicing with rockets on their firing range a couple of miles away. There was no need to worry, though—we were well outside the danger zone! The military opens their training lands to public use when it is safe to do so, and we coordinated with them over the last couple of months to ensure the area with Donnelly Dome would be available.

Teaching Boating Safety at the Kenai Area Festival

In mid-June, 10 Kenai Area volunteers manned a booth at the Kenai River Festival. The volunteers focused on boating safety and provided an opportunity for kids to put their hands in ice water and then put a life jacket on. The goal was to simulate the effects of cold water and encourage kids to wear their life jackets. Over 250 kids visited the Parks booth and it was a huge success. The volunteers who participated are campground hosts on the Kenai River units, and included Anthony and Joy Pancko, Richard and Evelyn Hamlin, George and Carolyn Daum, Nancy and Steve Marble, and Bill and Charlene Benjamin.



A child tries to put on a life vest while experiencing the effects of cold water.

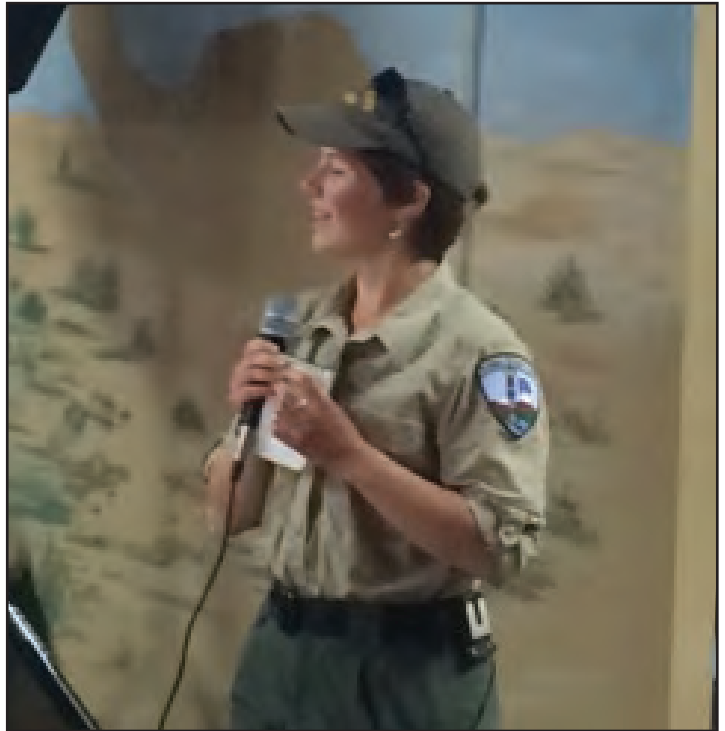


(L-R) Kenai area park hosts Evelyn Hamlin and Joy Pancko

Northern News



The Alaska Fire Service removed over 60 hazardous trees from Granite Tors Campground in Chena River State Recreation Area. According to Park Specialist Brian Charlton, "They saved us several years worth of work."



Park Specialist Jackie Cheek addresses the Harding Lake Property Owners Association during their annual meeting. Jackie was presented with an honorary membership to the association for her active participation.



As part of Alaska State Parks commitment to becoming more self-sufficient, day-use parking fees are now being charged at Big Delta State Historical Park and Lower Chatanika State Recreation Area. Northern Area maintenance staff installed this fee station sign at Big Delta State Historical Park this spring.

Chugach State Park: Alaska Conservation Corps in Action



Returning ACC Crew Leader Sean Cook breaks ground on Mt. Baldy.

Another exciting and busy trail season is underway as this year's Alaska Conservation Corps trail crew has hit the field in Chugach State Park. The crew this year will be working on Mt. Baldy and Flattop. They'll be building new sections of trail to provide a much safer and more sustainable alternative to the old fall line trails.

Get Into **Alaska State Parks**

[@alaskastateparks.facebook@alaska.gov](https://www.facebook.com/alaskastateparks)

The Happ Report



Eric Taylor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Ranger Dane Happ check a Common Goldeneye nesting box. Chena River State Recreation Area will serve as a nursery to more than 400 tagged ducklings captured in the 100 nesting boxes the USFWS has maintained since 1994.



This was Ranger Dane Happ's view from inside a Black Hawk helicopter during a search and rescue mission on Angel Rocks in Chena River State Recreation Area. An injured hiker who had fallen off a rock outcropping was hoisted into the helicopter and transported to Fairbanks Memorial Hospital.

Alaska State Parks Ranger Dane Happ certainly had a busy June. Between rescues, helping out our fair-feathered friends, and teaching Fairbanks youth backcountry CSI, Dane has managed to score a record four Eagle Watch items in a single month.

To keep up with Ranger Happ's whirlwind schedule, we've brought you "The Happ Report", the first of what promises to be a series about our hardworking rangers. Do you, or a ranger you know, have an interesting story? Send it in to [Eagle Watch](#) (with pictures) and we'll put them in the spotlight.



Improvised footwear of an individual whose feet had frozen while attempting to hike from Angel Rocks to Chena Hot Springs Resort in mesh tennis shoes this spring. The group the individual was with hit a snowfield and called 911 with concerns of frostbite after the individual had difficulty walking. Alaska State Troopers passed command of the search and rescue to Ranger Dane Happ who successfully brought the person to safety.



Ranger Dane Happ shows students at the Fairbanks Youth Conservation Camp how to conduct a crime scene investigation. Here students use a metal detector to recover a bullet from a lynx carcass.

Tonsina Trail Improvements Underway

By CAROL GRISWOLD, Seward State Parks Citizens Advisory Board, and ANDY BACON, Alaska State Parks



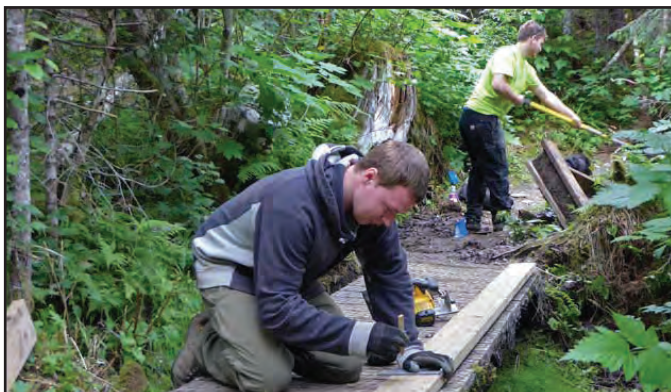
ACC Matthew Fatuch digs a trench to improve drainage along the trail.

Thanks to funding from the Recreational Trails Grant Program managed by Alaska State Parks, a deteriorated, one-mile section of the popular Tonsina Trail that provides access to Caines Head State Recreation Area near Seward is being improved this summer. This project will improve the switchbacks from the top of the trail to the North Fork bridge and will harden the trail section between the South Fork bridge and the North Fork bridge.

Work on the trail began in mid-June with a day of orientation and project planning for the three Alaska Conservation Corps staff. The team, under the supervision of Park Specialist Andy Bacon, then spent a day cutting and hauling lumber to a staging area adjacent to the trail using an ATV, and hand-carrying the lumber to the location of the first boardwalk project.

By late June, the old boardwalk had already been removed and replaced with a new 60-foot section of step-down boardwalk along a steep, muddy section of trail. Additional trail work was completed to improve drainage in the area. Backpackers and day users appreciated the great new boardwalk from the minute it was done.

Work is expected to continue through mid-August with many more trail improvements along this section of trail.



ACCs Dan Franklin and Matthew Fatuch work on a section of boardwalk.

Byers Creek Bridge Collapses

Denali State Park's swinging bridge finally collapsed into Byers Creek this spring. It was built in the 1960s by BLM crews before the park was created and has survived at least two other collapses, mainly caused by the heavy snow the area receives. It was salvaged each time by creative park staff trying to maintain one of the area's highlights. This time is different. The main cable anchors gave way, toppling one of the tower supports and dropping the fatigued structure into the creek. Fortunately, no one was on the bridge when it finally collapsed.

CIP funds were allocated to replace the bridge when it became apparent that this much-photographed bridge would eventually need major repairs. Design and Construction staff have been trying to award a replacement contract, but bids have come in too high. There is hope that additional grant funds can be awarded to put a new bridge in place by next summer. Until then, folks have to take the long way around Byers Lake to get to K'esugi Ridge—or swim!



Specialist Chris Love (now ranger) on Byers Creek Bridge in 2013, before re-tensioning the cables.



Byers Creek Bridge collapsed this spring.

Kodiak Corner



A late spring wind storm brought down multiple trees at two Shuyak Island State Park public-use cabins last month forcing Parks to close them. Natural Resource Tech II Jared Conrad, ACC Steve Rennewanz, and Ranger Jennifer Culbertson spent three days clearing and repairing the cabins.



Mulcahey View PUC had a near miss when a tree managed to fall directly between the cabin and the firewood shed, which sustained minor damage from the branches making contact.

Fort Abercrombie Trail Repairs

It's the season for trail repairs and maintenance, and Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park is no different. This season, just as they have the last two years, Island Trails Network is donating a trail crew to do some much needed work on sections of the trail system in Fort Abercrombie SHP. The ITN trail crew worked on the Lake Gertrude trail last month to repair and harden the tread.



ACC Rodney Sutton, who assisted the Island Trails Network crew, worked on a badly rutted trail section adjacent to the Monashka Bay campground. Even the rain can't stop this workhorse!



Island Trails Network trail crew works on the Lake Gertrude Trail



View of Lake Gertrude from the trail



Once again, we have experienced a rash of bunker art this spring at various WWII bunkers at Fort Abercrombie SHP. Kodiak park staff has been out to numerous bunkers this season to paint over the graffiti the historic structures have been tagged with this spring. Pictured is a rare non-obscene example left at the Piedmont Point Distant Electrical Control bunker.

Lowell Point SRS Bunkhouse Facelift

This summer, Seward Area Park Specialist Andy Bacon renovated the Lowell Point State Recreation Site bunkhouse exterior as part of a deferred maintenance project that included both the interior and exterior of the Seward Bunkhouse at Lowell Point State Recreation Site.

Last year, while volunteer Paul Paquette was helping Andy install sheetrock, he came up with the idea to shingle the front of the bunkhouse. However, when summer came, they got too busy with other projects. Finally, this summer, Andy had the opportunity to call on Paul for some help with putting his idea to good use. Paul donated all the shingles used, and gave Andy a quick lesson on how to install them. Once Andy got all the way up to the top of the door, Paul returned to add his personal touch and then Andy finished it off. Ranger Jack Ransom helped Andy paint the bunkhouse soon afterward.

Paul's shingle art is on homes all over Seward and Lowell Point, and Alaska State Parks is honored to have a little bit in the park now. Now all that's left to do is paint the other three sides of the building, but that will happen as time allows.

An AVTEC construction class replaced the roof this spring with materials purchased by the state, capping off this renovation project.



The Lowell Point SRS bunkhouse exterior before and after renovation



Left: The site before beginning construction in early spring. The Kasilof River was washing out material from under the existing vegetation and continually eroding away the bank.



Right: The site after project completion. Bank erosion was remediated and user access was improved by installing concrete mat and by rearranging or removing large rocks.

Kasilof Riverbank Restoration

With the support of the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund, work restoring eroded bank and critical habitat at the Kasilof River State Recreation Site boat launch has been completed. Slopes were stabilized with native vegetation to improve fish habitat and erosion protection. Concrete block was placed next to the boat launch to armor it and provide better access for users. River access stairs were also installed downstream of the boat launch.



Lower level deck of newly installed river access stairs



Removable aluminum river access stairs