



# IDITAROD National Historic Trail

## *The Southern Trek*



## Connecting... Trail, Story, Stewardship

The Chugach National Forest is restoring and developing 186 miles of the *Southern Trek* of the Iditarod National Historic Trail, connecting the communities of Seward and Girdwood, Alaska.

This outstanding national heritage, recreation, and education resource inspires and draws Iditarod enthusiasts, history buffs, students, and outdoor adventurers from around the world.

We've accomplished a lot along the *Southern Trek*, yet much remains to be done. This report celebrates 2015 accomplishments and partnership success, progress to date, and priorities for 2016 and beyond.

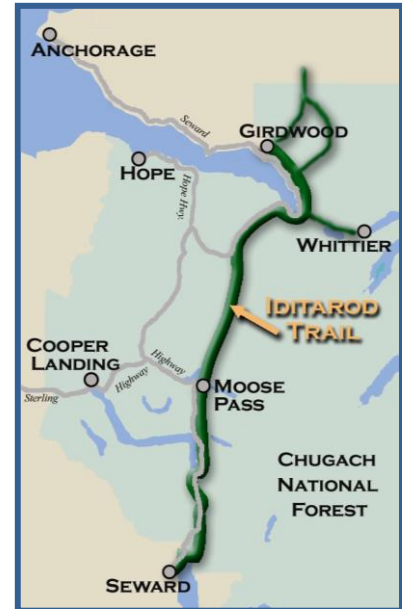
## 2015 Accomplishments

### Trail Repair and Maintenance

- Completed 80 miles of annual and deferred trail maintenance, with approximately 10% of the work completed by volunteers and youth crews
- Reconstructed one trail bridge near Primrose Campground
- Worked in partnership with Army Corps of Engineers and Kenai Peninsula Borough on placement of levee to minimize future flooding impacts on a section of Iditarod National Historic Trail corridor

### Planning, Survey and Design

- Completed 7 miles of new trail layout and design on two segments of new trail
- Discussion with Alaska Railroad Corporation on obtaining easement across railroad property near Mile 18 of Seward Highway
- Engineering survey work completed for 3 trailhead site easements on non-National Forest System lands at two critical access points along the INHT
- Completed trail bridge design packages for 5-6 trail bridges





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### Signing and Interpretation

- Completed construction of 9 kiosks at INHT trailheads with orientation panels through a Scenic Byways grant
- Issued contract with interpretative design firm to complete the INHT Southern Trek Interpretive Plan

### Partnership Projects

- Completed the fifth year and began the sixth year of the Iditarod Trail to Every Classroom program (iTREC!), a yearlong professional development program that provides teachers with place-based service learning skills to help today's youth become lifelong stewards of Alaska's public lands. We trained 14 additional teachers in 2015.

An iTREC! teacher and two of her students recently participated in the Capital Christmas Tree celebration in December and served as cultural ambassadors during a special visit to a Washington D.C. elementary school.

Through our collaborative work with Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, a total of 80 teachers have now completed the training, involving over 6,500 students in 13 different subject areas in 10 communities along the INHT.

- Worked with an Eagle Scout candidate who installed two vista benches on Portage Pass section of INHT trail

### 2016 Planned Actions

The Forest Service will continue to collaborate with a range of partners to advance the project. The projects planned for 2016 include:

- Development of the interpretive plan for the INHT Southern Trek that will engage partners and local communities along the route to highlight the important stories of this trail
- Laying out the location of approximately 5 miles of new trail
- Working with Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association and Seward Trail Blazers on stream relocation and rebuilding of an impacted trail segment
- Developing a trail bridge construction contract
- Coordinating with Alaska Department of Transportation and Federal Highways Administration on a highway project and opportunities to have pedestrian bridges included in the highway design
- Completing engineering survey work on 3 trail easements





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### Progress to Date

The entire *Southern Trek* of the INHT includes the construction/reconstruction of 186 miles of trail, over 30 bridges, trailheads and recreation cabins, easement acquisitions as well as on-site interpretation and the preservation of dozens of heritage sites—estimated at a total cost of \$26 million.

Accomplishments over the past decade include over 186 miles of trail location, 80 miles of trail restoration and construction, installation and reconstruction of multiple bridges, construction of one new trailhead, and restoration of a historic cabin.

The priorities for completion of a continuous route between Seward and Girdwood include:

- Construction of approximately 23 bridges with a total cost of \$4 to \$6 million
- Trail layout and construction of 35 miles of trail at \$75,000 to \$100,000 per mile
- Acquisition of 150 miles of trail easements and several site easements
- Continued collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration, Alaska Department of Transportation, and Alaska Railroad Corporation on pedestrian access along the Seward Highway, reconstruction of trailheads where highway projects are planned, and pedestrian access across the railroad
- Working with partners such as Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance and various communities to complete and implement interpretive and historic preservation plans to enhance visitors' understanding of the INHT's natural and cultural resources
- Working with volunteers and partner organizations such as Seward Trail Blazers, Student Conservation Association, and American Hiking Society to accomplish trail maintenance



### For More Information

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