



Happy Holidays!



As we near the end of the year, I would like to recognize the excellent work everyone in this division does to make Alaska State Parks function at the top of its capacity. In our division, a single ranger is in charge of caring for a 1.6 million-acre park, a natural resource specialist and a natural resource technician are in charge of eight park units, including five state marine parks, and a park specialist cares for five state marine parks and a 6,000-acre state recreation area with the help of a ranger who is in charge overseeing the care of even more park units.

With tight budgets and limited staff, what you manage to accomplish is astounding. With the help of volunteers, Alaska State Parks somehow manages to maintain and even improve trails and facilities. I trust that this next year the dedicated staff of Alaska State Parks and the many volunteers that regularly help us out will continue working hard for the sake of our land, resources, and fellow Alaskans.

Alaska State Parks staff and volunteers, you rock!

-Niki

**Last Minute Shopping?
Give the loved ones on
your list the gift of parks!**



Kachemak Bay State Park Thank You to our Friends!

The Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park group hosted their annual meeting in December to honor their hard working volunteers, recruit new members, and showcase their ongoing efforts to support the park.

★ The Friends group is a non-profit volunteer organization that works to support of Kachemak Bay State Park. Some of their many noteworthy contributions include:

- the development of the Kachemak Bay Water Trail,
- participating in Trails ★ Day projects, leading First Day Hikes, along with other First Day events,
- providing transportation for park volunteers, and
- continually seeking out support for the park through special events such as the annual ★ Pancake Breakfast fundraiser held during the Shorebird Festival.

Park staff recently attended the annual Friends of Kachemak Bay SP meeting. During the event, Friends member Dave Brann was presented with a Legislative Citation from Representative Paul Seaton's office honoring his many years of hard work and dedication to the community. Also, Kachemak Bay SP Citizen Advisory Board member Aron Peterson was recognized for his efforts and presented with "The Golden Pulaski" as volunteer of the year for 2016.

Thank you, Friends and volunteers, for ★ all your efforts!

Below: Volunteer-of-the-Year Aron Peterson receives the Golden Pulaski award from Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park Board members (L-R: Robert Archibald, Kris Holderied, Melisse Reichman, Aron Peterson with the Golden Pulaski, Dave Brann, Mako Haggerty, and Kenai Area Parks Superintendent Jack Blackwell.



Friends of Kachemak Bay State Park member Dave Brann receives a Legislative Citation from Representative Paul Seaton's office.



Kenai South District Ranger Jason Okuly gives a report on Kachemak Bay State Park operations.



UAS Class Completes a Service Project at Eagle Beach State Park

The University of Alaska Southeast Juneau offered a small group communication class this past fall semester titled COMM 235: *Small Group Communication and Team Building*. The final assignment for this class required students to break into teams and complete a service project to benefit the Juneau community. One team decided that, since they all enjoy being outside and hiking on trails, they would base their project around those things.

This took the group to Eagle Beach State Park for trail maintenance. The main focus was to clear up hazards created by recent windstorms, including a bridge destroyed by a fallen tree, tops of trees about to fall onto the trail, and debris scattered around the trails. They cut up and removed broken parts of the bridge and the tree, then barricaded the bridge to prevent injury to park users and created a bypass for winter cross-country ski use.

When asked if the group did good work, Southeast Area Superintendent Mike Eberhardt responded, "Great work! Staff definitely [appreciated] the assistance and visitors... will appreciate it more once we start skiing."

Team members: Jacob Eberhardt, Gavin Blood, Emma Lydann, Kieran Smith

Professor: Rosemarie Alexander

Below: Collage provided by UAS shows COMM 235 students working on Service Project at Eagle Beach State Park



Northern News



The Northern Area is excited to welcome Sam Braband to Alaska State Parks. Sam will be filling the Fairbanks Area park ranger position. His former job was Outdoor Recreation Manager at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Before that, Sam worked in Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness as a river ranger. Welcome to Alaska State Parks, Sam!



Ian Ludwig shows off a nice rainbow caught in ice hut D-11 on Quartz Lake. Eight ice huts were placed on Quartz and Birch lakes this month. The Department of Fish and Game provided the huts and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation manages them. Wood stoves provide an opportunity for people to fish in comfort.



The Northern Area Alaska State Parks Citizen Advisory Board held its 25th Interior Legislative Delegation Briefing earlier this month at the Legislative Information Office in Fairbanks. According to Parks Director Ben Ellis, "We had great compliments from both senators during the presentation and warm handshakes from all members before and after. All in all, it was a 10 out of 10!"

Wood-Tikchik Fall Cleaning

This fall Ranger Ali Eskelin spent two long days cutting up remnants of two aircraft that crashed in Wood-Tikchik State Park in the early 1980s, a Cessna 180 on Nishlik Lake and an Aeronca Sedan just west of White Sands Lake. Both wrecks were hazards to visitors and impacted the park's scenic resources. This was a concern specifically because one of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation's three primary management objectives, as outlined in the Wood-Tikchik State Park Management Plan, is to protect Wood-Tikchik's recreational and scenic resources.

The protected bay on the west end of Nishlik Lake is the most popular campsite on the lake and offers the most striking vista. This breathtaking location has been harboring twisted pieces of a metal aircraft for 35 years, strategically hidden by visitors between a rock outcropping and a large alder bush. Though partially concealed behind the alder, the orange metal could still be seen on Google Earth! The location saw the demise of two aircraft, the Cessna 180 and another small plane that came to assist. The second airplane flipped over in strong winds, drifted away and ended up at the bottom of the lake. Since then, local air taxi and lodge pilots picked up portions of the Cessna 180, but the remaining parts were too cumbersome for easy transport. Ali worked to cut the metal into smaller pieces, hauled away what she could, and received the support of two air taxis that plan to backhaul the remaining parts next summer.

There isn't much known about the Aeronca Sedan near White Sands Lake. As a local pilot recalls, "That was in the days when wrecks didn't often get reported." The White Sands Lake area offers great snowmachining in the winter months and is a popular drop off point for hunters and campers in the summer and fall due to the solitude and eye-catching white sand beaches all around the lake. This wreck posed a hazard, particularly during winter for snowmachiners, and increasingly so with the limited snowfall over the last three years. The top portion of the fuselage was removed, along with the bent struts and the cowling, which helped to reduce any hazard and eliminate the blemish on the landscape.



Google Earth image showing the orange metal airplane parts of the Cessna 180 on the west end of Nishlik Lake



The remains of the Cessna 180 and Alaska State Parks' Super Cub on the west end of Nishlik Lake



The remains of the Aeronca Sedan wreck piled on the beach of White Sands Lake prior to removal.