



Anchorage Hiker Notches 1,000th Ascent of Near Point Summit



1000

Left: Steve Hufford and almost two dozen fellow climbers celebrate his 1,000th climb of Near Point on May 23, 2015. Photo courtesy of Shawn Lyons

Below: Steve Hufford (lower center) celebrates his 1000th climb of Near Point surrounded by family and friends, including his wife Gwen (holding the “1000” sign), his five kids, and two of his grandchildren. Photo courtesy of Hannah Tacci



Article by Shawn Lyons
Adapted from article published in the Anchorage Dispatch News on 06/17/15

Climb a mountain once, and one retains a static picture of it. Climb the same mountain repeatedly, and see the changes—the new chill of an early autumn day, the melting of the last snow in spring.

Climb a mountain a thousand times and one notices not only these changes, but also subtle ones—a fresh set of animal tracks in the snow, the first spring buds on a branch overhanging the trail, the first autumn frost fringing a mud hole.

Having climbed 3,215-foot Near Point in the Chugach Mountains 1,000 times as of May 23, Steve Hufford of Anchorage has noticed all this and more.

Steve didn't originally set out to climb Near Point so many times. What began as an alternative workout, evolved into a routine after making perhaps 10 climbs of the mountain in 2003. Steve's wife, Gwen, documented each of these climbs by the phone call Steve made to her upon reaching the summit.

Slowly, the appeal of using the climb as his workout increased. In 2009, he reached the summit of Near Point

168 times—almost every other day. Most other years, he made more than 100 climbs.

Over the years, the number of completed climbs grew until the millennium climb was imminent. He could have made the thousandth climb in early April, but he put it off for a spring day after the snow was gone and green had begun to color the Anchorage Bowl. That day arrived May 23.

This thousandth Near Point ascent included far more people than have ever accompanied Steve. All in all, 23 people joined Steve's landmark climb—including Gwen and their five children. Steve's daughter Kea flew in from Boston and son Paul flew in from Nashville to be a part of it.

With Gwen by his side, Steve arrived at the summit last. By that time, some of the group had spread a banner and handed out poppers. Cheers and colored confetti filled the air as Steve broke through banner. After some snacks and festive snapping of pictures, the group began dropping off the summit.

Will he climb it again? “Of course,” he answers.

So will he try to climb it 2,000 times? “We'll see,” he answers with a laugh.

Northern News



The US Navy floated several 14x40-foot blimps in the Chena River State Recreation Area to test blimp-based communication systems. Flights were limited to weekdays to minimize visual impacts.



Thanks to a Yamaha Trail Grant the multi-purpose Upper Chena Dome Trailhead received D-1 to finish the parking lot. Now folks with ATV trailers will have a much easier time navigating the parking lot.



Twenty-one firefighters from the North Star Alaska Fire Service gear up to clear brush along the mile 28 river access road in Chena River SRA. The firefighters spent three days clearing the road corridor. The only cost to Alaska State Parks was lunches and chainsaw gas. Thank you, North Star Alaska Fire Service firefighters!



The Stiles Creek Extension Trail received 400 pounds of rye grass seed last fall as part of its storm water pollution prevention plan to stabilize soils. Bears and snowshoe hares sure enjoyed the spring greenup.



Jon Underwood with Happy Trails Inc. commenced work on Mastodon Trail in mid-June. Once the duff layer was removed, frozen ground was exposed underneath. Happy Trails hopes to rough in the trail then come back and finish the work once things thaw and dry out.



Northern Area maintenance staff continue work on Stiles Creek Extension Trail this summer. Four miles of re-routed sustainable trail will soon be completed.

National Trails Day Events in Alaska State Parks



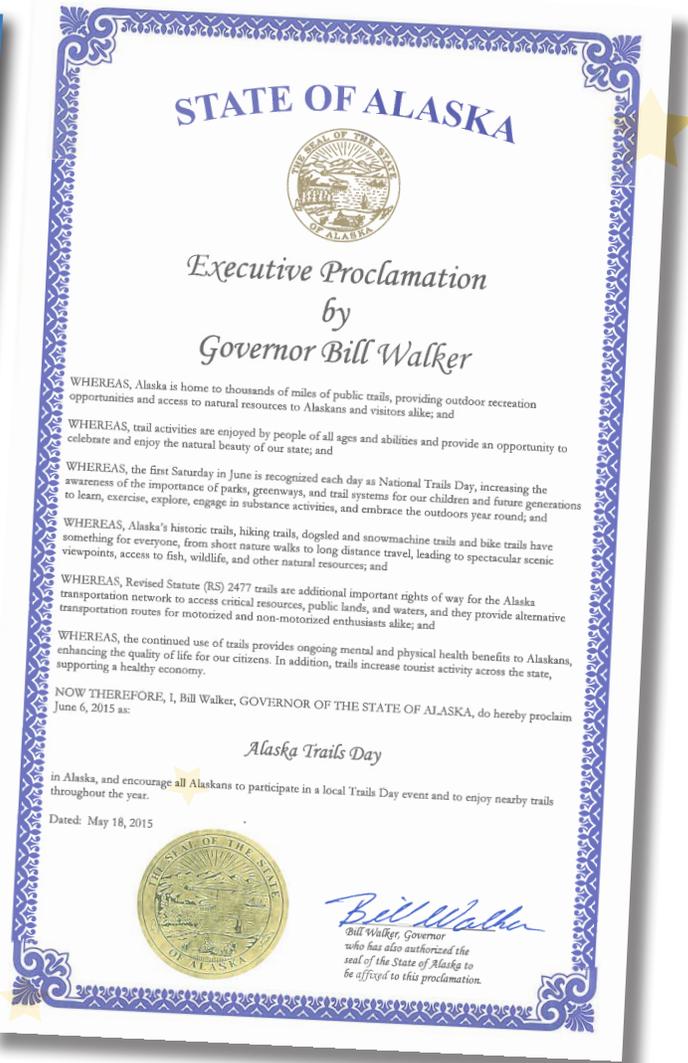
Left: (L-R) Lourdes and Mary Lester and Janey Lemons navigate the steep descent of Donnelly Dome.

Right: (L-R) Elin, Orin, Woodson and Whit Hicks take a well deserved break.

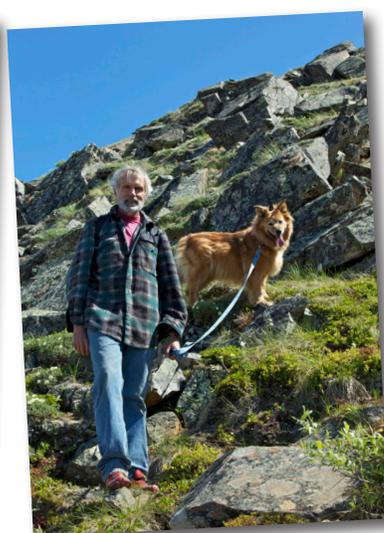
Northern Area ★

The folks at Delta Junction Trail Association organized and hosted a National Trails Day hike up the 3,910-foot Donnelly Dome, a stream- and glacier-modified fault block in the Delta Junction Area State Parks. This well loved landmark was once completely surrounded by ice, forming a nunatak 700 feet above the glacial ice. Today it stands alone in the Delta River Valley.

Approximately 50 hikers drizzled in for the hike. Many folks did the Crowley Fun Run in town first and then went to hike Donnelly Dome. It was a beautiful day with clear skies and crisp cool temps at the top, making for happy hikers, kids, and dogs. Whit Hicks, who packed ice and lemonade up the dome, served refreshments to tired hikers at the top. What a guy!



Kelly and Wesley Patton (Boy Scout and Leader) head down Donnelly Dome, which can be as challenging as heading up.



Whit Aillaud and Kenai on their way to the top of Donnelly Dome.



View from Donnelly Dome
Northern Area Trails Day photos courtesy of Cindy Aillaud

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Mat-Su

The National Trails Day event hosted by Mat-Su Area at the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area was a big success. Thirteen volunteers hiked the Red Shirt Lake Trail and did brushing and drainage work along the way. Upon return, they and the community were treated to a Dutch oven cooking demonstration and Natural History Presentation at the South Rolly Lake Overlook, followed by a potluck. Broiled rainbow trout, smoked sockeye salmon, baked beans, cornbread, and Dutch oven turkey soup were all featured on the day's menu, and Australian Pavlova and Dutch oven peach cobbler were served for dessert.



Volunteers Kierre Childers, Chris Voda, and Sam Crisanti



David Johnson runs to trails day



Camp hosts Jim and Monica Liguari prepare turkey soup in a Dutch oven.



2015 National Trails Day volunteers ready to head out



2015 Sitka Academy graduates

Two New Park Rangers Ready For Duty

Park Rangers Chris Love and Ben Corwin graduated from the Sitka Academy in early June. Here they are seated with the rest of their class, which was the first to include Village Public Safety Officers. Chris (back row, on left end) is the Denali State Park ranger and Ben (front row, sixth from left) works mainly in Nancy Lake State Recreation Area.