



Trail Condition Report

Caines Head State Recreation Area

April 9th, 2026

Overall Conditions: **Several landslides have impeded access to the Derby Cove Cabin and Caines Head SRA (CHSRA). The first slide is located approximately 300 yards south of the Tonsina Point Cabin along the “Coastal Trail” or low tide dependent, beach portion of the hike to CHSRA. The slide is passable but may require hikers to climb up and over the debris. Park staff have cut down trees for dispersal by the tides. Additionally, an old landslide that occurred in January 2022 just south of Bridalveil Falls may still require hikers to scale debris. Please exercise extreme caution and travel at your own risk!**

Lots of overflow ice exists on area trails. Ice cleats are highly recommended on the Tonsina Trail and beyond.

In general, expect a menagerie of winter conditions such as snow of varying depths, lots of overflow ice, running/pooling water, emerging mud and maybe a few downed trees throughout the CHSRA trail system. As always wear or bring ice cleats and anticipate changing trail conditions. **Please see attached trail breakdown for specific concerns and conditions.** Additionally, please be mindful of local weather and watch for periods of heavy rain/snow and/or flooding as these events may make access to cabins extremely difficult and trails impassable.

Public-Use Cabins:

- **Be Advised: Porcupine Glacier Cabin in Thumb Cove**-A contractor has completed flood mitigation measures to protect the cabin, but access to the cabin and adjacent latrine may still become compromised or impassable during heavy rain and/or flood events.
- **Due to flood damage, Callisto Canyon Cabin has been dismantled, R.I.P.**
- The Callisto cabin latrine remains on-site (for now) for use by park visitors.
- **Access to Derby Cove Cabin may require a stream crossing depending upon seasonal snow melt and/or periods of heavy rain. In addition, this cabin is tide dependent and most easily accessed during a low tide of +3ft or lower.**
- **The Tonsina Point Cabin is becoming increasingly tide dependent as the beach appears to be sinking and storm surges push material inland. It may require hiking well above mean high tideline during large tide cycles or active storm surges. Park staff have cleared and flagged a high tide route north of the cabin from the pinch point at the stand of Spruce trees on the beach. Although this trail at extreme high tides will have areas of standing water as soils adjacent to the mountainside become saturated.**
- Go to: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspcabins/index.htm> for additional cabin information.
- Please refer to the Seward area tide tables when booking your stay and be familiar with the tide cycles for the duration of your stay at either of these cabins. Tide tables are available here:
<https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/noaatidepredictions.html?id=9455090&legacy=1>

- There is a new website for reservations that still uses the Reserve America platform but is specific to Alaska State Parks. It can be found at: www.alaskastateparks.reserveamerica.com.

Tent Platforms:

- There are currently five tent platforms in CHSRA. They are free to use and first come, first serve.
- Four are located at North Beach near the day-use shelter. They can be accessed from the day-use shelter area or from a short trail leaving the beach. The beach access is designated with a camping sign. The two newest platforms built by local Eagle Scouts feature ridge and eave poles for a tarp/rain cover.
- The fifth tent platform is located at South Beach. It can be accessed from a short trail near the information board at the southern terminus of the South Beach trail or from the east end of the beach. A camping sign designates access from beach.

How to Get There:

- CHSRA trails and public-use cabins are accessed by foot from Lowell Point State Recreation Site (LPSRS), located 2.5 miles south of Seward. Follow the Seward Highway into Seward where it becomes Third Avenue. Follow Third Avenue to the end and take a right onto Railway Avenue. This becomes Lowell Point Road. Travel 2.5 miles to Lowell Point and turn right onto Pinnacle View Road, then make an immediate right to the upper parking lot for Lowell Point State Recreation Site and the Tonsina Trailhead. The trail to Tonsina Point and the Coastal Trail to Caines Head State Recreation Area starts at the southwest corner of the upper parking lot. Or continue along Pinnacle View Road and turn right into the lower parking lot for LPSRS and trail to Lowell Point Beach. A trail connects the lower and upper parking lots from behind the lower parking lot latrine to the south side of the upper parking lot.
- CHSRA trails and cabins can also be accessed by boat via water taxi (**except October-April**). Follow this link for a list of authorized commercial water taxi services: <https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspunits/kenai/cainesheadtaxi.htm>

Advisory:

- **CHSRA is bear country and carrying bear spray or other deterrents is encouraged, as is a review of safe travel and camping in bear country. Information regarding bear safety can be found at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/safety/bears.htm>.**
- The Coastal Trail is the beach between Tonsina Point and Derby Cove. It also provides the only foot access from Lowell Point State Recreation Site, upper parking area trailhead to the Caines Head trails south and west of Derby Cove (Overland, Alpine, Fort, South Beach, and Rainforest Loop).
- **The Coastal Trail is only passable during a low tide of +3ft or lower; the beach rocks and outcroppings can be very slick due to biofilm, water, and seasonal ice.**
- As per Alaska State Parks regulations, all firewood collected for use at public use cabins must be from **dead and down trees**. However, the **“ghost trees”** which are remnants of the 1964 earthquake and found in areas like Tonsina Point are **not to be cut or disturbed in anyway**. Firewood is often scarce and wet; **visitors are highly encouraged to bring their own wood**. The Tonsina Point Cabin has an oil heater that burns kerosene or diesel only.
- Treat all water in the park by filtration, boiling, or water purification tablets.
- Please use **LEAVE NO TRACE/PACK OUT WHAT YOU PACK IN** ethics to minimize your impact while in the recreation area. Check out www.lnt.org for more information.

Trail Breakdown: Conditions and Concerns

Tonsina Point Trail	<p><u>Ice cleats are highly recommended!!</u> Overflow ice exists on many areas of the trail as well as light snow cover. Areas of running/pooling water and mud in afternoons as temperatures warm. Please tread lightly on sensitive beach grass while hiking/camping on the beach and keep fires below mean high tide line. Please keep your pets on a leash and please do not cut the switchbacks!</p>
Coastal Trail	<p>The beach between Tonsina Point and Derby Cove is only passable during a low tide of +3ft or lower. <u>Beach rocks and outcrops can be very slick due to biofilm and seasonal ice.</u></p> <p>A landslide has impeded access to the Derby Cove Cabin and Caines Head SRA (CHSRA). The slide is located approx. 300 yards south of the Tonsina Point Cabin along the beach portion of the hike to CHSRA. The slide is passable but may require hikers to climb up and over debris.</p>
Overland Trail	<p>Expect areas of light snow cover and ice sections. Some running/pooling water and muddy areas. Please do not cut switchbacks!</p>
Alpine Trail	<p>Expect deep snow, icy sections, and potential down trees. Beware of fog and low clouds in the alpine, which may make navigating difficult. Upper elevations pose avalanche risk, please travel prepared and exercise caution in this area.</p>
Fort Trail	<p>Seasonal conditions with varying snow cover, overflow ice, mud and running/pooling water. Snow tends to deepen at elevation of the Fort. Bring a light source and please exercise caution while exploring the Fort!</p>
South Beach Trail	<p>Seasonal conditions with areas of snow cover, ice, mud and running/pooling water.</p>
Rainforest Loop Trail	<p>Beware of cliffs on southside! Deep snow around Alpine trail jct. Areas of snow, overflow ice, running/pooling water and mud. At least 1 down tree. Trail markers and flagging exist on south side but may be inconsistent and difficult to follow. The trail navigates a stream bed for a ¼ mile on south side and may be hazardous or impassable to travel after heavy rain.</p>

