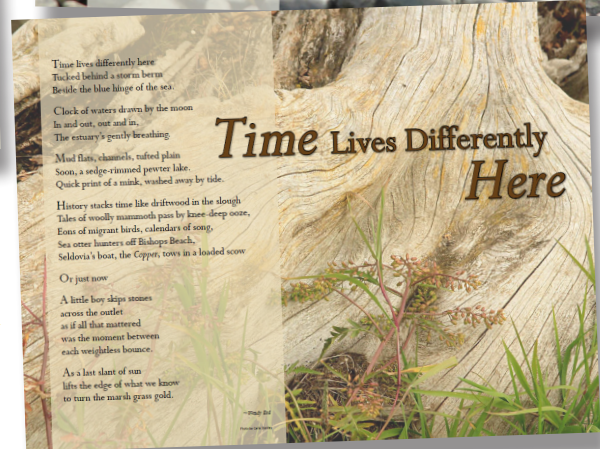
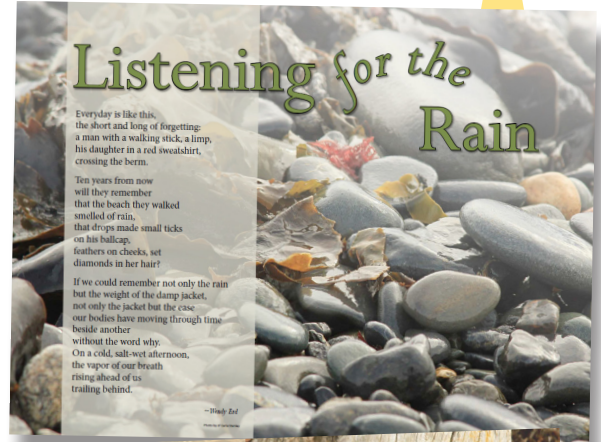
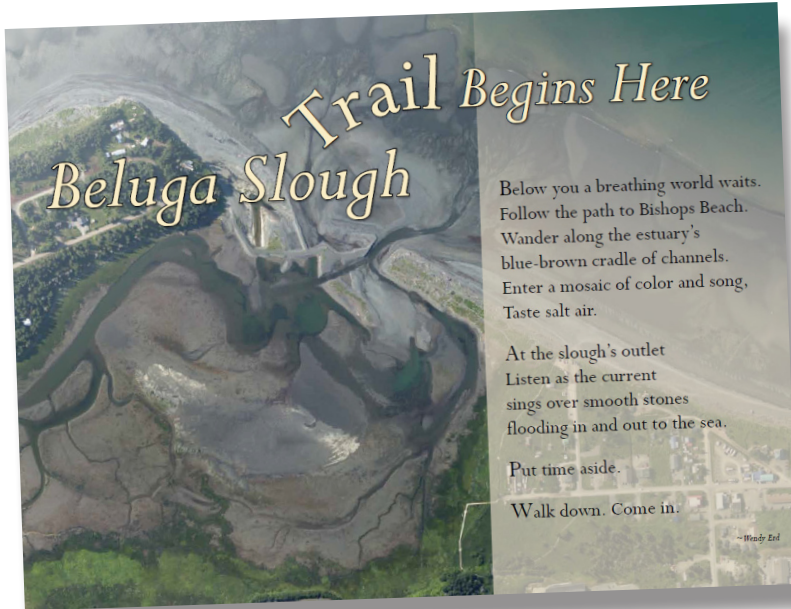




Thanks be to Beluga Slough



A trio of examples from the new Beluga Slough Trail poetry project

There's that certain time of year in that certain favorite place that simply inspires me. I can feel it, and smell it, and hear it—and it really makes me itch for a breezy spring day in Alaska.

On an autumn day, a team of people from the City of Homer and US Fish and Wildlife Service got together to talk about new interpretive displays for the Beluga Slough Trail, which recently received a makeover with an elevated boardwalk. The Bunnell Street Arts Center asked that their Artist in Residence work on the project. The team developed interpretive themes and the workshop—well—it inspired the group to think about their personal experiences at the slough. It inspired the Artist in Residence so much that she wrote some poetry.



The author, Wendy Erd, has been influential in the Poems in Place project that aims to place a poem in each of the seven areas of the Alaska State Park system. She presented her compositions to the Islands and Ocean Visitor Center Manager, Marianne Aplin, who did not expect to use poems for all of the interpretive displays, but couldn't resist accepting the verses. She immediately thought of the Poems in Place project and called the Alaska State Parks Interpretation and Education program to see if she could get her own version of the project at Beluga Slough. Carey Meyer with Homer's Public Works Department embraced this artsy addition to the trail project as the icing on the cake.

In the end, the interpretive themes turned into beautiful poems and they all have the same voice. The simple, striking graphics draw the reader in and the prose keeps the reader engaged. If you are headed down to Homer this spring, maybe take a detour to the Beluga Slough Trail. Who knows? You might get inspired.

—Emily Angel Lochart, Interpretation and Education Manager



Waffles at Wickersham

Last month, the Juneau State Parks Advisory Board hosted the second annual Waffles at Wickersham event. Director Ben Ellis and Deputy Commissioner Ed Fogels attended this year's event along with several senators, representatives, and their staffers. The event was a success with waffles, coffee, and conversation about the House of Wickersham Museum flowing freely.



Juneau Senator Dennis Eagan, Juneau State Parks board chair Gail Smith, board members Kurt Iverson and Craig Moore



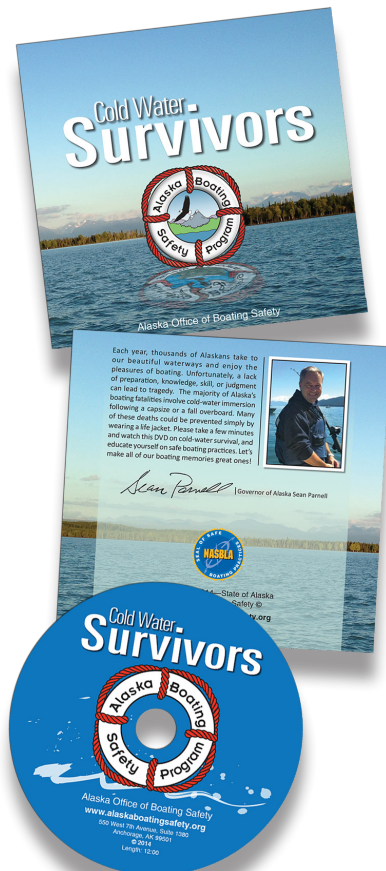
Director Ben Ellis and long-term State Parks board member Alice Rarig at the House of Wickersham

New Boating Safety Educational Film

The Alaska Office of Boating Safety recently completed its third instructional video, and judging from the public's response, this may be the best production yet. Within 48 hours of its posting to YouTube, the 12-minute video was viewed over 2,000 times. A supplement for the Kids Don't Float Schools Program, it tells a real life story of cold water immersion that underlines the importance of wearing life jackets.

Gayle Udelhoven Koger explains: "On June 4, 2011, my family went on a weekend outing by boat to a cabin on the north shore of Tustumena Lake. The excursion soon became far more dangerous than anyone anticipated. The weather turned wicked and our 18-foot aluminum skiff swamped and sank. Everyone went into the frigid, glacier-fed lake, with water temperatures in the upper 30s. Because my daughters were wearing life vests, they survived even though they were in the water for over four hours. I hope your family never has to experience an event like this. I also hope that you take the messages in this video seriously, beginning with always wearing a life jacket. Perhaps we can prevent these potentially fatal events from ever happening."

The Alaska Office of Boating Safety offers a variety of well-received free presentations and programs throughout the state that have reached over 100,000 students. Nevertheless, the staff of the Alaska Office of Boating Safety wanted to do more to reach the target audience of young adults. This target group is accustomed to getting information fast, either on the internet or through television. So, the Office of Boating Safety produced the short video to pique the interest of young viewers and encourage them to adopt safe boating practices.



Cover art for the new boating safety film

Northern Area News

- With the lake level dropping at Harding Lake State Recreation Area, it has become more and more difficult to launch and load boats. Maintenance workers Doug Avara and Marty Schatz spent three weeks dredging the boat channel. The Harding Lake boat channel will be much easier to navigate this summer thanks to their efforts, which made the channel four feet deep, 30 feet wide, and 1,200 feet long. Quartz Lake is next.
- The second annual Chena River to Ridge Endurance Race was held in Chena River SRA in early March. Twenty six teams raced a 25-mile course on the Compeau Trail. Another 31 racers did the 45-mile leg that included both the Compeau and Stiles Creek trails.
- The Delta Nordic Ski/Trail Club threw a “Sun Celebration” at Quartz Lake SRA. They rented the public-use cabin and three ice fishing huts. Over 100 people attended the festivities, which included a fishing derby, snowshoeing, skiing, dog mushing, and skijor events. State Parks pitched in with plowing, clearing four miles of trail, and setting several miles of track for classical skiing.



Dredging the boat channel at Harding Lake SRA



Boy Scout Troop 92 performed a community service project for Alaska State Parks by splitting and stacking firewood for use at the roadside public-use cabins in Chena River SRA. They also restocked the woodsheds at all three cabins. Woohoo Troop 92!



Megan Webb and Alyssa Hooton hanging out in the ice fishing hut during the Sun Celebration at Quartz Lake SRA



Thank you Cliff Larson, Division of Mining, Land and Water, for surplusing two Summit 550 snowmachines to the Northern Area. The ranger staff will put them to good use.



Yvonne and Wally Leavitt (back), Amelia Wenters and Zander Heaney (front) show off their fish at the Sun Celebration



Kids playing on the ice at the Sun Celebration

Chili Beach Party



Chili judge Dr. David Johnson



Board member Jim Shoemaker said a few words while the “Free Radicals” dance band prepared to play.

During a period of below-freezing temperatures in Ketchikan, things warmed up a bit with the first “Chili Beach Party” in late February. The Ketchikan State Parks Citizens Advisory Board and members of the Friends of Alaska State Parks-Ketchikan hosted the chili contest and potluck dinner event. The event was held at Refuge Cove State Recreation Site, and some good neighbors, the North Tongass Community Center, donated the rental of the building and kept the chili warm.

Chili-making contestants submitted 14 chili entries within their choice of three categories: meat, vegetarian, and wild card chili. Five pre-selected chili judges came with their own expertise in tasting and chili making skills: Fire Chief Steve Rydeen, professional cook Debi Simons, Executive Director of the Art Council Kathleen Light (also from the Southwest), maker-of-many-chilies-and-won’t-give-out-the-recipe Dr. David Johnson, and professional artist and gallery and restaurant owner Terry Pyles. Using a detailed score sheet, the judges took their job seriously. Three first place winners and three honorable mentions were chosen. The winners all received awards and a “People’s Choice Award” was also presented.

Over the course of the evening, more than 150 community guests were estimated to have attended this family-friendly event. Advisory board members gave a brief presentation about Ketchikan’s State Parks and talked about some of the most recent project accomplishments, including some that hopefully are to come. The “Free Radicals” provided old-time and bluegrass dance music.



Young and old alike danced the night away.



The crowd enjoying the chili

