



Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, PO Box 2323, Seward AK 99664

<http://www.Iditarod100.org>      [IditarodHTA@gmail.com](mailto:IditarodHTA@gmail.com)

The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.

The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance promotes awareness of the Iditarod Trail and its gold rush and Alaska Native heritage by encouraging education programs and historical research, assisting in the protection, improvement, maintenance and marking of the Trail and developing partnerships that foster stewardship, commitments and support

## **From the past...**

*Iditarod Pioneer* May 11, 1912

### **CHARTS MARK POSITIONS OF BOATS**

Indicative of the busy season of navigation, the Budweiser has converted its large blackboard into what local authorities call a profile steamship chart. The contrivance consists of a map of interior water courses, over which is arranged a series of chords. The dummies of the various steamers will mark their positions throughout the season. The chart bears the name of the principal stations, the gold producing points being distinguished by golden letters. The first boat to be represented on the chart was the Little Delta, placed in position at Fairbanks station yesterday morning with its nose pointed downstream. The execution of the chart is by Tom Mc Smart and is very cleverly done. It will prove convenient to all people interested in the movement of boats.

The Northern Commercial Company is preparing a very handsome board of the same character to be placed in front of the store. The Company will also have a miniature board hanging up for the special benefit of the office force.



Crew member taking a line ashore at Iditarod from Cy Atwell's steamer Little Delta, and it's barge. The Little Delts was built in Fairbanks in 1908.

## **Prescriptions to spend time outdoors**

A new program launched last month in Canada gives some doctors the option of providing patients with a free annual pass to the country's national parks as part of an effort to increase access to nature and the health benefits to be found outside.



PaRx, a health initiative launched by the BC Parks Foundation in 2019, partnered with Parks Canada to provide doctors across four provinces with an initial run of 100 passes that can be prescribed. The typical park prescription program allows doctors to write more general prescriptions for time spent out in nature; two hours a week, at least 20 minutes at a time, is what PaRx director Dr. Melissa Lem suggests.

This is the time first that year-long passes to national parks have been available under the program.

Given the growing body of evidence that indicates nature time can improve all kinds of different physical and mental health conditions, it is hoped that the PaRx program will not only improve patient health, but reduce costs to the healthcare system.

But getting outside isn't always as easy as it might sound. Income can affect one's access to nature, an issue that PaRx is trying to address in Canada. Doctors utilizing the new national parks pass program are urged to prioritize patients who might not otherwise be able to afford these passes. While only 100 adult discovery passes – which gives holders access to more than 80 national parks, historic sites and nature reserves – have initially been made available, organizers plan to routinely reassess this number as the program grows.

As more is learned about the effect spending time in the outdoors has on mental health, it becomes clear that access to these outdoor activities has a real and measurable effect on psychological well-being. Through the writings of well-known outdoor champions throughout history, from Henry David Thoreau to John Muir, it has always been clear that the relationship between humans and the outdoors is important, but now studies are beginning to actually measure that impact. For example, a study released in June 2019 was able to conclude that two hours a week, or 120 minutes, in the outdoors is the threshold for when there is measurable impact on mental health. Significantly, of the over 20,000 people studied in this research, the majority of those who participated took part in outdoor activities within two miles of their home, showing again why it's important to have trails readily available to the public. The study also concluded that it didn't make a difference whether the time spent outdoors was in a single day, or over the entirety of the week, meaning that daily commuters who use trails and pathways, if their weekly commute totals 120 minutes or more, are reaping real psychological benefits.

### **Race Across Alaska Winter Challenge**

The Race Across Alaska Winter Challenge (RAAWC) has exploded in popularity in only its second year. Over 2,000 participants are recreating on trails and tracking it on their RAAWC page. Activity is not limited to trails, but mostly includes walking, running, skiing, and biking. Each participant gets to choose their distance from 125 miles to 2,000 miles – with each distance corresponding to a distance between Alaska destinations including a 500-mile option that is length of the Alaska Long Trail from Seward to Fairbanks. There are participants from across Alaska and around the lower 48 – with a few from overseas as well. A portion of each entry is donated to Alaska Trails for our Alaska Long Trail project. In addition, each racer is offered the opportunity to donate to the project. Last year, the RAAWC donated nearly \$20,000 to Alaska Trails and this year that donation will top \$40,000.



### **The Alaska Long Trail**

There will be a work session on the Alaska Long Trail during the 2022 Annual Trails Conference. If you have interest in learning about the proposed routes or have ideas about potential routes in a specific region between Seward and Fairbanks, join session 2 of the conference (April 7, 9:30-11:30 a.m.). All are welcome in this collaborative process. While a lot of work has been done by partners along the proposed route in the past year, many questions remain unanswered, and the bulk of the planning work is still ahead. Over the course of the next year, this planning work will be carried out in local and regional working groups along the envisioned length of the trail. The conference session will initiate this planning effort through Zoom breakout rooms where participants will focus on the specific geographic area of their interest.

For registration information see: [www.alaska-trails.org/trails-conference](http://www.alaska-trails.org/trails-conference)

