

## Prince William Sound Marine Trail - Phase I

February 2012

In 2006, Alaska State Parks and its partners first proposed the Prince William Sound Marine Trail, a designated water route that would connect the communities of this region. Goals of the Prince William Sound Marine Trail include promoting sustainable tourism, improving and contributing to the regional economy, increasing recreational opportunities for Alaskan residents and visitors while protecting sensitive areas, guiding recreation use, and highlighting state parks to increase support and stewardship.

As a result of community meetings held in 2009, the Prince William Sound Marine Trail Steering Committee recommended a phased approach for the project that would focus on the Western Sound and include a designated route from Valdez to Whittier, with a spur trail to Chenega. We have adopted that recommendation. Alaska State Parks proposes the following components in Phase I, which are primarily on state park lands. The middle third of the route between Valdez and Whittier would be left undeveloped to ensure opportunities for those seeking a true wilderness experience.

1. Update State Parks website
2. Develop brochure
3. Develop information panels in harbors at Valdez, Whittier, Chenega, South Esther Island
4. Develop information panels at Valdez State Parks Office and USFS visitor center
5. Improve kayak launch area at Mineral Creek (trail improvements begin 2013)
6. Construct public use cabins at:
  - Iktua Bay – (Chenega finished construction 2011)
  - Sawmill Bay (1 cabin)
  - Granite Bay – *near Port Wells* - (1 cabin)
  - Eshamy Bay (1 cabin – will replace existing cabin)
  - Paddy Bay (1 cabin)

Alaska State Parks' mission is to provide outdoor recreation opportunities and conserve and interpret natural, cultural, and historic resources for the use, enjoyment, and welfare of the people.

The Alaska State Legislature designated state marine parks in Prince William Sound in 1983 and 1990. Alaska state marine parks were established to complete an international system of marine parks and recreation areas stretching from Washington, through British Columbia, into Southeast Alaska, and finally into Prince William Sound and Resurrection Bay. In addition, the state marine parks were established to:

- Maintain natural, cultural, and scenic values
- Maintain fish and wildlife resources and lawful existing use of these resources
- Promote and support recreation and tourism in the state

In addition to the legislatively designated state marine parks, Alaska State Parks also manages land acquired by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. Combined with the state marine parks, Alaska State Parks manages twenty one areas in Prince William Sound.

Alaska's state parks support local economies. A study conducted by the University of Alaska Fairbanks – Cooperative Extension Service in 2008 found that the state parks in Prince William Sound and Resurrection Bay contributed over \$12 million annually to the regional economy. The study concluded that the contribution to the regional economy would be greater with better marketing and the development of more recreation facilities.

The Management Plan for State Marine Parks: Prince William Sound and Resurrection Bay (1995) recommends developing public use cabins at Sawmill Bay and Granite Bay. The Warranty Deeds for the Eshamy Bay and Paddy Bay lands allows for the construction of public use cabins in these two areas.