



## Battery Point Trail Open to Public in Chilkat State Park



Battery Point Trail

The Haines Area of Alaska State Parks is pleased to announce the completion of the Battery Point Trail realignment that connects the existing trail down to a lower beach side route and mitigates erosion and run-off issues. The trail work, completed in 2015 and 2016, extends the hardened portion of the trail down to beach access, descending a ridge at the lowest point to avoid a previously muddy, ankle-twisting, root-infested section. The section of trail built to sustainable trail standards was over 1,400 linear feet. Haines Area Natural Resource Technicians, Dallas Anderson and Andrew Althausser, and Alaska Conservation Corps member Liz Segars, worked hard to provide solid trail access for the use, enjoyment, and welfare of the public.

The trail realignment process began long before boots were on the ground in Spring 2015 with hefty public input and a great deal of effort from staff previously assigned to the Haines Area. Tom Kain, the previous park ranger for the Haines Area, applied for a Recreation Trails Program grant during fall 2014. The grant was awarded the following spring for \$47,540. This, compounded with the \$15,000 previously awarded by the City and Borough of Haines, got the project moving.



Rock cairns mark transition points from forested trail to beach stroll.

However, money alone did not move the project forward—it was the expertise of Haines Area staff, Dallas and Andrew, that jump-started the project in Spring 2015. Both Dallas and Andrew had extensive trail work and chainsaw experience under their belts from their time working with Trail Mix, a Juneau-based non-profit. Dallas' eye for trail alignment finalized the details of the route and Ranger Travis Russel deferred to Dallas for all decisions regarding the trail. Volunteers from the Wilderness Adventures Youth Program helped place gravel and rehabilitate widened trails to abate erosion. When trail work resumed in 2016, Liz joined the crew.

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Right: Driftwood and natural elements provided the building materials for benches to rest and relax.



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## Battery Point Trail

They began sling loading gravel using a helicopter contracted through TEMSCO from Skagway. They spread the gravel along sections of trail and replaced dangerous log steps at creek crossings with pressure-treated crib steps. Benches were built for rest points. They completed the final step down the hillside, felling some trees and backfilling the slope to support the switchbacks, by using an innovative combination of logs, beach rock, and pressure-treated crib steps.

Crews also hardened and improved drainage on the 200-foot approach from Battery Point Trail to Mount Riley Trail and hardened the final portions of the Battery Point Trail. Rock cairns were constructed at both beach access points to facilitate wayfinding and benches were also built at these points to provide a place to rest and enjoy the views of Lynn Canal.

This project has been a long-term goal for Haines because of the benefits it provides to residents and visitors. The trail is popular with dog walkers, runners, family hikers, and picnickers. During the cruise ship season, it is used by many commercial operators for guided nature hikes and independent visitors on self-guided hikes. The efforts and skill sets of Dallas, Andrew, and Liz are an asset to State Parks and greatly enhanced the visitor experience in Haines.



These before and after photos show dilapidated log steps and newly constructed pressure-treated crib steps.



Right: Alaska Conservation Corps crewmember Liz Segars poses with the freshly completed Mt. Riley connection.

## Kodiak: The Wind Isle

Kodiak has been receiving a fair amount of high winds lately that recently toppled a few larger Sitka spruce trees in the Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park campground area. A local licensed contractor agreed to remove the trees in exchange for retaining the wood. We are crossing our fingers that this windy winter hasn't caused any additional major damage to the remote public-use cabins and facilities on Shuyak and Afognak Island State Parks, but we will not know until we get back out there this spring.



Work is underway to clean up fallen spruce trees in the Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park campground after a windstorm.

# Making Waves Across Alaska

The *Kids Don't Float* program was busier than ever last year. This statewide injury prevention program is a collaborative effort between several state and federal agencies, organizations and local grassroots sponsors. It consists of two main components: life jacket loaner boards and education programs.

The life jacket loaner board component of the *Kids Don't Float* program consists of over 750 life jacket loaner boards in the state managed by the Department of Health and Social Services, Injury Prevention program. Last year, there were four people who survived an immersion event wearing a *Kids Don't Float* life jacket, for a total of 31 lives to date. The Alaska Office of Boating Safety is the primary provider of life jackets for loaner boards. Contact Maria Bailey (907) 465-4170 for more information.

The national award-winning education program component consists of several classes and presentations. The classes are demand-based; any community can request boating safety education. Instructors offer a professional experience that is based on the latest research in the industry.

Instructors are myth-busting the old concept regarding hypothermia. For example, cold water immersion information has advanced over the years. The old mariner training of "stay with the boat" isn't always applicable to all recreational boating situations. Watch the Emmy award-winning *Cold Water Survivors*, and meet people who survived in cold water for over four hours, primarily because they were wearing a life jacket.

Technology has also evolved; there are many considerations for boaters when choosing the best recommended and required gear for a given situation. There are several hands-on, skills-based course offerings for children, teens, adults, and those interested in becoming instructors. Visit [AlaskaBoatingSafety.org](http://AlaskaBoatingSafety.org) for details.

Instructors from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadrons, Alaska State Troopers, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, various tribes, and civic groups actively teach the *Kids Don't Float* curriculum and contributed to the total activity for 2016. Connect on Facebook: Alaska Boating Safety Program, Instagram: Alaska Boating Safety, and Twitter: AKBoat. For information regarding the *Kids Don't Float* education program, please contact Kelli Toth at (907) 269-6042 or [Kelli.Toth@alaska.gov](mailto:Kelli.Toth@alaska.gov).



## Boating Safety Educator of the Year

The Alaska Office of Boating Safety nominated Ms. Kelli Toth of Chugiak, Alaska, as Educator of the Year for 2017 and she blew the competition out of the water!

As Andrew Schweisthal with Chugiak Elementary School put it, “Kelli Toth runs a well organized program that the students really enjoy. She has the pool sessions planned out so the students are engaged at each station using different survival skills. It is amazing how she challenges the kids to know what to do in a variety of situations. The students really gain a valuable experience that stays with the rest of their lives. Kelli rocks the house!”

Earlier this month, the Atwood Building Parks crew joined to applaud Kelli as Acting Director Matt Wedeking presented her with the award.



Acting Director Matt Wedeking presents Kelli Toth with the Alaska Boating Safety Educator of the Year award.



## A March Visit to Lowell Point

Seward Citizens Advisory Board member, Carol Griswold, drove to Lowell Point in early March to try to get out of the fierce north wind. The beach was beautiful. Neither the upper nor lower parking lots were plowed, but visitors made a path through the snow to get to the park.



The Poems in Place panel, "Soldier's Station," barely protruded above the three or more feet of snow.

Pinnacle Rock looks like a sea lion, staring out to sea and the spectacular scenery beyond.  
Photos courtesy of Carol Griswold



# Northern News

- Ranger Ian Thomas was invited to the Fairbanks Snow Travelers meeting this month to discuss snowmachining opportunities in the Northern Area and to provide an update on the snow grooming program. This has become an annual event for Ranger Thomas.
- Above average snowfall is a welcome change for winter recreation in the Northern Area. Thirty-four inches of snowfall pushes this winter into the top 10 snowiest winters on record for Fairbanks.



Spectators gather at Chena Pump Wayside to watch Iditarod mushers leave Fairbanks on their way to Nome. One hundred and twenty-two vehicles were counted in the parking lot on the chilly -30°F day.



Maintenance worker Doug Avara clears snowpack from Chena Pump Wayside in preparation for the Iditarod Sled Dog Race. The state recreation site on the Tanana River is an excellent location to view racers on their way to Nome.



Above and below: Ranger Sam Braband takes the family on a ski trip on Angel Creek Trail in Chena River State Recreation Area.



Iditarod spectators at Chena Pump Wayside



## Plane Crash on the Kenai

In early February, a Piper PA-18 airplane crashed into the Kenai River at river mile 32, approximately one mile upstream of Morgan's Landing in the Kenai River Special Management Area. Ranger Melissa Smith and Maintenance Chief Dave Engholm responded to the scene by snowmachine within minutes of the initial 911 call. Chief Ranger Jacques Kosto also responded by road.

The pilot was a 27-year-old woman, who was conscious and breathing upon contact, but suffered a severely broken leg. The airplane appeared to contact the river nose first and continued to slide 50 yards before hitting the riverbank. A witness in a separate airplane landed in a nearby field and extricated the pilot from the plane.

Emergency Medical Services personnel arrived on scene shortly after Alaska State Parks staff and transported the pilot to the hospital. Parks staff played an integral role in the search and rescue by making multiple trips with snowmachines to transport EMS personnel and equipment from the road to the crash scene.



Parks staff and EMS respond to a plane crash on the Kenai River near Morgan's Landing last month.

## Chugach Welcomes New Natural Resource Technician

Chugach State Park welcomes new Natural Resource Technician Sean Cook. Sean has been working with the park for the past two summers as a part of the Alaska Conservation Corps crew. He has an accomplished background in trails, public-use cabins, and tree care. He is always the hardest working person on the trail, and we are happy to have him!



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