



Statewide Conference Brings Ideas and Friends Together



One hundred and twenty-five Alaska State Parks employees attended the statewide conference in Anchorage in late September (not all 125 are in this photo).

Alaska State Parks' first all-staff conference in six years was held in Anchorage in late September over the course of two days. Participation was high, with 125 of a possible 132 employees attending.

We were honored to have Lewis Ledford, a park professional from North Carolina with a combined 38 years of experience as a ranger, manager, and park system director, speak to us about the importance of state parks and about innovation and customer service.

In between speakers and presentations, park staff took advantage of the opportunity to connect with their peers from other parts of the state. A lot of good ideas, information, and tips to help us do better jobs were shared. We hope everyone took the high energy and positivity back to work with them after the conference.

We would like to extend a special thanks to:

- the management and staff at the Westmark Hotel for treating park employees to a reception on Monday evening;
- the high energy participation by everyone in Monday's round table discussions;
- everyone who prepared for and presented break-out sessions on Tuesday and;
- Steve Neel for making the group photo so quick and easy.



A Life-Saving, Cabin-Cleaning Partnership

The U.S. Coast Guard not only saves lives at sea, it also has been a tremendous help on community projects throughout Ketchikan. Alaska State Parks, Ketchikan District recently benefitted from their support in the operation and maintenance of Grindall Island Public-Use Cabin.

On a beautiful day in September, the USCG crew transported three park staff, four camp hosts, and two advisory board members to Grindall Island PUC. The eager workers split up the workload amongst themselves. Within a five-hour period the park crew had cut, hauled, split and stacked firewood, thoroughly cleaned the inside of the cabin, scraped and cleaned moss off the deck, and brushed paths and a trail.

After the work was accomplished and during the wait for the return of the Coast Guard, a few normally non-smoking volunteers decided to be silly and pose for photos while smoking cigars left behind in the cabin. You can always find pleasure in a job and sometimes it pays to be silly!

In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard completely overhauled a mooring buoy replacement for Grindall Island. They sandblasted, added new foam, and painted it. The Anthony Petite Buoy tender hauled the mooring buoy to Grindall Island, set a new 12,500-pound cement block along with new one-inch chain, and floated the buoy. In the coming days, the next thing they plan to do is to transport and help install a new wood stove for the cabin.

Thanks, U.S. Coast Guard, your work at Grindall Island will help save even more lives during stormy crossings.



Grindall Island Public-Use Cabin



Citizen advisory board member Teri Hoyt clears the path to the outhouse.



Once the work was finished, the non-smoking park crew took a moment to be silly with a pack of cigars they found in the cabin.



With their mission complete, these hard workers are packing up and ready to go.

Is that litter on Totem Bight's Beach or an Act of Nature?

What is that stuff? More garbage washed up on the beach? Wonder what that Great Blue Heron thinks of the trash. Oh my, why it's not trash at all. The storm must have washed these jellyfish to shore. Look at the size of them! I could eat dinner off them if I wanted my lips to sting. You see the coolest things working in state parks.



Northern News

- The Chatanika River Personal Whitefish Spear Fishery was open from mid-September through mid-October. Rangers Dane Happ and Melissa Smith said “everyone’s got their permits and having fun spearing fish” at Lower Chatanika State Recreation Area.
- The silvers are running hot and heavy at Clearwater State Recreation Site. A little too hot and heavy for some anglers. Rangers contacted one person with 24 fish—21 fish over limit.
- The Dept. of Transportation and the Division of Parks in the Northern Area are working together. DOT Foreman Ron Davis provided a semi and operator to transport the parks loader from Harding Lake SRA to Chena River SRA this summer and recently hauled it back to our maintenance yard for the winter. Thank you Ron!



Ranger Dane Happ gets in on the action, spearing whitefish Alaska style at Lower Chatanika SRA, 11 miles north of Fairbanks.



This bridge was the end of the line at Mastodon Creek in Chena River SRA until contractor Jon Underwood carved another 1,500 feet past the bridge at the end of September using an excavator.



DOT hauling out the parks loader from Harding Lake SRA



During construction of the Mastodon Trail, an excavator was used to get the organics off and develop the grade reversals. The vegetative mat was placed on the uphill side to reduce berms along the downhill edge.



DOT removes a logjam by the first bridge at 37.7 mile Chena Hot Springs Road in Chena River SRA.

Totem Pole Restoration Continues at Totem Bight

The Thunderers Pole was taken down for restoration last year. After the totem pole's drying out period, Doug Drexel the South East maintenance chief from Juneau went down to Ketchikan to do the restoration work this past spring. He removed some decay from areas and applied epoxies, filling the majority of the holes and cracks. It will be good for another 25 years. But what about painting it and hiding those new scars on the pole's body?

Dorica Jackson, assistant to the famous master carver Nathan Jackson, has begun freshening up the Thunderers Pole with new paint. The principal colors of paint traditionally used were black, red, a blue-green, and sometimes yellow. Dorica will only be touching up the areas that should have been painted, but will blend colors to hide the pink fillers on the natural wood areas. Ketchikan area parks staff is pleased to report that this Tlingit totem pole will be ready to be re-erected very soon.



Dorica Jackson begins painting the totem pole.



Dorica Jackson paints an ovoid on one of the the Thunderers Pole wings.



Dorica Jackson paints the chest-flicker.



Dimetri Stefopoulos stands on a boardwalk section of the Chicken Lake Cross Park Trail.



"Trailboss" Carter Forney leans on his tool next to the newly erected sign that best describes his crew's attitude toward that particular location.

Chicken Lake Cross Park Trail Now Open for Business

Thanks to all hands, the multi-season, multi-use "Cross Park Trail" in the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area is open. Trail users can now enjoy the lakes and scenery of the park's interior via this rediscovered and reconstructed addition to the Mat-Su Area trail system.

International Archaeology Day

Every third Saturday of October, archaeologists around the world celebrate International Archaeology Day. The UAA Anthropology Department sponsored the event in Anchorage and the Office of History and Archaeology and the State Historic Preservation Office participated in 2013 and 2014. UAA's National Archaeology event was held at the University Center earlier this month.

OHA and SHPO staff set up a booth with various educational and interpretive materials to hand out and were available to answer participants' questions about those offices and the role of the state in managing and protecting Alaska's significant heritage resources.

OHA staff also worked with the UAA Atlatl Club and the cultural resource professionals with HDR to stage an atlatl event wherein participants threw ball-tipped darts at a bison target with a metal gong representing the kill-zone. This activity helped participants understand the extraordinary level of skill required to feed oneself using these traditional tools. It gave them a little taste of how much effort Native people of centuries past had to put into surviving.



Travis Shinabarger gives a hands-on demonstration of flint knapping

Jeff Johnson Receives Prestigious Award

During its 55th annual conference, held earlier this month, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) presented Jeffrey Johnson, chief of the Alaska Office of Boating Safety, with its prestigious William B. Garner National Boating Safety Leadership Award in recognition of his efforts on both state and federal boating safety initiatives during his career.

NASBLA developed the Garner Award to recognize and commend the accomplishments of those rare individuals whose vision, persistence, and willingness to go beyond the status quo puts them on the frontier of recreational boating safety. It honors those men and women whose outstanding effort and achievement have elevated state or federal policy interventions to heights not previously attained.

Jeff began working with the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation in 1981 as a law enforcement ranger. As an experienced boat operator and marine safety instructor, he developed the Division's first powerboat operator certification program. He worked closely with a coalition



of partners including the U.S. Coast Guard, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Alaska boating organizations, and legislators to draft the Alaska Boating Safety Act and to garner public and legislative support. The Act was signed into law in May 2000.

Jeff is currently a member of the National Boating Safety Advisory Council, treasurer for the Western States Boating Administrators Association, and chair of the National Boating Education Standards Panel. Largely due to his leadership on the Panel, NASBLA received ANSI recognition as an accredited standards developer last month.

This article is a shortened version of NASBLA's news 10/19/14 news release. For the full article visit http://nasbla.org/files/public/News/nr_Johnson_Garner%20Award.pdf.

