



## Himalayan Hiking



Mt. Everest, the highest peak, is far left and Lhotse is to its right, also with a puff of clouds. Photo taken from Renjo La Pass, 17,700 feet elevation.

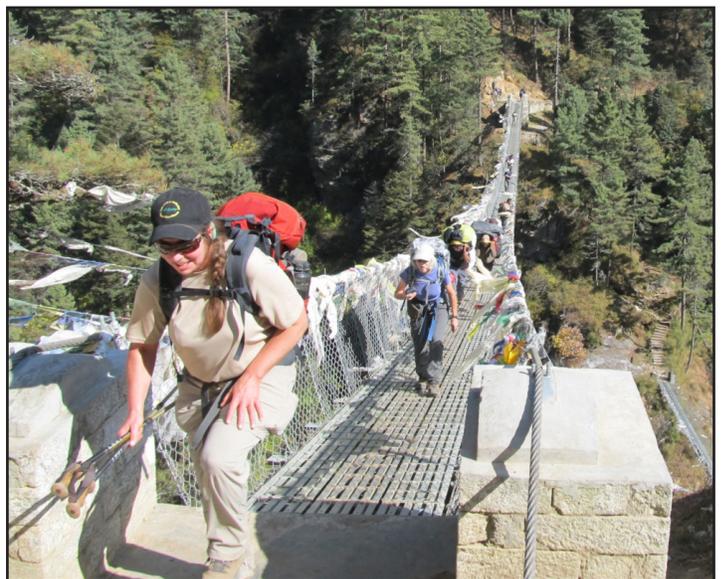
Juneau ranger Kevin Murphy recently had the opportunity to travel to Nepal to check out the Himalayan hiking opportunities and trails.

Nepal is known for its access to Mt. Everest since the Tibetan border closed. Upon departing Kathmandu for Lukla, one of the top 10 most dangerous airports in the world (Sitka is on that list too), he landed on the 1500-foot, 12-degree sloped runway at an elevation of 9000 feet and transitioned to a non-motorized culture.

★ In Lukla, all traffic and commerce is by foot, donkey, or yak. The communities are all connected by trails, some dating back 400 years. The granite trails, staircases, and buildings are some of the finest examples of dry laid masonry in the world.



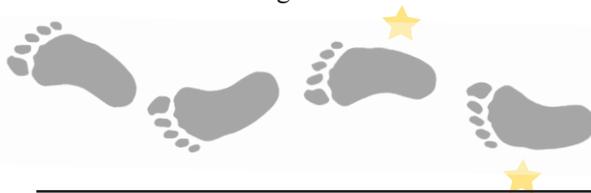
Sustainable stone staircases



The cable bridges can be a little unnerving, especially when a string of pack yaks is coming the other way.

## State Park Fees Go Up

The state's FY2015 operating budget includes a net increase for state park operations in the form of program receipts, also known as park fees. In order to meet the new target for program receipts, park fees have been, or will be, increased. Earlier this year, the fees for public-use cabins increased about \$10 per night per cabin, and in January 2015, fees for overnight camping, boat launching, and reserved use of park facilities, as well as prices for annual passes will all go up. These fee increases are part of an ongoing effort to make the operation and maintenance of the state park system more self-sustaining.



I am thankful for our state parks, the backyard treasures that everyone in this division works so hard to care for. This picture of my older daughter hiking in Chugach State Park with radiant light on October snow illustrates my gratitude. Thanks to all for your commitment, dedication, and excellent work! -Claire LeClare



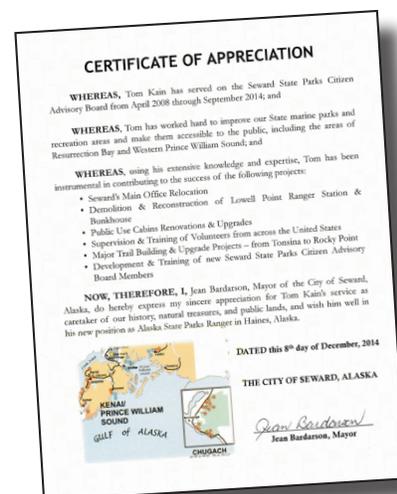
Sweetie Pie, the hen rescued by Mat-Su's Paul Dimaggio, gets comfortable in her box in the Finger Lake office.

## Mat-Su to the Rescue!

Here's a story of holiday spirit for the chicken-hearted. Early this month, Mat-Su's maintenance guy, Paul Dimaggio, saved a chicken from succumbing to the weather. According to Teri Zell, the lucky hen's name is Sweetie Pie. She was at the Finger Lake Campground in the snow, freezing, shaking, and pulling her feet off the ground. Paul brought the hen up to the office and Teri put her in a box and fed her apples and sunflower seeds. The poor bird was starving and very dehydrated. After taking care of these most pressing matters, Teri got on Facebook's Farm and Food group and, within 45 minutes, found a home for Sweetie Pie!

## Ranger Tom Kain Recognized for His Contributions to the Seward Community

Earlier this month, Seward CAB member Carol Griswold accepted a letter of appreciation for Tom Kain received from the City of Seward's Mayor, Jean Bardaron. In the letter, Mayor Bardaron wishes Tom well in his new position in Haines and thanks him for his work in making Seward area state marine parks accessible to the public. He also thanked him for the successful relocation of Seward's main office, the demolition and reconstruction of the Lowell Point ranger station and bunkhouse, major trail building and upgrades, and supervision and training of volunteers from across the nation. During Tom's time as a park specialist in the Seward area, his passion for his work was evident in the way he cared for and managed the area's historical resources, natural treasures, and public lands. Way to go Tom!



## Northern News

- Alaska State Parks issued a contract to Design Alaska to inspect the mechanical, architectural, and electrical systems at Twin Bears Camp in Chena River State Recreation Area. This is being done in conjunction with planned renovations to the 35-year old facilities.

- The Northern Area Alaska State Parks Citizens Advisory Board held its 24th Interior Legislative Briefing in mid-December. This year's meeting was held at the Legislative Information Office in Fairbanks.

- Northern Area staff working with Department of Transportation hydrologist Jeff Stotzke are collaborating on a design to mitigate a serious erosion problem at Rosehip Campground. Jeff's comment was: "This is worse than I thought." It's a good thing a mitigation design is underway.

- Alyeska put out a letter of interest to sell property that Alaska State Parks currently manages. Big Delta State Historical Park has used this property for parking under a management agreement for the past 27 years. In 1977, Alyeska donated the 6.8 acres of land where Rika's Roadhouse and Big Delta SHP's other historical structures are located. If Alyeska is considering donating the property, for which it is now requesting expressions of interest, the state would be very interested.



Volunteers Sonja and Antonio Gonzales happily plow snow in the Northern Area after a November snow drought.



A snowmachine on Colorado Creek Trail is a sure sign that winter has finally arrived in Interior Alaska.



A Christmas party was held at Superintendent Brooks Ludwig's home. The highlight of the evening was a "White Elephant" gift exchange. Good food and company capped a festive evening. (*Bottom row:* Mike Hitte, Dane and Linnae Happ, Ian Thomas, Doug Avara, Ian and Brooks Ludwig *Second row:* Lona Boyarsky, Rene Avara, Eli Ludwig *Third row:* Melissa Smith and Fin Ludwig *Top row:* Michelle and Brian Charlton and son Logan, Sonja and Antonio Gonzales)

## New Faces Around Mat-Su

The Alaska State Park Shuffle continues and this month the Mat-Su Area is pleased to announce the recent addition of two new staff members.

**Ben Corwin** joined us several weeks ago as the new Willow Area park ranger. Ben comes to us with many years as a Natural Resource Technician at Chugach State Park. His strong background in parks and trails will be a great compliment to Willow area programs. Ben is off to a running start as he has been downloading the myriad of issues surrounding the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area. He also is starting to meet some of the colorful park neighbors who make our jobs so much fun! We will make sure he continues the tradition of providing additions to the never ending “Only in Willow” photo series.

We also welcome **Carter Forney** as the new Denali State Park Natural Resource Technician. This position was recently vacated by Justin DiPaola-Allen who is now the Park Specialist. Carter is no stranger to Denali State Park. He has worked several seasons as an ACC on trail crews at Denali, and this past year as trail boss at Nancy Lake SRA. He is currently working on public-use cabin replacements at Nancy Lake SRA. Carter brings a strong work ethic and a passion for trails that will suit him perfectly as the park trail boss. He’s also a darn good musician and can be heard at various establishments in Talkeetna.



Ben Corwin



Carter Forney



Jennifer Culbertson

## Jennifer Culbertson: The Return of the Ranger

The Kodiak District is pleased to announce that Jennifer Culbertson is the new area Park Ranger I. She returned to duty late November after serving as the Kodiak Ranger from 2003-2010. Back then, she was also a defensive tactics and an OC (pepper spray) instructor.

Jennifer grew up as a military brat, traveling around the world. She started her career as a volunteer “backcountry ranger” for Wood-Tikchik State Park in the summer of 1989. Once she was exposed to the ranger virus, there was no turning back. She forged a 20-plus-year ranger career, starting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and finally came full-circle back to Alaska State Parks where we hope she will stay for many more years.

In the summer of 2010, Jennifer took a job as a Lands Security Officer for Afognak Native Corporation, which provided her with the opportunity to learn more about the ownership and management issues pertaining to the land adjacent to the expanding Afognak Island State Park. While working for Afognak Native Corp., Jennifer also acquired a USCG 50-ton captain’s license and more boating experience on Kodiak’s challenging waters.

Now that Jennifer is back with Alaska State Parks in Kodiak, she is eagerly looking forward to reinvesting her wealth of experience, knowledge, and skills into all the Kodiak District state parks. Welcome back, Jennifer!

