



## Poems in Place



A visitor reads a poem installed in Totem Bight SHP



Poem installed in Chena River SRA

From Jan. 15 to March 15, 2014, *Poems in Place* invites Alaskans to submit poems for **Aleknagik State Recreation Site/Wood-Tikchik State Park** near Dillingham and for **Independence Mine State Historical Park** near Palmer. *Poems in Place* seeks original poems submitted by Alaskan writers as well as poems written by Alaskan poets and nominated by appreciative readers.

*Poems in Place*, a collaboration between the Alaska Center for the Book, Alaska State Parks, a steering committee of poets and writers, and the residents of Alaska, will place a poem written by an Alaskan writer on a permanent sign in each of the seven areas of Alaska's state park system in the coming years.

Information, contest rules, and entry forms will be posted online at [www.alaskacenterforthebook.org](http://www.alaskacenterforthebook.org).

*Poems in Place* grew naturally from a poem, "What Whales and Infants Know" by Kim Cornwall, that was installed at Beluga Point in Chugach State Park in May 2011. In September 2013, poems were placed in Totem Bight SHP in Ketchikan and Chena River State Recreational Area near Fairbanks.

To see examples of current Poems in Place signs, go to <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/misc/poemplace.htm>.

This project is supported by the Alaska Humanities Forum, the Usibelli Foundation, the Rasmuson Foundation, the Alaska Poetry League, Alaska Center for the Book, and numerous generous individuals.



### First Day Hikes

More than twenty years ago, a state park in Massachusetts launched a program to promote healthy lifestyles and year-round use of state parks. On New Year's Day in 2012, state parks across the nation followed suit and a new national health trend was born—Americans called it the First Day Hike.

This year, three First Day Hike, Snowshoe, and Ski events were held in Alaska—one in Delta Junction (see page 3,) one in Independence Mine State Historical Park, and one in Kachemak Bay State Park. One hundred and forty five brave souls, dedicated outdoorsmen, and health nuts participated in these three events, covering a combined 10 miles.

Well done, Alaskans! You make your state park public servants proud and happy to take care of these parks for you.



## Northern Area News

- It finally got cold enough in mid-December to put ice huts out on Quartz and Birch lakes, south of Fairbanks. This is the latest ice huts have gone out in nearly 20 years. Maintenance staff slid 10 huts over sweet spots where folks immediately started hammering fish.
- A 50-year weather event made for slow going on the trails in the Chena River State Recreation Area. A heavy, wet snowfall caused birch saplings, willows, and alders to bend over, choking out the trail system. Groomers were unable to complete a single grooming cycle in December.
- Superintendent Brooks Ludwig gave a “Sustainable Trails” presentation to a UAF Natural Resource class. He also attended a recreation planning session hosted by UAF and the Borough of Land Management.
- Northern Area Administrative Assistant Lona Boyarsky joined park administrators from around the state for two days of training in Anchorage. The training provided by Administrative Operations Manager Jamie Walker was a big thumbs-up according to Lona.
- Rangers responded to three search and rescues in Chena River SRA this month for overdue cabin renters. Thankfully, all three had happy outcomes.
- The First Day Hike of the New Year in Delta Junction was a huge success with 92 people hiking 2.5 miles from downtown Delta to the parks office and back. Parks advisory board members Judy Hicks and Mindy Eggleston organized the festivities. (see page 3)



The ice dropped out behind Ranger Ian Thomas as he was checking conditions on the trail to Nugget Creek public-use cabin, leaving a black hole in the Chena River. Luckily, the water was only 20 inches deep and he was able to throttle out without getting wet.



Former Northern Area board member and hard core winter camper Tom Paragi broke trail along the new Mastodon Trail and set up camp 3.5 miles up the trail in Chena River SRA. He plans to push all the way to Nugget Creek Cabin this winter. It took him 3.5 hours to reach Mastodon Creek and half that time to get out.



The Northern Area staff held their annual Christmas party at Ivory Jacks. After dinner, staff reconvened at Ranger Dane Happ's for dessert. His wife and baker extraordinaire, Linnae, made apple, pumpkin, and pecan pies to top off a great night.

## Nancy Lake Winter Safety

This winter's ice and snow accumulation has kept Nancy Lake State Recreation Area's dedicated staff busy, ensuring visitor safety by vigilantly removing hundreds of downed trees from the area's trails and roads. Ranger Drew McElvain and maintenance guru Paul Dimaggio spent many days clearing and re-clearing trails and roads in the park this winter.



Ranger Drew McElvain (left) and maintenance guru Paul Dimaggio (right) clear a trail

## Walk of Lights

On the first day of the New Year, the Delta Junction Trails Association & Delta Nordic Ski Club held the second annual First Hike in Delta in collaboration with State Parks across all 50 states. Our theme this year was "Walk of Lights."

Almost 100 hearty starting-the-New-Year-right folks and some dogs walked the path, lit with 90 ice candles in 15°F, gusty weather. Even a couple of Fairbanks folks joined the fun. Judy Hicks donated "Wish Lanterns" as prizes awarded to hikers for dressing themselves, their dog, or their team up in lights for the jaunt.

The two-and-a-half-mile walk went from the Sullivan Roadhouse to the Alaska State Parks office, where refreshments were provided, and back.

A number of people and organizations were instrumental in making this event a success:

- Delta Junction Trails Association & Delta Nordic Ski Club organized the event.
  - Alaska State Parks lent support and inspiration for the First Hike events.
  - The Delta Chamber of Commerce provided Sullivan Roadhouse parking and fabulous decorations.
  - Dick Austin plowed the Sullivan.
  - DOT plowed the walking path.
  - DJTA & Delta Nordic Ski provided the ice candles & refreshments.
  - Joyce McCombs & Cheryl Cooper were the cabin mamas and provided refreshments.
  - Volunteers lighted the candles as quickly as the Delta wind put them out.
  - Alaska State Troopers Jason Pugh and Mike Wilcox, plus Wayne Crowson helped keep walkers safe at road crossings.
  - Whoever is in charge of the wind even helped out by shutting it down a bit (from 50 mph gusts in the morning to 20-30 mph gusts that afternoon).
- Hope to see you next Jan. 1 for our First Day Hike, "Walk of Lights."



First Day hikers take to the trails in Delta Junction



Hikers who took the "Walk of Lights" seriously and brought their own glow spread some extra holiday cheer

