

Natural Currents

“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.”



The District Board is comprised of local cooperators who provide direction for District programs. Nominations for the next term are currently being accepted.

Board of Supervisors

- Chris Rainwater, Chair
- Jim VanOss
- Steve Gibson
- Otto Kilcher
- Pete Roberts

Alternate

- Devony Lehner

District Staff

- Shirley Schollenberg, District Manager
- Lindsay Winkler
- Caleb Slemmons
- Seth Ex

CARIBOU LAKE TRAILHEAD CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN

After three years of trail construction, a new trailhead for the Caribou Lake Trail will be constructed this fall. The trailhead will be used to access the Caribou Lake Trail, a 7.5-mile, multiuse trail that was completed through a cooperative District project in 2005.

The Caribou Lake Trail crosses two streams and numerous wetlands. To mitigate damage to these fragile habitats and improve the quality of the trail, the Homer District embarked on a multi-year project that utilized beetle-killed spruce to construct almost 12,000 feet of boardwalk to cross wetlands. The trails design and construction was

accomplished by a diverse partnership between the District, the Snomads, Cook Inlet Keeper, and the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service. Now the construction of a trailhead is in the works for this fall.

In a competitive bid process, Kachemak Bay Construction of Homer has been awarded the contract to construct the 40,000 square foot trailhead.

Construction will occur in three phases: grubbing and initial grading of the site, (Continued on page 4)

AN ORNAMENTAL INVASION:

DISTRICT SEEKS INPUT FROM LOCAL GREENHOUSES

On Tuesday, October, 10th the Homer District hosted an afternoon meeting to gather input from local greenhouse owners and landscapers about the District’s Invasive Plants Program. Topics of discussion included: common ornamental invasive plants, plant lists, outreach materials and how invasive weeds may be “sneaking in” on potted and root-balled ornamentals.

The meeting was well attended and many helpful suggestions were made. Brenda Adams, Homer Garden Club President and owner of Gardens by

Design, suggested targeting local plant sales to “get the word out” about invasives. Attendees commented that outreach materials need to be simple and accurate! There was also discussion of the public’s need for concise, management fact sheets for some of the most problematic invasive plants.

The District hopes to make use of this valuable input to reach other greenhouse and landscape businesses Peninsula-wide. Thanks for all those that attended and provided ideas and direction to this developing program.

SIGN UP!

JAN 31st

Is the deadline to sign up for EQUIP and WHIP projects for 2007. Call or stop by for more info about these and other available programs.

NRCS COST SHARE PROGRAMS

Interested in developing a wildlife pond, implementing a nutrient management program or improving your pasture management practices by installing cross fencing?

These are just a few of the cost share programs available to agricultural producers to improve their operations. Other programs include trail building and planting to control erosion. All projects must address resource concerns such as erosion or wildlife issues.

Both programs will reimburse the

producer 75- 90% of the cost of implementing an approved conservation practice. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) also includes opportunities for incentive payments to producers demonstrating sound resource development practices such as weed and nutrient management.

For information call or stop by the Natural Resource Conservation Service office at the corner of Lake Street and Pioneer Avenue or call 235-8177.

IMPROVEMENTS AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES AT THE HOMER DEMO FOREST



The Homer Demonstration Forest continues to evolve into an ever more valuable local resource. Notably, recent improvements have been made in Demo Forest planning and in trail upgrades.

The recently-updated Demo Forest Management Plan (currently available at the District website) is a valuable tool for everyone involved in the decision-making process associated with the facility. The Plan is awaiting a final edit as of this writing, but should be complete by mid-October. The Homer District this year undertook the first update of

the document since its inception in 1992. The new version addresses significant changes that have occurred in the area since the previous plan was written, and clarifies goals and objectives for the Demo Forest.

Trail work in the Demo Forest is ongoing, but the close of summer 2006 saw especially significant changes. Visitors will notice almost 1600 feet of new boardwalk trail has appeared since 2005 (left). This construction is part of a multi-year project intended to establish a durable, user-friendly, summer route in the facility.

The above developments should not overshadow other happenings in the facility. September was a busy month on Roger's Loop Road (the primary public access to the demo forest). State Division of Forestry tree care experts Patricia Joyner and Stephen Nickel presided over a tree care, pruning, and identification workshop in the Demo Forest arboretum, which was hosted by the Homer Tree Stewards. Passers-by also may have noticed Homer High School busses ferrying science students to and from the self-guided nature trail.

BLOWING THE WHISTLE ON THISTLE: PROJECT UPDATE

Through a Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area project, the Homer District continues work to control and eradicate two high-priority infestations of Canada thistle on the lower Peninsula.

The importance of controlling the spread of this noxious weed can't be overstated. Canada thistle is very common weed in the lower 48. For example, the state of Colorado has over 400,000 infested acres, and costs to agricultural production are staggering.

Although significant challenges were encountered this season, efforts effectively

reduced seed set at project sites to near zero! This year, an integrated plan included mowing and fall application of a systemic herbicide to get a leg up on this thorny invader.

Two new infestations were also reported on the lower Peninsula this season and landowners voluntarily treated those sites. Keep a close watch on your feeding areas, thistle is a common hay contaminant from outside.

If you think that you have thistle on your property contact the District for help in identification and in controlling its spread.



STREAM MONITORING AND ATV CROSSINGS

The Homer District is continuing to investigate rising stream temperature trends recorded within several salmon streams on the Lower Peninsula including Deep Creek and the Anchor River. Stream temperatures have regularly exceeded state standards and have become the focus of a project to determine critical conditions and periods where air temperature and stream flow conditions can cause these alarming exceedances.

In July, several gauges were installed to record stream flow. Air and temperature loggers were also included in monitoring efforts begun this past spring and will be retrieved soon to collect the summer-long temperature data. Also, Alaska Department of Fish & Game has identified two areas on the Anchor River to begin identifying habitat types to look into possible

correlations with reported stream temperature patterns.

As part of stakeholder group priorities established over several meetings in 2005-06, the District is assessing 20 miles of trails in the Four Corners area to understand the extent of trail needs including wetland and stream impacts. Funded through the Alaska Clean Water Action Program, the project uses National Park Service assessment protocols and will be utilized as part of a larger planning process for the Caribou Hills trails.

The District will complete the mapping portion of the project at the end of the month, and will spend the winter scoring and prioritizing trails. A stakeholder meeting will be held in the next few months. Please contact Lindsay if you would like to be involved.

“Help spread the word, not the weed”

Thistle outreach cards are finally complete and available now at the District office.

The District welcomes Seth Ex as the new Special Projects coordinator.

Seth has been a trail crew leader for District projects since 2004. Please feel free to contact Seth with any comments or questions about the Demo Forest.

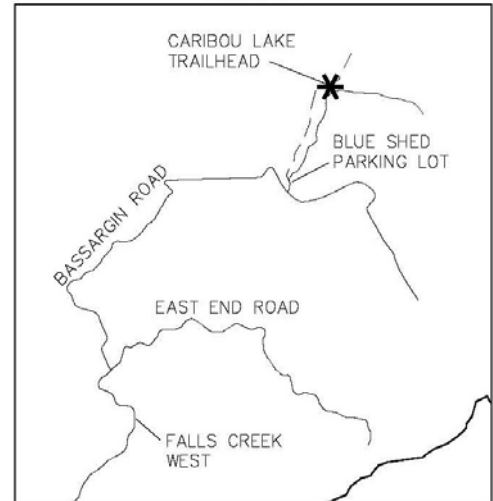
TRAILHEAD CONTINUED...

(continued from pg 1) culvert installation, and placement of geotextile (a synthetic underlayment used to improve final surface durability) and gravel on approximately 20,000 square feet of the parking area. A loading ramp will also be built to allow for easy loading and unloading of off-highway vehicles.

Additionally, a final asbuilt survey has been submitted to the state for the Caribou Lake Trail,

and the Homer District hopes to obtain an easement on the trail by next spring.

Kachemak Bay Construction expects to begin work at the end of this month. This project has been made possible through Alaska's Recreational Trail Grant program and sponsored by Alaska State Parks. A regional topographic map and report on the Caribou Lake Trail is available at the District website: www.homerswcd.org



The Caribou Lake Trailhead is located approximately a mile past the Blue Shed Parking Lot, on Basargin Rd off E. End Road.

UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

November 21st - Nominations for Homer SWCD boardmembers

January 31st - EQUIP and WHIP sign-up deadline



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*Meeting the needs of the local
Land User*