



State Park Merchandise Bill Passes Legislature



State Parks' t-shirts, hoodies, and hats along with blank note cards, trail maps, and other printed materials highlighting some of the state's most beautiful park areas will now be sold to help underwrite the operational expenses of Alaska State Parks after both the Alaska State House and Senate unanimously passed legislation earlier this month.

With the passage of SB101, introduced by Governor Bill Walker, Alaska will join a majority of states with park merchandise programs, says Ben Ellis, Alaska State Park director.

"There are a half a dozen states that belong to what I call the \$1 million club," says Ellis. "Those state park merchandise programs bring in at least a \$1 million in profit annually. But they have also been around for a number of years."

Alaska's program will start small, says the director, and then grow as startup issues are addressed and funding is available to expand the number and kinds of products.

Printed products like blank note cards and reprints of artwork created by visiting artists participating in the Rie Muñoz/Dorothy Gruening Artist-In-Residence program will be first introduced while federal and state trademarks are secured for park clothing merchandise. Once trademarks are in hand, Ellis sees focusing on the Anchorage market and Chugach State Park as the next step.

It is envisaged that merchandise will be sold through retail stores, online and to a very limited extent through park locations.

"The merchandise program has the potential, in time, to provide significant revenue to support our park system, thus reducing the amount needed from the state general fund," says Ellis. "We are looking at a number of ways to diversify our revenue stream while reducing the cost of doing business and finding efficiencies with online reservations and cashless payment systems."



(R-L) Ryan Thomas, Justin Wholey, and Emily Angel spread the word about Alaska State Parks during the "Workender" event at the Anchorage Bass Pro Shops

Alaska State Parks at the "Workender"

Alaska State Parks staff participated this month in the Anchorage Bass Pro Shops' "Workender" event. Part of a nationwide event at stores across the United States, it was designed for people who work all week, but live for their weekend escape into the great outdoors. Stores promoted the event as an opportunity to learn about local camping, paddling, fishing, and hiking options. Justin Wholey, Ryan Thomas, and Emily Angel represented Alaska State Parks with a booth, showcasing our most popular sites for the weekend visitor.

The Anchorage store hosted how-to seminars, distributed free samples of snacks and backpacking meals, and held hourly prize drawings for new gear and gift cards. Shoppers dropped by the booth, not expecting to see the display, and walked away with enough information to get them excited about their next adventure in our parks. The trail guides, Chugach State Park brochure, and the Alaska State Parks stickers were all a big hit with visitors. The Division of Mining, Land & Water also had a booth to distribute state land sales brochures.

Celebrate the Sun 2016



Carol Dunlap-Austin and Coleen ice fishing at the 2016 Celebrate the Sun event hosted by the Delta Junction Trails Association and held at Quartz Lake State Recreation Area.

by MINDY EGGLESTON, Delta Junction Trails Association

Delta Junction Trails Association's Celebrate the Sun 2016 event was held at Quartz Lake State Recreation Area on a warm, sunny day. Over 100 folks, families, and friends shared the park, enjoying the day's offerings. Participants watched the talented and imaginative local artist Sam Vose transform blocks of ice into a fish, hot dog, and skier.

Interior Freight Dog Association also came down from Fairbanks with their beautiful St. Bernard dogs, sledge, and cart. They generously shared tips with the public to help them teach their own dogs how to pull. Brandy Baker with Fish & Game drilled holes and offered polls for ice fishing and basic instruction on how to catch 'em. Ellie Mason brought her dog team and shared the excitement of dog mushing with everyone. Dick Austin fired up a Swedish hand warmer and everyone roasted hot dogs (compliments of John Sloan) and made s'mores with help from Scout Troop 56.

DJTA's Christine Lemly offered photo ops staged with a dog sled and a beautiful husky named Traveler. Alaska State Parks groomed the trails for skiing and snowshoeing as best they could with the light dusting of snow still available.

At the end of the day, all 2016 DJTA members were eligible for the drawing of a beautiful wolf trapper's hat, compliments of Rachelle Stebbins. The lucky winner was Annie Grossman.

DJTA thanks all the hard working volunteers for their generous contributions towards this year's successful, fun-filled event. They also want to give a special shout out to Wayne Crowson, whose skills with the megaphone were impressive. The time and effort of everyone who helped with this event supporting the trail users in the Delta Junction area is much appreciated!



Sam Vose carves a block of ice into a hot dog.



Children ice fishing on Quartz Lake during the 2016 celebrate the Sun event.



Ellie Mason gave Celebrate the Sun participants a chance to go dog mushing.

Northern News



Ranger Brad Garasky frames up a pony wall for the loft of a reconstructed cabin that will provide volunteer housing this summer. After a 45-mile trip from Chena River SRA, it will serve as the base of operations for campground hosts working Olmes Pond in Lower Chatanika State Recreation Area. The cabin previously housed a summer trail crew made up of volunteers.



Northern area staff removed ice huts from lakes at the end of March. Normally, they are removed in early April, but warm spring-like weather dictated early removal.



A "Cat train" (Caterpillar equipment) crosses the Chena River SRA on its way to mining claims outside park boundaries. State Parks, Fish and Game, the Division of Mining, Land and Water, and a half dozen mining operations worked together to adhere to cross country permits that minimized resource impacts.

- Northern Area staff are working on a safety re-route for the Yukon Quest Trail section that runs through Chena River SRA. The Chena River washed out a segment that parallels the river.
- Twin Bears Camp in Chena River SRA didn't receive any proposals for camp operation. The Fairbanks Rescue Mission agreed to operate the camp through the summer to honor reservations already made and allow time to solicit a new contractor.
- Ranger Brad Garasky spent a day at the Tanana Middle School Career Day recruiting the next generation of State Park Rangers. The kids loved the moose antlers Brad brought to display, and the tree-shaped cookies were also a big hit.



Alaska State Parks on *Outdoor Explorer*



Park Specialist Blaine Smith of Chugach State Park discussed trails in the Anchorage area on Alaska Public Media's *Outdoor Explorer* radio program hosted by Charles Wohlforth. Blaine was a guest alongside Steve Cleary of Alaska Trails. The program aired earlier this month on the Alaska Public Radio Network. You can listen to an archived version of the broadcast at <http://www.alaskapublic.org/2016/04/15/new-trails/>

It's Moss Season!

By CAROL GRISWOLD, *Seward Area State Parks Citizen Advisory Board member*

A snow-less winter or early spring are ideal times to enjoy the beauty of coastal rainforest mosses in the Seward State Parks. When the other forest plants are dormant, dozens of different kinds mosses in every shade of green are easy to see.

★ One of the more common and dominant species on the forest floor is the Stair-step Moss. This large, feathery moss is easy to recognize. The current year's growth arises from the center of the previous year's branch, forming a unique stair-step effect. Each "step" is one year's growth.

★ Another easily identified, large moss tucked at the base of trees, on logs, and humus is the Wavy-leaved Cotton Moss. This pale, whitish-green moss grows in mats of cascading, flat, triangular blades.

Where the humidity is high, mosses can cover tree branches to the treetops, forming fat, rounded balls and thick mats, often with long, hanging shoots. A common tree branch moss is the Hanging Wing-moss.

★ As you walk along the trails, have a scavenger hunt for these interesting mosses, and see how many other species you can find. It's a whole new world!



Hanging Wing-moss
Antitrichia curtipendula
Carol Griswold



Wavy-leaved Cotton Moss
Buckiella undulatum
Carol Griswold



Stair-step Moss *Hylocomium splendens*
Carol Griswold

Spring came very early to the Mat-Su Valley—the daffodils have never bloomed at the Finger Lake HQ in March before.

