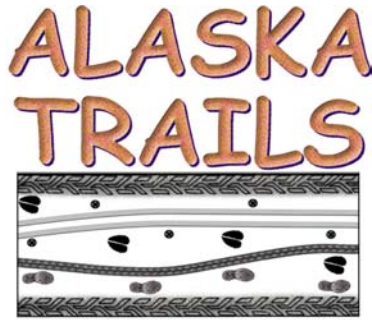


PO Box 140264  
Anchorage, AK  
99514-0264  
www.alaska-trails.org  
333-4442



Lester says:

“We are known  
by the tracks  
we leave”

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Welcome to Alaska Trails' first statewide newsletter. This is our attempt to help broaden the trail information message across the state. The following are short samples of trail activities around the state that you might be interested in. A contact or web address is listed for follow-up. A copy of this newsletter will also be posted to our web site. If there is sufficient interest, we may do another newsletter in late February 2005. Your contributions, as always, are welcome.

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**Welcome Lester Lightfoot** - Meet Lester Lightfoot, a red fox whose job is to convince all trail users to be respectful of wild animals and the wild places he and his relatives inhabit. As Smokey Bear has shown, animals can communicate some messages more effectively than humans, says Stacy Studebaker, the Kodiak artist and retired science teacher who created Lester. And like Smokey, Lester has a motto that always accompanies him; “We are known by the tracks we leave.”

A red fox that appeared on Stacy's cabin doorstep one winter and left his little footprints on a nearby beach inspired the development of Lester. A friend took several photos of the fox that Stacy named “Lester Lightfoot”. The photos developed into the cartoon fox that Stacy now uses for trail use education.

“I went for a walk on the beach one morning after kids had been 4 wheeling there and was intrigued by the pattern created by the combination of tracks in the sand which included human foot prints, fox and bird tracks, and 4-wheeler tracks. I thought about some dinosaur tracks I'd seen in sandstone in Arizona and the motto “We are known by the tracks we leave” popped into my head.”

The fox seemed like the perfect animal to convey educational messages about Alaskan trails. “Most people regard foxes as smart and handsome,” Studebaker says. “They are beautiful creatures with their fluffy tails and contrasting colors. They are fun to draw too. People also encounter them or their tracks often so they are familiar critters that have been a subject of folklore forever. When foxes pass through the land, they don't leave much impact behind.”

Lester is a handsome-looking fellow who wears knee-high rubber boots, a red bandana, and a custom baseball hat with holes for his ears to poke out. “I gave him the red, white and blue look because I wanted him to be subtly all-American.” She paid great attention to detail, even drawing Lester with a round tummy so as not to appeal to only athletic types.

The foxy Lester first appeared in a Kodiak Borough-funded brochure that explains why riding in streams can damage salmon habitat and shows the locations of legal stream crossings. He also has been adopted as the mascot for Alaska Trails, a nonprofit group dedicated to statewide trail protection and enhancement. This summer, Lester showed up on a new Hiking and Birding Guide for Kodiak Island saying, “Please respect the land.”

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**Austin Helmers Trail Dedication** - The Austin Helmers-Pioneer Ridge Trail dedication took place Saturday, October 2, at the trailhead along the Knik River Road near Palmer. Surrounded by his family, friends, and co-workers, the trail that he has worked on since 1990 (a lot of the work which was done by himself), was dedicated in his honor. This is one of the dozens of trails that Austin has worked on in the Valley area over the past 20<sup>+</sup> years. American Trails also recognized him during the 1996 National Trails Conference in Anchorage with a Lifetime Service



Award. Way to go Austin! May we all have your commitment and enthusiasm to trails when we are 88! Photos by Ron Swanson.

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**American Trails Recognizes Alaskans October 23 at the National Trails Symposium** - Alaska Trail Advocate Award to **Jody Simpson** for her continued efforts to influence public policy for trail protection. Jody is a Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly Member. During her time on the Assembly, she has worked very diligently and consciously on recreational trail issues. She has been a staunch public supporter for the need to have trails reserved and dedicated for public use in perpetuity.

**Alaska Trail Worker Award to two Alaskans.** **Eric Clarke** has extensive experience in trail design, construction and maintenance. The design and construction of 50 miles of new trails within Kachemak Bay State Park best witness his dedication and commitment to the trails. These trails, accessible by water taxi, personal boat, and kayak, are now one of the most popular destinations for hikers.

**Austin Helmers** had a mission to find a hiking route up Pioneer Peak, a 6,400' peak near Palmer. Twelve years of hard work and determination resulted in a route developed for the average hiker. See more above about Austin's trail dedication.

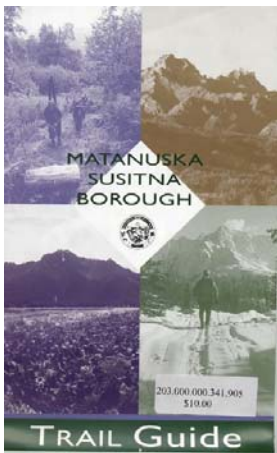
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**Anchorage Trails and Greenways Coalition** - ATGC has been working with other groups in Anchorage to protect and improve access into Chugach State Park. Recently, ATGC, along with the Chugach Park Access Coalition and concerned citizens, persuaded the Anchorage Platting Board to require a developer in the Stuckagain Heights area of Anchorage to dedicate public access to the park as a condition of approval of his subdivision plat. This is an important precedent because the Anchorage Trails Plan requires that historical access be protected as lands are subdivided, yet over the years the platting authorities have been lax in enforcing this requirement and

many neighborhood access points have been lost as subdivisions have sprung up. With increased vigilance, we hope to stop that trend. ATGC also is working with the Anchorage Winter Recreation and Tourism Partnership (organized through the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau) on a range of activities to improve Anchorage trails and winter recreation opportunities. Collectively, we believe the tourist industry and others in the business community have strong incentives to support protection of open space and improvements to trails and park facilities, and we hope to build closer working relationships between non-profits and businesses. We are working to get funding to survey trail use and to compile information on the economic and health benefits of trails and winter recreation. We also are looking at developing a plan for new Chugach Park access points and a possible new winter recreation facility at some point along the Anchorage-Chugach Park boundary. More info: Michael Mitchell at: [mgm@ak.net](mailto:mgm@ak.net)

**Outdoor Recreation and Trails Advisory Board** - The former TRAAK Citizen's Advisory Board has been abolished and replaced by the ORTAB. As of December 1, the AK DNR Commissioner had appointed eight board members: Susan Byersdorfer, Kodiak; Paul Sandhofer, Anchorage; Ken Lancaster, Soldotna; Rich Macintyre, Sitka; Bobby Andrew, Dillingham; Bruce Friend, Anchorage; Wendell J. Shiffler, Fairbanks; and Bish Buckle, Wasilla. Their first meeting is expected sometime in January 2005 under the auspices of Alaska State Parks. The ORTAB will review federal recreational trail grant proposals, prioritize Land and Water conservation Fund grants, and address various other topics from time to time. More info: Samantha Carroll at [samantha\\_carroll@dnr.state.ak.us](mailto:samantha_carroll@dnr.state.ak.us)

**Alaska Trails Seeks New Board Members** - Alaska Trails would like to diversify its board with one or more additional member(s) from around the state. We are especially interested in trail users from off the road net and Southeast Alaska. If you have an interest in trails, have some available time (5-6 hours/month), are willing to be a trail steward and advocate for trails across the state, and can meet via monthly teleconferences during the day for one-two hours, please join us. More info: Jack Mosby at 333-4442 or [jrmosby@alaskalife.net](mailto:jrmosby@alaskalife.net)



**Matanuska Susitna Borough Trail Guide** - The MSB recently published a very handy trail guide listing over 100 trails Borough-wide. It includes year-round, winter, multi-use, and nonmotorized trails. The trail guide is \$10. It shows only those trails with legal public rights-of-way, but they are not necessarily marked or maintained. The Borough intends to update the maps every 2-3 years to make corrections and add new public trail easements. To order your copy, contact the MSB Community Development Department, 350 East Dahlia AVE, Palmer, AK 99645.

**MSB Trail Care Program** - The MSB is now accepting applications for the Trail Care Program. The goal of the program is to promote and support volunteer trail stewardship, teach trail maintenance and trail building techniques, and promote health through safe and enjoyable trails. The program unites trail users with meaningful volunteer work and provides an opportunity for individuals and groups to be actively involved in our community. Volunteers assist the Borough by adopting a trail and helping with the vital task of improving and maintaining trails throughout the Borough. Volunteers who choose to become a MSB Trail Care Crew or crewmember will adopt-a-trail to maintain and improve for a year or more. They will receive training and guidelines on trail monitoring, trail maintenance and trail building techniques. Tools, equipment and training will be provided by the MSB whenever possible. Trail user groups, civic organizations, youth groups, church organizations, community groups, schools, and private industries and businesses are

encouraged to adopt-a-trail and become a trail care crew. All that is needed is the ability and desire to build, improve, and maintain trails. Volunteer participants in the MSB Trail Care Program must be at least 12 years old. For every 6 minors (age 12-17) who participate, at least one adult (age 21 or older) must be continuously present and act in a supervisory capacity for the minors. Minors under 18 years old may not operate motorized or power equipment.

MSB Trail Care Crews and crew members agree to:

- \* Complete a Volunteer Trail Care Application
- \* Attend a one-day MSB Trail Care Training session
- \* Perform trail care as outlined in the Trail Care Agreement
- \* Provide adequate supervision to participants seventeen years of age or younger
- \* Advise the MSB of trail problems or concerns that are beyond the Trail Care Crew's resources and/or capabilities
- \* Encourage all trail users to utilize the "Trail Etiquette Standard for Trail Users"
- \* Adopt-a-trail for a minimum of one year

MSB will:

- \* Provide hand tools, and other trail maintenance equipment when available
- \* Provide Trail Care training on an annual basis
- \* Provide signs, trailhead kiosks and markers (if available)
- \* Publicly recognize the volunteer group for their work
- \*

**MSB Public Trail Easements** - The Borough has a goal to acquire 2005 miles of public easements for recreational trails by the end of 2005. There are an estimated 1,700-1,800 miles of public trail easements currently. The borough has spent thousands of dollars having trails surveyed and mapped for this project in order to preserve recreational access all over the borough. Legal rights-of-way for trails near Petersville, Trapper Creek, Amber Lake, Big Lake, Pt. MacKenzie, Sutton, Eureka, and Lake Louise, to name a few, have

recently been obtained. A list is being compiled and may be available by the next newsletter. More info: Bruce.Paulsen@matsugov.us or 745-9867.



The District's Trail Crew and volunteers work to build this year's final section of boardwalk, approximately 1 mile south of Caribou Lake. The District will lay down the final boardwalk footage in 2005.

**Caribou Lake Trail** - The second field season on the Caribou Lake Trail was completed in mid-September. The Homer Soil and Water Conservation District (The District), with its partners, have lain down almost 8,000 feet of boardwalk en route to one of the lower Kenai Peninsula's most attractive off-road vehicle access and recreation areas, Caribou Lake. Caribou Lake is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Homer.

The Caribou Lake Trail project spawned from studies of the impacts of off-highway recreational vehicles on the landscape in the Lower Kenai Peninsula. The Snomads; Cook Inlet Keeper; the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; and The District formed a partnership to address these issues by rerouting and working to legally establish a multiple-use trail to Caribou Lake. Funding for the project has been provided by numerous sources, including the State Recreational Trail Grants, the Natural Resource Conservation Service Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program, and the Snomads (a local ATV and Snowmachine user group). Many individuals contributed over 300 hours of volunteer time on the trail this year, by far, making this the most successful field season for the project. "It was the collaboration by all the diverse partners that has made this project a success, as well as the incredible dedication of the folks out there this summer," Lindsay Winkler, The District's program manager stated. The District anticipates completing the project by the fall of 2005. More info: Lindsay Winkler at hswcd@xyz.net

**Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan - SCORP** - Alaska State Parks has revised the "Alaska's Outdoor Legacy - Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan" for 2004-2009. The SCORP maintains Alaska's eligibility to participate in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program in addition to helping policymakers determine where and how funds for outdoor recreation should be allocated for State and local recreation projects. The plan explores outdoor recreation-related preferences, issues, use trends, needs, and existing and potential facility development. It assists recreation providers, advisory boards, user groups, and the public in making outdoor recreation decisions. The plan gives Alaska State Parks the direction and priorities necessary to implement strong outdoor recreation programs for all levels of government as well as the private sector. The objectives identified in the plan: developing a secure funding base for outdoor recreation and maintenance, expanding recreation opportunities on public lands, improving access to recreation resources, and meeting the needs of diverse and increasing user groups will require all our collective effort to meet. The plan is available to all interested parties including recreation providers, communities, and the public statewide. More info: <http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/plans/scorp/index.htm>



**International Mountain Bike Association Trail Crew Trains in Alaska** - Mark Schmidt and Lora Woolner, of the award winning Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew, spent two weeks in June 2004 leading two Trailbuilding Schools - one at the Fairbanks Birch Hill Nordic Ski Center and one in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley Kepler-Bradley Lakes area. Over 50 people attended the two classroom and day long, hands-on trail training sessions. Mark and Lora also met with land managers, city planners, trailbuilders, and trail users to encourage dialog about decisions affecting the trails they love. The Wildlands Section of the Alaska Recreation and Parks Association and Alaska Trails funded their visit. The Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks and Recreation Department recently requested a 2005 visit by the 2005 IMBA Trail Crew as well as Anchorage's Single Track Advocates ([www.singletrackadvocates.org](http://www.singletrackadvocates.org)). STA was also the recent recipient of an IMBA/REI Outdoor Stewardship kit (McLeod, Pulaski, clinometer, *Trail Solutions* book, gloves, signs, t-shirts, and Responsible Riding flyers). More info: <http://imba.com/>

**Mechanized Equipment and Trail Training** - The Fairbanks office of the Bureau of Land Management is in the process of trying to get a class set up for next summer, but they don't have any definite information yet (dates, cost, etc.). The class size will be limited. More info: Tim Dupont at [Tim\\_Dupont@ak.blm.gov](mailto:Tim_Dupont@ak.blm.gov) or 474-2370.

**Snowmobile Grant Applications Due December 15** - In May, 2000, the Alaska Legislature approved money for grants to develop and maintain snowmobile trails and trailheads, and for safety and education programs. Grants are available for easement acquisition, equipment rental or purchase, and construction or maintenance of trails, and trail related facilities. Matching funds are required for trail development grants. No match is required for safety and education grants. If you would like to know more about applying for a snowmobile trail grant, please contact: Samantha Carroll at 269-8699 or [samantha\\_carroll@dnr.state.ak.us](mailto:samantha_carroll@dnr.state.ak.us) or [www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/grants/snowmotr.htm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/grants/snowmotr.htm)

**Southeast Alaska Trail System - SEATrails** - SEATrails was established to help plan, promote, maintain, and construct a region wide, Southeast Alaska trail system that will stimulate economic development, enhance quality of life, and improve transportation. With 18 supporting communities, and seven other regional and statewide organizational supporters, SEATrails has been successful in obtaining

several grants that have led to the almost complete SEATrails Transportation and Trails Master Plan. The plan describes over 80 trails and cultural features identified by the communities they want SEATrails to promote. As part of the plan, this information will become part of their updated web page and be searchable by trail activity and community. Part of the grant funds have also gone into a \$125,000 community based trail grant program which received four times that amount in applications. A Business/Marketing Plan will be initiated in early 2005. More info: [www.seatrails.org](http://www.seatrails.org)



**Fairbanks Multi-Use Trail and Park Area Proposal** - A new multi-use 400-acre recreation area proposal is underway in the Fairbanks area that will connect with neighborhoods and the 100-Mile Fairbanks Loop Trail. The proposed recreation area would be located south of Ester between Cripple Creek and Isberg Roads in the Cripple Creek subdivision off the Parks Highway. The Borough Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with user groups and adjacent landowners, will develop a master plan to determine where trails will go, what kind of uses they will be designated for, and the location of facilities such as parking lots, trailheads, and warm-up huts. A number of diverse local trails and advisory groups have expressed support for the recreation area. They include the Fairbanks Cycle Club, Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks, Interior Trails Preservation Coalition, Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association, Alaska Dog Musher's Association, Fairbanks Area Hiking Club, Ester Community Association, Borough's Trails Advisory Commission, and the Parks and Recreation Commission. An area trail system was identified when the original recreation oriented Cripple Creek

Subdivision was developed in 1982. Borough officials estimate it will be one to two years before actual construction begins once the master plan is completed and all the approvals are in place. More info: Dan Chagnon at [dchagnon@co.fairbanks.ak.us](mailto:dchagnon@co.fairbanks.ak.us)

**Trail Staking** - The MatSu Trails Council, with direction from the Matanuska Susitna Borough (MSB), helped sign and mark about 80 miles of trails in the Eureka Summit area last spring/winter. Most of the trails were signed every mile with flat, flexible fiberglass markers (provided by the MSB) listing the trail name and distances from major intersections. More info: Scott Lapeine at 373-7568 or [lapiene@usa.net](mailto:lapiene@usa.net) or see the MSB Trail Care Program above.

**Curry Ridge Riders** - On Saturday, December 4th, the Curry Ridge Riders, the snowmobile club of South Denali, will complete the clearing of and preparation for grooming of the East-West Express Trail. There is only about a mile and a half of trail to be cleared and brushed to allow a 12-foot wide groomer to pass through. With prospects of grooming money excellent, we want the trail to be ready when the check arrives. The East-West Express allows for a direct route to the Petersville Road near the Deep Creek Trail and the Peters Hills without having to park at Kroto Creek and ride those awful bumps. Be at the parking lot at MP 121.5 of the Parks Highway to depart at 10 am. If you arrive late, just follow the tracks to the crossing at MP 122 and catch up with us. We'll be heading west. Bring brush nippers, saws, a lunch, and water. We'll work on the East-West until about 3PM, then head back, with a short familiarization tour of the Chulitna Bluff Trail, then back to the parking lot. If you can't stay all day, come out for as long as you can-every little bit helps. More info: Joe Gauna at 244-6775 or [joegauna@gci.net](mailto:joegauna@gci.net)

**Alaska East Resource Management Plan** - The Glennallen Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management is preparing an East Alaska Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. The Plan will provide guidance and direction for BLM-managed public lands located in portions of eastern Alaska for the next 10-15 years. It includes the area from Cantwell, across the Denali Highway (both sides), Paxson and Paxson Lake areas including the Delta and Gulkana Rivers, south to Valdez, and a separate unit around the Bering Glacier and River to just east of Cape Yakataga. It includes hundreds of trail and river miles with specific sections addressing trails and the two river corridors. The draft plan/EIS is scheduled to be out for public review by mid-February for three months of review-comment. If you want to get on the mailing list, call Bruce Rogers at 822-3217 or hit their website at [www.glennallen.ak.blm.gov/landplan/index.html](http://www.glennallen.ak.blm.gov/landplan/index.html)

**Winter Trails Day** - Winter Trails® Day will be January 8, 2005 at more than 100 locations around the country. The event, now in its 10th year, offers the public the chance to try snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, and to discover the great fitness and social benefits with these easy-to-learn winter sports. Winter Trails is a program of American Hiking Society and SnowSports Industries America and is a part of SIA's **Winter Feels Good**. Log on to find an event near you! More info: [www.wintertrails.org/index](http://www.wintertrails.org/index)

The only Alaskan event I could find on the Internet was February 12 at the Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage for a "Winter Trails Activity Day." What is your club doing to celebrate?

The next Alaska Trails Board Meeting teleconference is December 14, 2004. Contact Jack at [jmosby@alaskalife.net](mailto:jmosby@alaskalife.net) or 333-4442 for more information.

The next Alaska Trails Newsletter will be in late February. Deadline for articles: February 20, 2005.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**