



## New Alaska Office of Boating Safety Video Wins Emmy



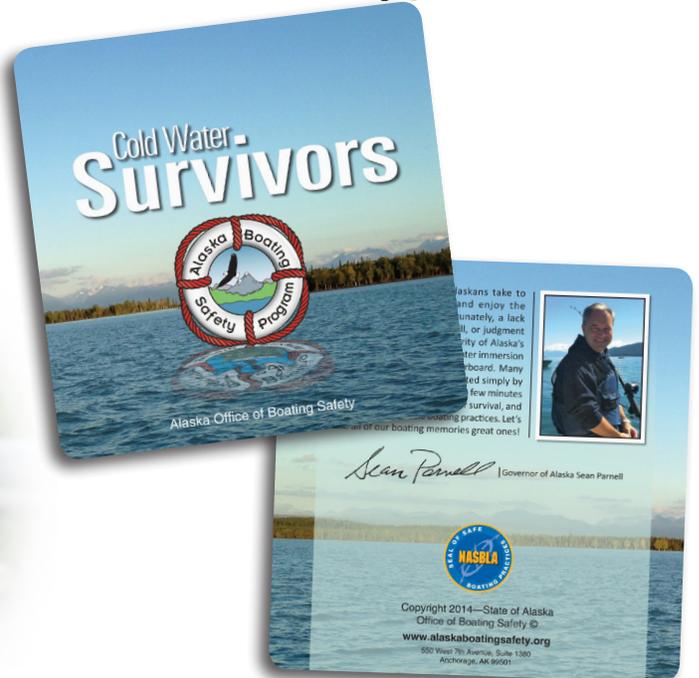
*Cold Water Survivors*, a new instructional video from the Alaska Office of Boating Safety recently received an Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Northwest Chapter at their 51<sup>st</sup> annual award ceremony.

Developed for teens, the video reinforces the learning objectives of the Kids Don't Float Education program on the topic of cold water immersion and the importance of wearing life jackets when boating on Alaska's cold water.

The video tells the real life story of Miranda and Hanna Koger Udelhoven who experienced, but survived, a boating tragedy on Tustumena Lake in 2011.

"These remarkable young women and their compelling account will help us reach teens with potentially lifesaving information," said Joe McCullough, Education and Training Coordinator and the project manager.

The video is one of many educational products available through the Office of Boating Safety. It can be viewed online on [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#), and Alaska State Park's Facebook page.



## National Trails Day at Kachemak Bay State Park

Kachemak Bay State Park staff and the Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park are proud to report the most successful and unique Trails Day in twenty years.

The final numbers are in—114 citizen volunteers participated on Trails Day. If we factor in the water taxi boat captains, the air taxi pilot, Homer Wilderness Leaders staff, and park staff and volunteers, 138 people participated!

This year's Trails Day offered the first ever (maybe only in US) Alaska bush pilot floatplane ride into a Trails Day project. The first six who signed up got a very inexpensive ride with Beluga Air, landing at China Poot Lake after a scenic flight over the park. There, two trail crew leaders met them and they worked the trail back to the ranger station at Halibut Cove Lagoon, with a side trip up Moose Valley.

Of course, Trails Day in Kachemak Bay is unique even without the bush pilot aspect, as each year many of the water taxi businesses donate round trips to the park. These businesses not only drop their price by two-thirds or more, most donate the entire trip! This year nine water taxi businesses lent their time and boats for Trails Day events.

Kachemak Bay SP can be accessed only by boat or airplane, with most visitors traveling by commercial water or air taxi. Because of this, the success of the Trails Day events was largely due to the support of the water and air taxi businesses.

The most difficult project was trying to re-open the Lagoon Trail. Park Specialist Eric Clarke led a group of intrepid and dedicated volunteers from the north end of the Lagoon Trail at Alpine Ridge junction where they attempted to re-open a trail that had not been maintained in several years.

The photos speak a thousand words, telling of the difficult and dangerous aspects of an Alaska style Trails Day.

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Beluga Air on China Poot Lake with Rio Pitcher after his first floatplane trip  
Photo courtesy of Don Pitcher



(Not in order) Paul Allen, Tom Soltis, Amy Holman, Kris Hoderied, Kathleen Reeves, Cody Anderson, and Erin Brinkley formed the Lagoon Trail crew



Park Specialist Eric Clarke and VIP Cody Anderson cutting through for the trail

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We also had two other crews on this project. Kenton Bloom, a citizen volunteer, led one of these projects. He organized his own group of friends and opened the section of trail from Halibut Creek to Goat Rope Spur.

Another crew moved north along the trail from the ranger station, but no report of their progress had been submitted at the time of this writing.

Sixteen folks joined naturalist Ed Berg on a guided hike to Grewingk Glacier Lake. Along the way and at their destination, Ed enlightened folks about the natural history and wonders of this fabulous glaciated valley.

Nomad Shelters donated an overnight stay in a yurt at Tutka Lakes, where six volunteers and two crew leaders helped build a small footbridge. They spent the night in the yurt after a hard day on the trail.

Six other Trails Day projects were also completed:

- Six folks helped clean up flotsam and litter along two miles of beach.
- Eighteen Girl Scouts helped build rock cairns, destroy illegal fire rings, and brush out trails. They spent the night on a campout. Six additional Girl Scouts joined them, but just for the day.
- Six folks helped clear the trail up to Sadie Knob.
- Homer Wilderness Leadership cleared a new cross-country ski trail in the Grewingk Valley.
- Dave Brann led a group of friends and Girl Scouts out at Eveline State Recreation Site, 15 miles from Homer on the East Road.
- The Homer Cycling Club worked several hours on Sunday cleaning up the single-track trail at Diamond Creek State Recreation Area.

All told, it was an incredible weekend. Everyone showed up even though it rained. In fact, more people showed up than were expected, and they all were accommodated. The only “injuries” reported were sore muscles, especially smile muscles.



Park Specialist Eric Clarke and VIP Cody Anderson stop to figure out a snapped branch still hanging from a tree, which arborists know as a “hanger” or a “widow maker”



Trails Day sign on the morning of Trails Day (only Roger and the donuts are missing in this photo)

## Trails Day at Red Shirt Lake!

Trails Day on the Redshirt Lake Trail was a success. Maxine Franklin, the Red Shirt Lake host, led six volunteers who brushed one mile of trail and hauled out 45 pounds of trash from the lake. This Trails Day event was topped off by a well-attended naturalist program, cornbread, and baked beans at the South Rolly Lake Overlook.



The six trail volunteers, ready to get cutting

## Eklutna Lake Trail

The Eklutna Lake Trail improvement project is mostly complete. The Design and Construction crew placed two retaining walls on the bridge abutments to combat erosion and replaced a culvert farther down the trail.



Bridge before...



...and after.



Culvert before...



...and after.



ACC Scott Browning hard at work

## South Denali Construction Progresses

Work is back in full swing at South Denali. Engineer assistants Sarah Wells and Roxanne Risse, and ACC (intern) Scott Browning have been on site since Memorial Day, administering the remainder of the Campground and Trailhead contract. The entire site is now drivable and all campsites have been roughed in. At this rate, this portion of the project will be finished in early August.

The three Design & Construction staff have been lucky enough to have a few days where they have been able to catch views of the mountain from the project site and have had a few curious visitors. Overall, things are going well and the finish line is within sight.



Grubbing for the future campground at South Denali

## Susitna Landing

Susitna Landing recently had its final inspection. The grass still hasn't grown in, but once that happens, this project will be complete.



Susitna Landing before...



...and after.

## Northern News

- Rangers Dane Happ and Ian Thomas attended the Alaska Peace Officers Association Crime Conference in Fairbanks. The conference involved lectures on everything from ethics and leadership to officer safety and tactical training. Dane said it was “tremendously valuable experience and top quality training.”
- Ranger Ian Thomas received the first ever Yamaha Trail Grant for Alaska. Thanks to his wordsmithery and tenacity, the Northern Area will receive \$10,000 to upgrade and repair ATV trails and two half-off vouchers to purchase Yamaha ATVs.
- Rangers Ian Thomas and Dane Happ participated in the procession and memorial service for the fallen state troopers Gabe Rich and Sgt. Patrick “Scott” Johnson. Northern Area mourns the loss of former Alaska Conservation Corps employee Gabe Rich, who worked at Harding Lake State Recreation Area in 2008. He attended the Fairbanks Law Enforcement Academy with rangers Travis Russell and Nikki Potter.
- Park rangers worked several booths this month promoting Alaska State Parks. The first was at the Outdoor Show for DNR and the second was at the Chena River Watershed Summit. Both events were held at the Carlson Center in Fairbanks.



Chief Ranger Ian Thomas stands vigil next to the honor flag for fallen troopers Gabe Rich and Sgt. Scott Johnson. The honor flag travels nationwide to honor our fallen heroes. It was also at the site of the 911 tragedy.



Campground host Sonja Gonzalez gets a workout at Rosehip Campground in Chena River SRA.



Congratulations to our newest ranger, Melissa Smith, for successfully completing the Sitka Law Enforcement Academy. Ranger Dane Happ attended the graduation to celebrate her achievement and represent the division.



The Northern Maintenance motorcycle gang (a.k.a. Doug and Marty) get ready to ride.

## State Park Staff Help Respond to the Funny River Fire

Visitors and residents of the Kenai Peninsula were recently faced with a major wildfire near Soldotna. The human-caused Funny River fire began in mid-May five miles east of Soldotna and has burned over 195,000 acres.

In response to the extreme fire danger on the Kenai, federal and state land managers issued a temporary burn closure for the entire peninsula. During the peak of fire fighting efforts, over 750 fire fighters were assigned to the fire.

Five recreational cabins burned, including a state park cabin on the Kenai River.

Over a two-week period, many state park staff were called to help, including park rangers, radio dispatchers, and administrative staff. Three Kenai River rangers were called to assist troopers during the evacuation of residential area near Kasilof. A few days later, six Kenai/Prince William Sound rangers were involved with the evacuation of the Funny River area. In addition, two rangers also helped transport fire crews by boats on the Kenai River.

Kenai/PWS staff did an excellent job of working with other agencies and the public during this major incident.



Smoke rises from the Funny River fire behind the Kenai/PWS Area office



Alaska State Parks trash collector



Volunteers show off the marine debris they collected

## Preserving our Natural Resources with Partners

The Resurrection Bay Conservation Alliance based out of Seward hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Marine Debris Cleanup last month. Tim Johnson, the Marine Debris coordinator, dedicated a notable amount of volunteer hours to preserving the pristine shorelines and protecting the maritime wildlife. In fact, the RBCA was awarded the Coastal America Spirit Award in 2012 for their efforts with marine debris removal.

Alaska State Parks was one of many partners involved in this year's Marine Debris Cleanup. Tom Kain, the North Coastal District's Park Specialist, took a crew around the Resurrection Peninsula to visit the exposed state marine parks of the North Gulf Coast. These areas had not been cleaned for two years due to foul weather conditions.

Driftwood Bay State Marine Park lies at the mouth of Day Harbor and, as its name indicates, is a collector beach for driftwood and large volumes of marine debris. The crew removed 20 bags of marine debris totaling 500 pounds from the Driftwood Bay SMP, bringing the four-year total to 186 bags of marine debris weighing 5,120 pounds.

Other shorelines involved in the cleanup this year were the Sandspit Point SMP, Safety Cove SMP, and South Beach within the Caines Head SRA.

Thank you, RBCA, for orchestrating this event!

## New Faces Around Mat-Su



Accounting clerk Cathy Wilcox



Dan Belanger, new Park Specialist at IMSHP



Amanda Planchek, new NRT II at Little Su

Mat-Su's new accounting clerk **Cathy Wilcox** comes to us from a long career in banking. She is a lifetime Alaskan and loves working for State Parks.

Born and raised in Alaska, **Dan Belanger** spent time as a US Army mechanic and crew chief on the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and is an Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm veteran. One thing he always knew was that Alaska was home.

Dan's love of the outdoors led him to begin working as a Park Specialist with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Prior to coming to DNR, Dan worked as an Emergency Management Specialist II and III with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

He also spent eight years teaching middle school science and geography in the Mat-Su School District. Dan received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education from Alaska Pacific University.

Dan has three children and he enjoys hockey, traveling, rafting, camping, hiking, fishing, riding ATVs and anything outdoors. He also has a background in construction and general aviation.

**Amanda Planchek** was born and raised in Northern California. She attended college in Vermont at Norwich University and upon graduation commissioned into the US Army. Amanda became an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician stationed with the 716<sup>th</sup> EOD Company at Fort Richardson.

She deployed to Afghanistan from 2011 through 2012 and earned the Combat Action Badge. Amanda was honorably discharged from the Army as a Captain in 2013. She loved Alaska so much that she decided to make this her home.

Amanda shares her Alaska adventure with her boyfriend, Mike, and their two dogs.

### Refinishing the Derby Cove Public-Use Cabin

The Caines Head crew will be addressing deferred maintenance needs at some of the public-use cabins in the Resurrection Bay area state parks this summer. Projects will include staining and sealing the exterior, constructing new roof systems, and installing new woodstoves.

The crew began the stain removal project at Derby Cove last week. Logistically, the project involved the 22-foot landing craft, ATV, water pump, pressure washer, and a fair bit of patience. The three-person crew ran into the usual hiccups that occur with remote field projects, but persevered and were able to complete the stain removal in just three days.

Next week, a 12-person volunteer crew with the Sierra Club will arrive to assist with the staining and sealing of three more public-use cabins in Resurrection Bay.



Applying the finish remover to the exterior of the Derby Cove Public-Use Cabin

## Chugach Tricycle Fleet

This year, the hosts at Eklutna Lake and the Bird Creek campgrounds will be performing their duties in style. Chugach State Park purchased two tricycles for the hosts to use. The trikes have rear-mounted baskets, which allow the hosts to carry miscellaneous supplies easily while they make their daily rounds.



Office Assistant Teri Coeville shows off the tricycles on the "Bird to Gird" multi-use trail.



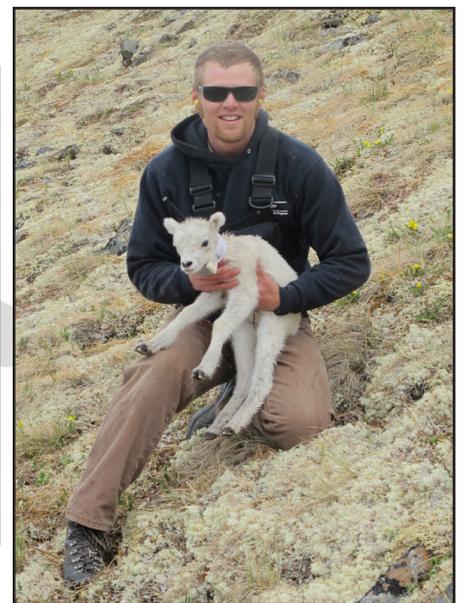
Claire LeClair and her family came across this driftwood arrangement out at Eklutna Lake during a weekend jaunt. They were especially smitten with the sentry at the top.

## Kachemak Bay Water Trail dedication



Front row: (left to right) Rep. Paul Seaton, Sen. Peter Micciche, Robert Archibald, Devony Lehner, Dave Brann, George Reising, Carol Kerkvliet, Heather Rice, Kris Holderied, Jeannie Woodring. Middle row: (left to right) Morgan Warthin, Lisa Holzapfel, Mary McBurney, Director Ben Ellis, Donna Aderhold, Marie McCarty, Jack Blackwell, Dorothy Malambianakis. Back row: (left side of rock and right side of rock) Pat Pourchot, DNR Dep. Commissioner Ed Fogels

## The Softer Side of Chugach



Chugach Natural Resource Technician Ben Corwin with a lamb in our continuing cooperation with ADF&G to study mortality rates of Alaska's Dall Sheep.

