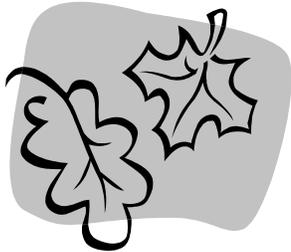


“To provide education and leadership in the conservation and sustainable use of soil- and water- related resources through cooperative programs that protect, restore and improve our environment.”



FALL ISSUE:

- ATV Strategic Planning Session
- HSWCD call for nominations for Board of Supervisor vacancy
- Trail Improvements for the HDF
- Santiago Lane Culvert Replacement

Board of Supervisors

- Chris Rainwater, Chair
- Jim Van Oss
- Devony Lehner
- Otto Kilcher
- Pete Roberts

Alternate:

- Steve Gibson

District Staff

- Tara Schmidt, District Manager
- Al Poindexter, Education Coordinator
- Alder Seaman, Trails Coordinator
- Sarah Eastin,

Natural Currents

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR ATV TRAILS

HOMER DISTRICTS SEEKS INPUT THROUGH
ATV USER GROUP MEETING.

The Homer Soil and Water Conservation District will be facilitating an ATV user group meeting on November 13th at 5:30 pm. The purpose of the meeting is to gather information from trail users and supporters and incorporate their concerns and knowledge into a regional strategic plan for offroad trails in the Homer-Ninilchik area. In particular, the meeting will focus on trails in the Caribou Hills area. Input from Caribou Hills trails users is needed to:

- prioritize trail needs,
- identify and seek potential trail funding,
- coordinate stakeholder efforts, and
explore collaborative ways to address trail-related concerns.

In the past, similar user group meetings have identified as the highest priorities for the Caribou Hills area (1) the need to develop trail alignments that cross wetlands and streams with minimum environmental damage and (2) the need to acquire legal easements along existing trail corridors to protect them for public use forever. The time is now right to take stock of recent accomplishments (*continued on page 5*)

HOMER SOIL AND WATER BOARD OF SUPERVISOR ELECTIONS

It's time again for the annual call for nominations to fill seats on the Homer District's Board of Supervisors. Currently one seat is open for election, Seat C, held by Pete Roberts. Nominations must be received by the **DNR Commissioner's office (Attention NRCDB Executive Director) no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, November 14, 2008.** Included in this newsletter is the form for submitting nominations.

The District's Board of Supervisors is comprised of local citizens who volun-

teer to represent landowners, farmers, businesses that use land, educators, and all citizens within District boundaries. The Board provides local leadership in natural resources related issues.

To be eligible to serve on the Homer Board of Supervisors, individuals must be signed up as a cooperator of the District and be nominated by at least 3 other District cooperators. Board members attend monthly District meetings, generally held on the second (*continued on pg 2*)

HOMER DEMONSTRATION FOREST IMPROVEMENTS

The Homer Demonstration Forest and Homestead Trail on Baycrest Hill have been gaining popularity as accessible summer recreation destinations for both locals and visitors. The Homer Soil and Water Conservation District has been working on improvements to the summer trail system throughout the summer of 2008, thanks to grant funding from Alaska State Parks.

Signage: The summer trail system currently consists of the Homestead Trail, the Summer Trail, and the Self-Guided Nature Trail. Seven large map-based signs and dozens of color-coded diamond markers were installed along these paths to clarify routes and reduce confusion among users. The large "Arc-Map"-based signs are located at trail intersections; blue, red and yellow diamond markers run the length of each color-coded trail.

Tread Improvements: Some short sections along the Homestead Trail and the Self-Guided Nature Trail needed re-routing. Dangerous or difficult spots were blocked off, and affected sections were rebuilt in more suitable locations. The trail's tread was reshaped in a couple of spots to reduce the danger to hikers and runners and to improve water flow across the trail. Also, branches encroaching on the trail corridor were cleared in some locations to encourage

hikers to stay on the defined trail.

Community Involvement: In late August, a group of 3rd and 6th graders from West Homer Elementary School spent the day walking the Homestead Trail, doing plant identification in the Arboretum, and exploring the moose enclosure. The Demonstration forest provides an accessible learning environment for Homer kids of all ages, offering diverse plant and animal communities and a trail system that leads trail users through the area safely.

In addition, the HSWCD has had help from a group of Homer Middle School kids, who have spent a few hours each week throughout September and early October re-routing the trail and clearing the trail corridor. Mr. Alex Koplín and his class have been excellent trail workers. In particular, progress has been made on a section of trail near the middle of the Homestead Loop, where the old trail crossed a large mud-hole. The kids have also cleared sections of trail corridor, staged lumber along the *(continued on page 5)*

(continued from page 1) Wednesday of the month at 5:00 pm.

Homer District activities include cooperator assistance such as conservation planning for landowners, soil and forage testing, information programs, landuse planning projects, resource education programs and information programs to promote land stewardship, sustainable trail work to protect aquatic resources, invasive weed outreach programs, along with a variety of other projects.

If you are interested in running for a seat on the Board of Supervisors please fill out the nomination form (opposite page) and return to the Executive Secretary of the Commissioner of DNR.



Section of re-routed trail along the Self-Guided Nature Trail in the Homer Demonstration Forest.

**Call For Nominations and Notice Of Election
Homer Soil and Water Conservation District**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to cooperators that nominations by petition will be accepted by the Executive Director, Natural Resources Conservation and Development Board (NRCDB) to fill one eligible seat on the above named Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seat C has a term of three years expiring on December 31, 2011.

Candidates wishing to fill any board seat must be a cooperator of the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District. The nomination period runs until 5:00 p.m., Friday, November 14, 2008. **Petitions for nomination must be:**

1. Signed by the nominee certifying the nominee's willingness to serve, if elected.
2. Signed by at least three (3) cooperators in the District who appear on the certified cooperators list.
3. **Received** by the DNR Commissioner's office (Attention NRCDB Executive Director) no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, November 14, 2008. Nominations may be faxed to 907-269-8918.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that an election to fill the vacant seat will be held in December 2008, unless nominations for only one candidate are submitted. In the event this occurs, the Executive Director of the Natural Resource Conservation and Development Board will appoint the nominee to fill the seat instead of conducting an election.

For more information, contact Tara Schmidt, District Manager, at tara@homerswcd.org or (907) 235-8177 ext. 5.

NOMINATION FORM

We, the undersigned cooperators of the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, hereby nominate

_____ as a candidate for Supervisor in the December 2008 election. (*Must have at least three (3) signatures other than the nominee.*)

PRINTED NAME

SIGNATURE

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |

CERTIFICATE OF NOMINEE

I hereby certify that I am a Cooperator as defined in AS 41.10, and that if elected, I will serve as Supervisor on the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

Signature of Nominee.

Mail or deliver nomination form(s) to:

*Executive Director NRCDB
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1400
Anchorage, AK 99501
or FAX to: 907-269-8918*

and to identify additional trail needs, goals, and strategies for the area.

The District has for many years worked to improve trail quality and access on the Lower Kenai Peninsula: boardwalked sections of the Caribou Lake trail provide one example, improvements to the Homestead trail in the Homer Demonstration Forest another. In particular, the District has focused on areas where trail uses have caused surface degradation, soil erosion, and increased sedimentation into streams. One indicator that a trail needs attention is ATV rut depth. Deep ruts channel water along the trail, concentrating surface runoff and increasing erosion and trail deterioration. In an effort to address such rutting, the District this summer installed 1,400 ft of a plastic trail hardening material—Geoblock—on rerouted sections of the Water Hole trail, an ATV trail east of Ninilchik. This Geoblock installation should be monitored to determine its effectiveness in preventing ATV rutting and related erosion. The District is also designing a bridge installation to be located at the Beaver Creek crossing on the Watermelon trail

As the District has worked on trail improvements over the years, it has seen how important it is for trail users and advocates to organize themselves and to work together in identifying and planning needed trail improvements. By working together, trail users increase their effectiveness in raising trail funds and providing “match” for trail grants, as well as in educating other trail users through signage and outreach

along the trail for use in boardwalks, and helped clean up around the Arboretum. The Homer District wishes to express and send out heartfelt thanks to these middle-school kids and their teachers for their enthusiasm and hard work and looks forward to working with local youth in the future to complete additional trail improvements.

What’s Next? The HSWCD still has plans to harden certain wet spots along the summer trail system. Two-plank boardwalk, which already hardens some spots along the Homestead Loop, will be used in some smaller muddy spots, while GeoBlock, a

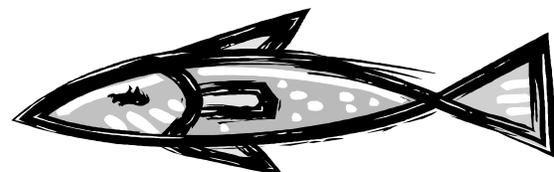
porous plastic material, will be installed along

sections near the beginning of the Homestead Trail where it crosses extensive wetlands. The Homer District is interested to see how this porous plastic hardening system performs in our Demonstration Forest compared to the boardwalk methods already



Installation of Geoblock along the Water Hole Trail. The Homer District installed 1,400 feet of this material, hopeful to upgrade the ATV trails in the Caribou Hills to environmentally sustainable trails.

porous plastic material, will be installed along sections near the beginning of the Homestead Trail where it crosses extensive wetlands. The Homer District is interested to see how this porous plastic hardening system performs in our Demonstration Forest compared to the boardwalk methods already



BLOWING THE WHISTLE ON CANADA THISTLE

Canada thistle has been declared a "noxious weed" throughout the U.S. and Canada and has long been recognized as a major agricultural pest, costing tens of millions of dollars in direct crop losses annually and additional millions for control. Only recently, however, have the harmful impacts of Canada thistle to native species and natural ecosystems received significant attention.

As it establishes itself in an area, Canada thistle crowds out and replaces native plants, thereby changing the structure and species composition of natural plant communities and reducing plant and animal diversity. This highly invasive thistle prevents the coexistence of other plant species through shading, competition for soil resources, and possibly through the release of chemical toxins poisonous to other plants.

Canada thistle is a tall, erect, spiny, perennial, herbaceous plant that grows to 4 ft. (1.2 m) tall. The leaves are lance-shaped, irregularly lobed, 2-6



in. (5-15 cm) long with prickly margins. The stems are ridged and hairy. The flowers are purple to white and can be up to 0.5 in. (1.8 cm) in diameter. Flowering occurs in late June through August.

Canada thistle produces an abundance of bristly-plumed seeds that are easily dispersed by the wind. Most of the seeds germinate within a year, but some may remain viable in the soil for up to 20 years or more. Vegetative reproduction in Canada thistle is aided by a fibrous taproot capable of sending out lateral roots as deep as 3 feet below ground, and from which shoots sprout up at frequent intervals. It also readily regenerates from root fragments less than an inch in length. Seeds may be transported long distances by water or by becoming attached to animals, clothing, farm equipment and other vehicles, as well as in contaminated crop seed.

Canada thistle has been found in Homer. Local populations of this weed are small and if targeted and controlled early, the likelihood is good that we can curtail the impacts of this plant will have on the local ecosystems. We encourage the community to keep a lookout for this plant, and if you see it please report it to the Homer District.

SANTIAGO LANE CULVERT REPLACEMENT

The Homer District completed a culvert replacement project this past summer, removing an undersized culvert along Santiago Lane, 10 miles northeast of Anchor Point, to improve salmon habitat along a tributary of the Chakok River, in the Anchor River watershed. Surveyed in June of 2006, the crossing had consisted of a 16-inch culvert that was described as "perched by 2 feet." The undersized culvert was constricting the stream channel and altering stream hydrology. The 16-inch culvert was replaced with a flattened 66-inch diameter culvert to facilitate natural stream flow and to allow for fish passage.

Funding for this project was secured through a cooperative agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife

Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. The NRCS provided engineering specifications and on site inspection of the installation. The USFWS provided technical assistance to ensure restoration of instream and adjacent habitat continuity.

The Homer District has recently secured funding to address two poorly designed culverts east of Homer, on Beaver Creek. Both projects are located off Hutler Rd. This work will be completed in partnership with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Kenai Watershed Forum. Work is scheduled for the summer of 2009.

To find out more about the various programs the Homer District is involved with visit our website at www.homerswcd.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

- October 16-17 AACD Fall Meeting —Anchorage
- October 22-24 CNIPM Workshop—Anchorage
- November 12 HSWCD Board Meeting
- November 13 ATV User Group Meeting, Ninilchik @ 5:30 pm
- November 14 Call for Nominations form due to NRCDB

Welcome to Alder Seaman, the Homer District's new Trails Coordinator. Alder worked for the Homer District this past summer as a student intern on the trail crew. A recent graduate from Humboldt State University with a BA in Geography, she brings great technical skills to the field, a great work ethic, and overwhelming enthusiasm for trails in the Homer area.

In partnership with USDA-NRCS the HSWCD is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer



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*Meeting the needs of the local
Land User*

