



Restored Searchlight Brings a Shine to Fort Abercrombie



Chuck Meitle and the World War II-era searchlight he restored for Fort Abercrombie SHP. *Photo by Anibal Ortiz, Corvallis Gazette-Times*



The restored searchlight arrives at Fort Abercrombie SHP.

During World War II, the Japanese threatened the Pacific Coast of the United States, bombing Dutch Harbor and invading two Aleutian Islands, Attu and Kiska. Alaska played a key role in the U.S. defense strategy and military bases were established across Alaska. One of these was Fort Abercrombie in Kodiak. ★

Miller Point and Piedmont Point, both within present-day Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park, were U.S. Army observation posts intended to protect the new Kodiak Naval Air Station. This U.S. Army post was manned by the 205th Coast Artillery Regiment and equipped with two eight-inch Mark VI battle ship guns, a top-secret SCR-296 radar tower, an observation tower, two search lights, and many other logistical support buildings, including living quarters and mess halls. The soldiers stationed there were charged with spotting any incoming enemy ships, calling in the enemy's coordinates, and neutralizing the threat if ordered to do so. ★

The first searchlight was installed at Fort Abercrombie on Dec. 17, 1941, just 10 days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Once the threat to Alaska and the rest of the U.S. Pacific coast had mostly ceased, Fort Abercrombie was decommissioned. Today, Fort Abercrombie is a State Historical Park and a National Historic Landmark in which visitors can visit the ruins of WWII buildings and the Kodiak Military History Museum, which is housed in the old emplacement magazine. ★

In the 1990s, Chuck Meitle and his family visited Fort Abercrombie SHP. They fell in love with the park and have returned to volunteer at the park since many times. Chuck likes to keep busy making museum exhibits and doing repair work at the park. His latest project involved restoring an eight-foot tall Sperry Gyroscope Co. searchlight from 1941, which is the exact make and model of the searchlights used there during the war.

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Ranger Rescues Rafters on the Kenai River

It was a good thing Ranger Don Barber happened to be at the Bings Landing boat launch on the Kenai River in mid-July. Don had secured his boat near the boat launch and heard someone yelling about a raft in trouble. He looked downstream near the Naptowne Rapids and saw a raft with three people on board who appeared to be in trouble. Naptowne Rapids is a Class III/IV located approximately 300 yards downstream from the boat launch at Bings Landing.

Don jumped into his boat with park volunteer Wayne Waldrip and responded to the raft. He found that two of the rafters had fallen into the river, but had made it to shore, and three people were still in the raft, which was out of control on the river. Don towed the raft to shore, then went back up the rapids to retrieve the two who had fallen into the water. Don reunited the two wet rafters with the other three at the raft.

After interviewing the boaters, he determined the raft had hit a rock and launched two of the occupants into the river. Don confirmed that all five of the rafters were safe and did not require medical attention. The rafters thanked Don for his help and continued with their trip.

This is an example of the important work that Alaska State Park employees do every day. Keep up the great work, Don!

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Fort Abercrombie Searchlight

Dave Orlando of Albany, OR, collected WWII searchlights that were sold as surplus after the war ended. According to Chuck, Dave committed to donating a searchlight to the museum three years ago. The donation to the park came through last year, and Chuck devoted much of his free time to restoring it.

According to an article in the Corvallis Gazette-Times written by Anthony Rimel, “[Chuck] said he saw a searchlight like this one at a movie premiere at age 8 and recalled that it was loud and smoked a lot. The beam it produced was hot enough that if a broom was held in front of it, the broom would explode into flames.”

Now that the restoration work is complete, Matson Shipping has donated over \$8,000 in shipping costs and an additional \$3,000.00 to the Friends of Kodiak State Parks to help with the restoration of the searchlight and a searchlight shelter located in Fort Abercrombie SHP. The searchlight is being temporarily housed in the museum until the searchlight shelter is restored enough to house it.



The searchlight before restoration



The searchlight on display at the Kodiak Military History Museum. Volunteers Nancy and Chuck Meitle pose with it for scale.



This searchlight bunker, when restored, is the planned home for the new searchlight.

Retired Ranger Returns

Retired Ranger Bill Berkahn and his wife, Patti, returned to Wood-Tikchik State Park to volunteer for the month of July. Bill and Patti are loving retirement, but were excited to assist with park operations in southwest Alaska. In early July, Bill and Ranger Ali Eskelin traveled to Tikchik Lake to start the restoration of the remote Eagle Island camp site. The island’s white sand beach, scenic views, and sheltered bay make the site popular with campers. Bill and Ali were able to tear down, cut up, and start the removal of a dilapidated 12x24-foot wooden wall tent platform that was both a hazard and an eyesore at the scenic spot.



Bill Berkahn gears up at the dilapidated tent platform at Eagle Island on Tikchik Lake.



Bill Berkahn and the newly acquired state park super cub at Cabin Cove Ranger Station on Nuyakuk Lake.

Volunteers Make a Difference at China Poot Lake

Warm weather and ripe blueberries were just some of the perks of volunteerism in Kachemak Bay State Park last month. Six volunteers—Brenda and James Dolma, Bobby and Michael McKinney, Dana Nelson, and Adam Lein—spent two nights in mid-July at China Poot Lake, also known as Leisure Lake, clearing nearby trails and enjoying the best of Kachemak Bay SP.

After hiking to the lake with their tools and supplies on a Friday night, the crew was met the next morning by two trained volunteers, Bill Hague and Chris Kelly, both members of the Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park. Together, the group cleared brush along the China Poot Lake Trail, then south from the lake all the way to the Poot Peak North Trail junction.

The McKinneys remarked, “What a wonderful thing to have an opportunity where people of all ages could be successful in knowing that they could improve the trails for everyone!”

The Dolmas, similarly, said “It was a treat to get across the bay and contribute to our beautiful state park. We had a couple of beautiful days and bountiful berries that kept us moving down the trail.”

Enthusiastic volunteers such as these help increase the staff capacity to clear trails in Kachemak Bay SP. With more than 80 miles of trails, the park relies on engaged community and visitors to complete many annual projects.



Volunteers gear up for a hard day's work in Kachemak Bay SP.



This group shot gives proof of the crew's hard work and the park's abundant blueberries.

★ # ThisParkMatters



This month, Alaska State Parks started running a monthly social media campaign called #ThisParkMatters. The campaign highlights the wonders of Alaska State Parks and encourages all park users to share these wonders with the rest of the world.

Each month, a new area of Alaska State Parks will be featured on social media, promoting the many features Parks has to offer. The month of August featured Northern Area State Parks, highlighting the park sites around Fairbanks, Delta Junction, and Tok. In September, we will travel to Chugach State Park.

Be sure to check out the Alaska State Parks social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to stay up to date on all of the featured content. Don't forget to also share your own photos and videos with the hashtags #ThisParkMatters and #AKStateParks!

Flaming Sourdough Waffles Return to the House of Wickersham



Haley Loggins and House of Wickersham Museum Assistant Mary Kay Havens, along with "Judge James Wickersham"

After homeschooler Haley Loggins and her mom, Stephanie, visited the House of Wickersham for a history lesson, they began experimenting to re-create the famous Flaming Sourdough Waffles. Ruth Allman, Judge James Wickersham's niece, served these waffles to guests at the House of Wickersham in Juneau until 1984.

Starting with Ruth's book, *Alaska Sourdough*, Haley and her mom first experimented with making their own sourdough starter, capturing yeast from the air. Later they found a Juneau local who gave them decades-old starter.

Haley's next challenge was to learn how Ruth put the flame on the waffle. She learned that Ruth had used sugar cubes soaked in lemon extract, placed on vanilla ice cream, surrounded by fresh berries.

Haley and Stephanie picked fresh wild strawberries from Eagle Beach and fresh wild blueberries from Amalga Harbor. They found salmonberries to be too tart. They brought waffles, berries, ice cream, sugar cubes, lemon extract to the House of Wickersham to share with Mary Kay Havens, Museum Assistant. The three shared a delightful brunch with Judge Wickersham overseeing the celebration.



Haley and Stephanie Loggins' flaming sourdough waffles à la Ruth Allman

Upper Troublesome Creek Trail Repaired

The trail in Denali State Park has lived up to its name. Known as the most southerly section of the K'esugi Ridge Trail system, it has been opened and closed several times since the 1990s. Well known as a high bear concentration area during salmon spawning season, with both black and brown bears in the area, the trail has been closed due to high bear activity several times in the last two decades.

In the fall of 2006, a series of storms created record high waters on the Troublesome Creek and destroyed 16 separate segments of the trail along the first seven miles. The storm also destroyed the Parks Highway Bridge over the creek.

Flood damage occurred throughout Southcentral Alaska and FEMA funding was released for widespread repairs. After waiting four years for FEMA funding, Denali State Park trail crews were finally hired and repairs commenced two summers before re-opening the trail in the fall of 2011.

Then in the fall of 2012, another storm caused additional slope failures along two segments of trail. FEMA funding was again secured three and a half years later, and trail crews completed repairs to the trail this summer.



The 2016 Denali State Park Trail Crew extraordinaire works on Upper Troublesome Creek Trail. (L-R) Natural Resource Tech Foreman Carter Forney, Alaska Conservation Corps interns Liam Jones, Ryan Johnson, Riley Bickford, and Gemma Amorelli



This section of trail slid into Troublesome Creek 50 feet below, causing the trail crew to have to cut new trail tread into a granite rock face. Safety lines and rigging was expertly established and supervised by Park Specialist Justin Diapola-Allen (not pictured). Another DSP project completed in a timely manner and without injury or incident! (L-R) ACCs Ryan Johnson, Gemma Amorelli, Liam Jones, and Riley Bickford

A Deluge of Northern News



This summer, heavy rains flooded many access roads and facilities at Chena River State Recreation Area. At the Flat Creek Slough boat launch, you'd need a boat to pay your launch fee.



Fish and Game staged out of the Flat Creek Slough boat launch to collect Chinook salmon eggs for the Ruth Barnette Fish Hatchery in Fairbanks. Usually, they harvest eggs from the Salcha River, but this year's fire out there congested the boat launch and staging area.

Big Trouble at Big Delta

The Tanana River is threatening four historic structures at Big Delta State Historical Park. Parks will be using a crowd funding platform called "Fund Your Park" to secure the support needed to protect these historic resources. Follow the link to donate: <http://www.fundyourpark.org/campaign/detail/4717>



The aerial view shows the two signal corps buildings from the Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) active from 1907 through 1926.



Fish and Game used a holding pen during their Chinook salmon egg take at Flat Creek Slough boat launch on the Chena River. The fish are held in the pens until they are in prime condition for spawning.



The bridge along the Rosehip Nature Trail in Chena River SRA became a floating bridge. Luckily, the bridge is cabled and only had to be moved a short distance for re-attachment.



The closest building to the river, which was 14 feet from the bank, was moved to protect the structure. This move also provided room for a crew from the Office of History and Archaeology to work on the riverbank, recovering artifacts before they are lost to riverbank erosion.



Harding Lake State Recreation Area gets a weed smackdown on bird vetch by volunteer hosts Jim and Lynn Heath.

Little Coal Creek Trail Gets Repairs by Local Youth Crew

In mid-June, the Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District's Youth Conservation Corps completed a trail hardening project on Little Coal Creek Trail over the course of three days. Seven youth, ages 14-17, accompanied by two crew leaders, hauled and compacted gravel on a trenched and muddy section of K'esugi Ridge's most popular access trail. The youth worked tirelessly while learning important lessons about natural resource protection.

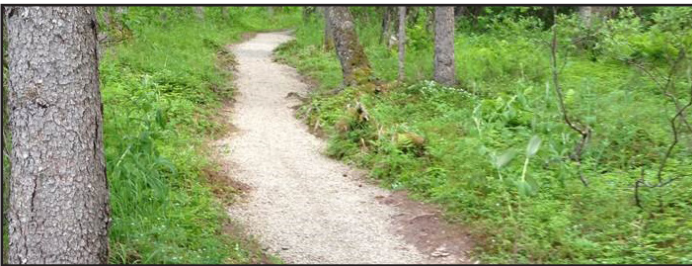
Mat-Su Area and Denali State Park would like to thank the Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District's Youth Conservation Corps for all their hard work. The project would not have been possible without funding by a grant awarded from the State of Alaska's Recreational Trail Program. Thanks to Ranger Chris Love and Park Specialist Justin Dipaola-Allen for the oversight and coordination of this project.



2016 YCC crew from Talkeetna: (L-R) Erik Hernandez, John Hicks, Cy Jolley, Aiden Jolley, Daniel Kehoe, Sean Maguire, Sienna Carey, Abigail Smothers, and Rob Shelby



Little Coal Creek Trail's well-worn, rutted tread before work



The finished product—good job, YCC crew!



YCC crew leader Rob Shelby and worker John Hicks move and spread gravel with a powered wheelbarrow.

Chugach/Southwest Region's Natural Resource Tech Joe Hall leads three Student Conservation Association members on a Crow Pass Trail logging excursion in late June.



Gary Carpenter © 2016

Chugach Corner

Kenai Area Update

Kenai EVOS Land



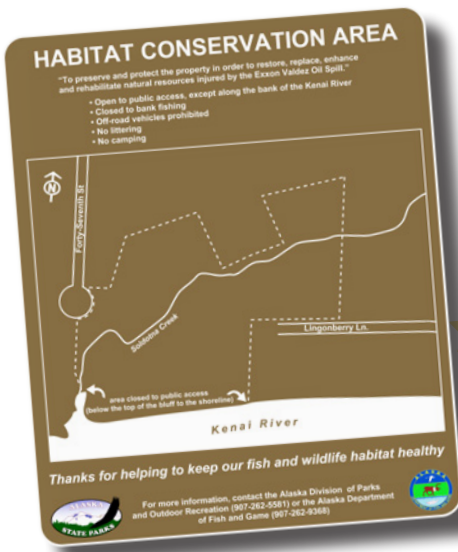
Dave Engholm in the Parks Bobcat talking with US Fish & Wildlife Service employee Don Hendrickson. USFWS also helped with this project and provided a dump truck to haul debris to the landfill. Photo courtesy of Jeff Breakfield, ADFG

The Mullen property located on the Kenai River was purchased by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council for habitat conservation. Kachemak Heritage Land Trust acquired a conservation easement on the property, and in 2004, the parcel was added to the Kenai River Special Management Area. It is cooperatively managed by Parks and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

A recent annual inspection conducted by KHLT, Parks, and ADFG staff identified old 55-gallon drums, building debris, tires, roofing tin, and an old outhouse on the property. In late June, Parks and ADFG staff conducted a clean-up of the property and removed almost a ton of debris from the property.



Division Operations Manager Matt Wedeking joined Kenai Area staff on a two-day park orientation trip in late June. This photo was taken in Kachemak Bay State Park at Grewingk Glacier Lake.



Signs will be posted on the property to help identify the conservation area.

Uluḡtuḡ Built at Cultural Summer Camp

In mid-June, 50 youth gathered at Goose Lake to launch a two-hatch traditional sea kayak and learn what it means to be Unangaḡ. The uluḡtuḡ, a two-hatch sea kayak with a light wooden frame and waterproof skin, was built as part of the Urban Unangaḡ Cultural Camp in Anchorage.

The boat was named to honor Sergie Sovoroff (1901-1989), a prominent Unangaḡ educational leader and sea kayak craftsman from Nikolski, a village on Umnak Island. Master kayak builder Marc Daniels (Ferndale, California) and senior apprentice Samantha Zacharof (St. Paul Island in the Pribilof Islands) led the team who built this uluḡtuḡ. Several other new apprentices also had the opportunity to learn this ancient art in hands-on fashion.



Building the uluḡtuḡ

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Right: After working on it through the night, the uluġtuġ, is ready for the "skin" to be stretched onto its frame.

Below: Marc Daniels and Caleb Zacharof try out the uluġtuġ

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Uluġtuġ Launch

The Alaska Office of Boating Safety was invited to include their education program as a portion of the ceremonial launch. "We were fascinated with the engineering of the traditional sea kayak (iqyaġ), the bow design was not only decorative, it is pure function for navigating in waves. The Unangaġ People have been using iqyaġ for over 10,000 years and it was an honor to be invited to include boating safety at the ceremonial launch. Our team appreciated the opportunity to learn from the boat craftsmen, and learn about their history and way of life. This is a partnership we look forward to cultivating long after today's event," said Kelli Toth, education specialist.



Annie Grenier and Iris Nawiesniak from the Office of Boating Safety join in the ceremonial launch.



Design & Construction Update

Hatcher Pass Road Miles 18-20

At the end of June, State Parks engineers Loretta Nabong and Rangell Soriano closed out a long chapter in the history of Hatcher Pass Road. Parks engineers had been working with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities for over ten years, dating back to the days of former Design and Construction folks like Brad Doggett, Mike Seidl, and Bill Evans. D&C has been working with ADOT&PF since 2013 to design and construct a drainage and roadway upgrade on Miles 18 through 20 of Hatcher Pass Road. The work was intended to be completed last year, but early snow and the early opening of the road due to the Sockeye Fire in Willow caused project delays.



Hatcher Pass Crew: (L-R) Project Designer Kirk Louthan, Environmental Impact Analyst Chet Fehrmann, Project Engineer Rangell Soriano, and Project Engineer Loretta Nabong are some of the D&C staff who've worked on this project over the years and brought it to a successful close. ADOT&PF Engineer in Charge Jeanette Clugston and Mass X Contractor Superintendent Greg Ravencraft were also instrumental in this project's success.



South Denali Crew: (L-R) Project Engineer Loretta Nabong, Ranger Chris Love, Chief of Design and Construction Rys Miranda, Mat-Su/Copper River Basin Area Superintendent Wayne Biessel, Project Engineer Rangell Soriano, Engineering Intern Scott Browning.

South Denali Visitor Center Complex, Walk-in Campground

Final inspection for South Denali's walk-in campground was held in late July. The walk-in campground adds 10 tent sites complete with picnic tables, fire pits, a sod tent pad, and bear-resistant food containers as well as views of the Alaska Range and Denali.

Two public-use cabins and a larger camp host cabin are being constructed in the walk-in site concurrently. The camp host cabin will have electricity and, seasonally, water and sewer. This project completes the visitor camping infrastructure for the South Denali Visitor Center Complex. Additional projects are ongoing this summer, including trails around the complex, trails to Lake 1787, an interpretive center (in conjunction with ADOT&PF), and roadway paving. Check back for updates.