Alaska

Fiscal Year 2026: Trail Administrator Report

Iditarod National Historic Trail

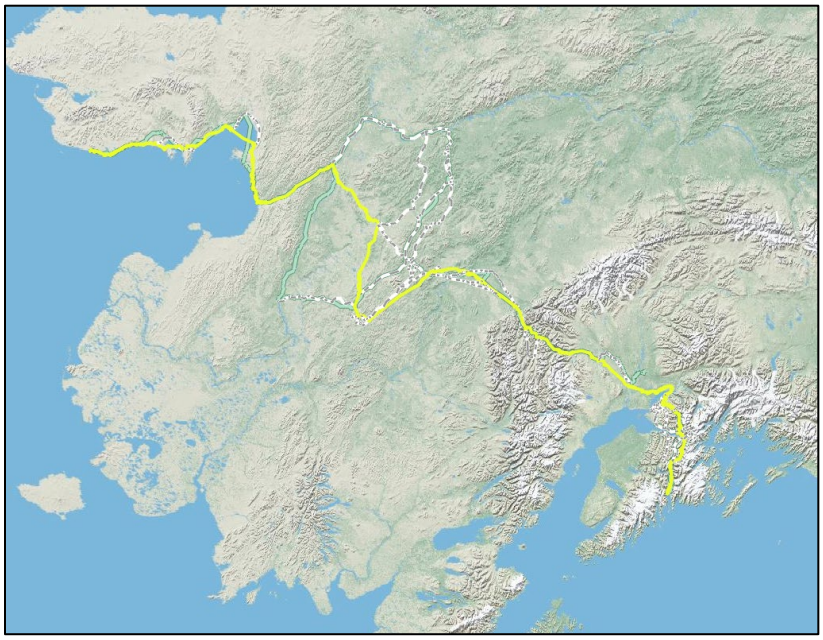


Overview

"Nowhere in the National Trail System is there such an extensive landscape, so demanding of durability and skill during its winter season of travel. On the Iditarod, today's adventurer can duplicate the experience and challenge of yesteryear."
-Senate Report 95-1034, 1978

The Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) commemorates the importance of Alaska's gold rush history. Stemming from Alaska Native travel routes that were expanded into gold rush era transportation corridors, the Congressionally designated National Historic Trail continues to be used for travel, recreation, and long-distance races, connecting communities past and present. Spanning from Seward to Nome, the INHT is the only winter trail in the National Trail System, as well as the only National Historic Trail celebrating the indispensable role played by 'man's best friend' in the settlement of Alaska. In fact, the name Iditarod, above all in National and International recognition, symbolizes the dramatic, long-distance sled dog race that has taken place on portions of the INHT each March since 1973.

Dozens of managing agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and others work to promote the preservation, enjoyment, use, and appreciation of this vast trail network. This report, compiled by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in its capacity as the Trail's administering agency, provides details of work and projects that have been accomplished between October 2025 and September 2026 (fiscal year 2026) in support of the INHT. The mention of company names, trade names, or commercial products does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use by the federal government.



A map of the INHT system, including the primary historic route from Seward to Nome, shown in yellow. Cover photo courtesy of Iditarod Trail Invitational.

Freedom 250 – Iditarod Ceremonial Start

Each year, Iditarod mushers and their dog teams take part in an 11-mile ceremonial kickoff in Anchorage before embarking on the 1,000-mile Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race® along the INHT. The course begins in downtown Anchorage and ends at Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Campbell Tract. For 2026, the long-standing event was selected as one of four marquee BLM Freedom 250 (F250) events. F250 was a national effort to celebrate the America's founding and heritage through public events throughout the year. The heart of the event remained the same, but the F250 connection provided an elevated opportunity to engage partners, heighten outreach and community visibility, and tell Alaska's unique history as a part of the broader American story.

Despite almost a foot of new snow on the ground, the event drew an impressive crowd, with an estimated 1,600 attendees joining to cheer on 37 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race® teams. From meeting adoptable retired sled dogs to trying their hand at panning for gold, spectators were treated to memorable programs and educational activities. Adding to the excitement, several distinguished guests attended, including leadership from the Department of Interior as well as both Alaska U.S. Senators.

The event required sustained commitment and support from many of the INHT's managing agencies and partners. The BLM is thankful to the following organizations who made it possible:

- Alaska Resources Library and Information Services
- Alaskan Sled Dog and Racing Association
- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
- Department of Interior Office of Subsistence Management
- Denali National Park and Preserve
- Eagle River Nature Center
- Friends of Campbell Tract
- Iditarod Trail Committee
- Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance
- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
- Leave No Trace – Alaska
- Municipality of Anchorage
- NPS Anchorage Alaska Public Lands Information Center
- State of Alaska: Office of History and Archaeology and Chugach State Park
- The August Fund
- Tread Lightly!
- University of Alaska Anchorage Archives
- U.S. Forest Service Chugach National Forest
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service







BLM staff pose post-event as snow continues to fly (top). Visitors try their hand at panning for gold at one of the partner-run activity stations (bottom left). An Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race® musher gets ready to high five a spectator (bottom right). Photos by BLM.

Alaska Trails

The INHT Southern Trek continues to receive support for trail construction, reconstruction, and maintenance thanks to successful coordination between nonprofits and land managers. Alaska Trails is a key partner making this decades-long vision a reality. See the United States Forest Service (USFS) write up regarding several projects Alaska Trails was involved with in FY26.

Additionally, Alaska Trails Pro Crews and the Youth Employment in Parks undertook substantial improvements to the Middle Iditarod Trail in Girdwood. The trail now features extensive gravel fill, improved drainage and bridges, and fewer roots and muddy areas to navigate. The Youth Employment in Parks work was funded by the Anchorage Park Foundation.





Photos of Youth Employment in Parks participants and Indian Valley Trail construction by Willie Dalton, Alaska Trails.

The Indian Valley Trail within Chugach State Park has been re-routed to higher ground with 4.5 miles complete and another 3.2 miles near completion. When complete, it will connect the trailhead to Indian Pass and include connectors to the Powerline Trail and the old Indian Valley Trail. The reroute supports trail sustainability into the future. Funding was secured through FY23 state capital appropriations requested by Alaska Trails for the Alaska's Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Several grant opportunities may fund the remaining trail and provide for bridge work.

Bureau of Land Management

Comprehensive Plan Revision

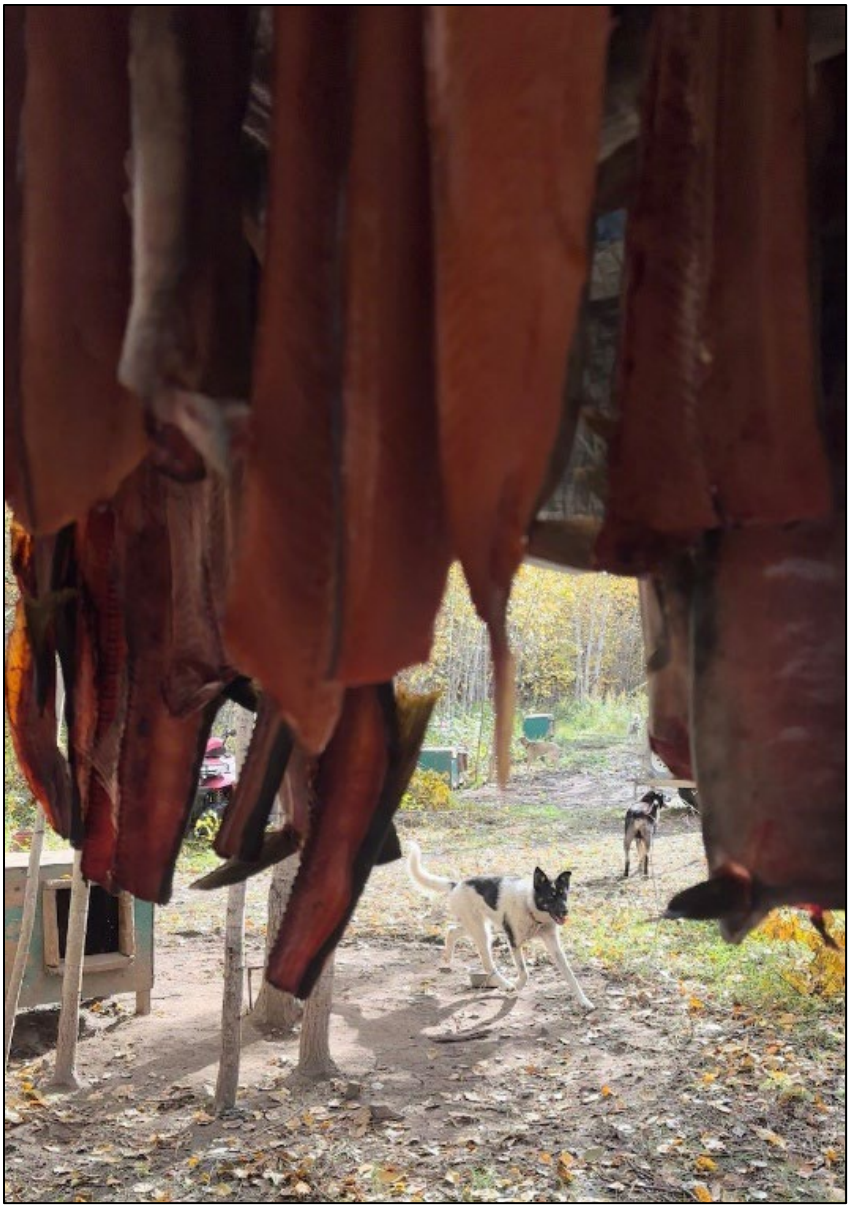
All National Trails are required by the National Trails System Act to have a Comprehensive Plan (CP) in place to serve as a common guide for the Trail's many stakeholders. The INHT's CP was completed in 1986, making it nearly 40 years old. After robust stakeholder engagement in 2025, BLM, as the INHT Administrator, had planned to deliver an initial draft to managing agencies and partners in early October. However, through the drafting process, the BLM determined that there was more work to be done—and more data and information needed—to ensure the plan meets the needs of agencies and partners across the Iditarod. As a result, BLM spent FY26 continuing to work to build a robust draft plan.

Ongoing Partner and Project Support

Throughout FY26, BLM, as the INHT Administrator, provided coordination support, technical guidance, and financial assistance to managing agencies and partners across the Trail on various projects, plans, and efforts. This included BLM providing additional funding to the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance's (IHTA) assistance agreement and continuing to engage the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities on the West Susitna Road Access Project as a Section 106 consulting party.

Native Lands, National Trails Intern

The BLM secured a year-long internship for the INHT through the Native Lands, National Trails program (NLNT). The NLNT program is a partnership between BLM, Conservation Legacy, Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps, and Americorps. The BLM hired Emmy Ryn, raised in Chugiak, Alaska, for this internship which runs from June 1, 2026 through May 2027, and is supervised by Jenny Blanchard, the AFO Archaeologist. Emmy's time will be focused on gathering Indigenous perspectives for the INHT. Her goal is to develop a storymap delving into Indigenous history and contemporary Indigenous connections to the Trail and its surrounding lands through video, audio, archives, and more. Emmy has already made connections with several tribal members along the Trail; is planning work with the Unalakleet School District; and has worked with the Anchorage School District to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and the INHT into their middle school social studies curriculum. She also spent a week with Jody Potts-Joseph, a Hän Gwich'in musher who has raced the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race®, learning from her about the land, subsistence, and the importance of dog mushing to Indigenous communities.



A view of musher Jody Potts-Joseph's dog yard, seen through her salmon smokehouse. Photo by Emmy Ryn.

Rohn CCC Cabin & Tatina Aviation Field Reserve Now Listed on the NRHP

Anchorage Field Office (AFO) staff coordinated with BLM Headquarters and the National Park Service to nominate the Rohn Cabin and airstrip for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the United States' list of historic and prehistoric sites most worthy of preservation. The site was listed on the NRHP by the National Park Service in June, ensuring its protection now and into the future. This was the culmination of decades of effort by BLM AFO cultural resources staff, including assistance from two Student Conservation Association interns.





The Rohn Cabin, pictured on the left. On the right, a bronze plaque commemorates listing the cabin and airstrip on the NRHP. BLM plans to install the plaque on site in 2027. Photos by BLM.

Flat Townsite Cultural Survey and Evaluation

The community of Flat was one of the largest mining communities along the Iditarod Trail. Because of its remote location, as well as continuous stewardship by some of the descendants of the original mining families, the abandoned townsite remains in good condition. While its historical significance was not in question, the last comprehensive evaluation of the historic district for the National Register of Historic Places was in 1993. The BLM and its partners agreed that an update was needed for several reasons. The condition of many buildings had changed significantly since the previous survey, and technology has evolved to allow for more accurate mapping of the building locations. In addition, there have been several fires near Flat in recent years, and an updated map and NRHP evaluation was considered necessary for future fire protection.

The BLM AFO partnered with IHTA and the State of Alaska, Office of History and Archaeology Survey Unit to conduct a new survey and evaluation of the townsite's core in the summer of 2024. The report was finalized in the winter of 2025-2026 and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review and concurrence in April 2026. The project updated the determinations of eligibility for the Flat Historic District and 60 contributing properties. Of the 60 contributing properties, 53 were determined eligible to contribute to the significance of the Flat Historic District.

Public Shelter Cabin Maintenance

In FY26, AFO staff completed inspections and maintenance on the five INHT public shelter cabins located on BLM-managed lands. Fuels reduction work occurred at the Rohn Cabin. The Tripod Flat cabin was raised and leveled, the old outhouse decommissioned, a new outhouse was built, and hazard trees close to the cabin were removed. A big thank you to community volunteers, coordinated through IHTA, who stepped up and delivered outhouse building supplies to the Tripod Flat Public Shelter Cabin when unsafe temperatures derailed BLM's winter mission to the Unalakleet to Kaltag section of the Trail in March. Old Woman and Foothills cabin were cleaned up and inspected for future improvements. Approximately 3,000 lbs of garbage and unusable construction materials was flown back to be disposed of in Unalakleet. Work did not occur as planned at the Bear Creek cabin due to a wildlife hazard staff encountered.







Volunteers pack outhouse supplies for the trek to Tripod Flat public shelter cabin. (left photo). BLM staff digging the latrine pit and installing the new outhouse (right photos). Photos by BLM.

Chugach State Park

Interior Trails LLC completed a 0.7-mile reroute around the “Chutes and Ladders” section of Crow Pass Trail in summer 2026. Located approximately eight miles from the Eagle River Nature Center, the project bypasses a badly deteriorated stretch affected by a major washout, a creek flowing down the trail, dense brush, and beaver-related flooding. The new alignment replaces repeated ups and downs with a more consistent climb and descent, adding less than a tenth of a mile to the overall route.

The reroute winds through forest, alpine tundra, and natural rock features, offering expansive views of Eagle River and the surrounding mountains while retaining the steep, technical character of this memorable section. Funding and support from Alaska State Parks, cooperation with the Eagle River Nature Center, advocacy by Alaska Trails, and the skilled work of Interior Trails made the project possible. Building on the one-mile Perch reroute completed in 2025, this work continues a multiyear effort to address deteriorating trail conditions and sustain opportunities to experience the INHT within Chugach State Park.

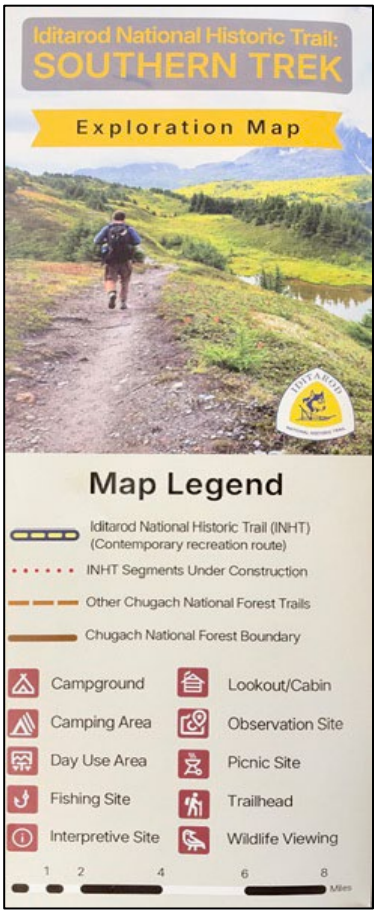


Gorgeous views as the new trail meanders through a natural rock gateway.
Photo provided by Chugach State Park.

Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance

The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance (IHTA or Alliance) works to protect, preserve, and promote the INHT. The Alliance accomplishes its mission by supporting education programs and historical research to tell the story of the Trail; assisting in the protection, improvement, maintenance and marking of the Trail; and developing partnerships that foster stewardship commitments and support from landowners, local communities, organizations and others along the Trail. Notable accomplishments in 2026 included:

- Organizing volunteer efforts and/or providing small sub-grants for the following trail work projects that improved access and safety along the travel routes:
    - Clearance of windfall trees from 80 miles of trail between Unalakleet and Kaltag, Alaska.
    - Replacement and installation of wayfinding signage in the Knik, Nome, and Bearing Sea coast areas of the Trail, including reflectors, logos, and tripods.
    - Repair of significant potholes on 6-mile Tiehacker Trail, in partnership with Seward Iditarod Trail Blazers volunteers.
    - Repair of a damaged safety cabin structure (Topkok Cabin) along the Bering Sea Coast.
- Creating new public-facing interpretive and outreach materials, including:
    - A map of the new and coming-soon sections of pedestrian trail on the Southern Trek portion of Iditarod Trail, in partnership with USFS and Alaska Trails (see image on right).
- Providing significant planning and support for the Freedom 250 event for the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race® Ceremonial Start.
- Continuing to promote and distribute the Jr. Trailblazer youth activity booklet around Alaska.
- Supporting interpretive consistency among Trail partners:
    - Assessed the status of the Iditarod Trail passport program along 180 miles of trail to facilitate planning and improvement efforts, in partnership with BLM.
    - Assessed the status of interpretive signage along 180 miles of trail to facilitate planning and improvement efforts, in partnership with Kenai Mountains Turnagain Arm Heritage Area.
- Building capacity in communications and outreach through the hiring of a new Communications Manager.
- Producing historic and archeologic research, in partnership with Alaska's Office of History and Archeology:



    - Survey of Flat historic townsite completed and shared with the public (see BLM write-up for additional information).
    - Survey of Old McGrath townsite.
    - Created plan for assessing historic Don's Cabin.
- Planning and facilitating special outreach events for the public about the INHT, including:
    - National Public Lands Day special event with BLM, PNTS, & REI – 870 attended
    - Ribbon-cutting for new and improved trail sections in Moose Pass – 30 attended
    - Interpretive information shared with youth trail crews working on Iditarod Trail, with Municipality of Anchorage – 40 attended



Alliance Executive Director Betsi Oliver, Alliance Board Member Allegra Hamer, and INHT Administrator Robin Lewis share information about the Trail at an outreach event. Photo provided by BLM.

- Planning and hosting multiple stakeholder workshops throughout the year to build partnership connections and to share information about needed and potential projects to enhance trail infrastructure, safety and use; associated sites and communities; historic preservation; and community engagement.
- Fostering relationships at the national, state, and local level to discuss trail needs, share perspectives and expertise, and support the efforts of INHT partners across the trail network.
- Representing the INHT in various regional and statewide meetings hosted by outdoor recreation advocates, historical societies, and public engagement groups.

Iditarod Race Events

The INHT has a rich history, but in this modern era it is best known for its prominent race events. Annually, the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race®, the Iron Dog snowmobile race, and the Iditarod Trail Invitational (ITI) human-powered race utilize portions of the INHT for their competitions across Alaska. The sled dog and snowmobile races have made use of the Trail since the early 1970s. The human-powered race began using the Trail in the 1980s. With participants and viewers from various countries, these long-distance competitive events place an international spotlight on the INHT, Alaska, and these rugged endurance events.

The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race® held their annual race from Anchorage to Nome with 37 racers journeying along the Trail. The Iron Dog included 31 teams in 2026. The 2026 ITI started from Knik on February 22nd, sending athletes from all over the United States and 15 countries up the INHT on foot, bike and ski at distances of 150, 350 and 1,000 miles. Deep snow, high winds and temperatures near -35°F made for a demanding year, and 56 athletes reached the finish. The four 1,000-mile finishers arrived in Nome after nearly 28 days on the trail. ITI's trail crew also put substantial work into the Trail itself this season, improving it for everyone who traveled it, not only the racers.



Athletes racing in the Iditarod Trail Invitational make their way along the trail. Photo provided by Iditarod Trail Invitational.

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

JBER and our cooperators, National Preservation Institute and Northern Land Use Research Alaska, completed our second year of work on a Department of Defense Legacy grant project to identify segments of the INHT on the installation. After a deep dive into early 20th century surveyor notes and archival information, we identified more than 80 locations where the Trail was reported. During the summer of 2026, we completed site visits to all locations, identified several new archaeological sites, and investigated the location of the Eagle River Roadhouse. A final report is expected in summer 2027.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Visitors to the Knik Museum and Mushers Hall of Fame, operated by the Wasilla Knik Historical Society in partnership with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, will notice several recent improvements, including a fresh coat of paint on the exterior and redecorated exhibits in the upstairs Iditarod display area. As one of the last remaining buildings from the historic Knik townsite, the museum continues to preserve the rich history of the INHT and the community that helped support it. A nearby section of the Trail, located directly in front of the museum, has been identified as needing attention. However, because part of the trail crosses private land, developing a plan for upgrades that support both summer and winter travel by hikers and mushers remains a challenge. Collaboration and thoughtful planning will be essential to improve this historic trail segment.





Photos of the Knik Museum and nearby section of the INHT courtesy of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

United States Forest Service

INHT Southern Trek Buildout

New Trail and Bridge Construction. Early in FY26, the USFS completed approximately three miles of new trail and two large bridges south of Ptarmigan Creek near Moose Pass. Combined with an adjacent 2025 project, the work opened seven miles of trail with views over Kenai Lake. At Turnagain Pass, contractors, including Alaska Trails, completed approximately 2.5 miles of a planned five-mile extension and built a bridge over Taylor Creek. Work will continue through 2027; three additional trail bridges are under contract for summer 2027, and bridges over Lyon, Bertha, and Spokane Creeks are anticipated in fall 2026 or winter 2027.

Trail Maintenance and Reconstruction. Maintenance and reconstruction of approximately five miles of Turnagain Pass Trail began in summer 2026 and is about 75 percent complete. Completion in early 2027, together with four new bridges, will connect the Johnson Pass segment of the Iditarod to points north through Turnagain Pass. Deferred maintenance also continued on Primrose Trail and Meridian Lake Trail, where tread and drainage improvements will support increased use associated with the Dan Seavey Cabin. Trail crews brushed trails and completed other maintenance actions throughout the INHT Southern Trek. Specifically, the Alaska Trails Pro Crew provided 800 hours of on-site trail work and hosted two volunteer events that provided for additional improvements.



Volunteers and Alaska Trails staff working on Meridian Lakes Trail. Photo by Willie Dalton, Alaska Trails.

Trail Construction Funding. Alaska Trails advocacy secured Congressionally Directed Spending for additional construction, emphasizing a connection in the Moose Pass area. The USFS has established a new agreement with the National Forest Foundation with these funds, to leverage their support for further construction contract administration.

Construction Planning. A conceptual design report was completed for the Twentymile Trail segment. Planning also concluded for two Turnagain Pass cabins, and a contract was awarded to construct a cabin near Tincan Mountain in summer 2027.

Trail Protection. Alaska DNR renewed the USFS temporary easement authorization for five years on Southern Trek segments crossing state lands.

Public Outreach. The USFS participated in BLM's Freedom 250 event during the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race® ceremonial start. Kenai Mountains–Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area volunteers installed new signs on Seward Ranger District trail segments, and staff inventoried Southern Trek signage to guide future development. The USFS, Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, and Alaska Trails produced a new print and online Southern Trek map; the latter organizations also hosted a Moose Pass ribbon-cutting and trail celebration.



Attendees of the Moose Pass ribbon-cutting and trail celebration. Photo by Willie Dalton, Alaska Trails.





The top photo highlights improvements to the new Seavey Cabin, named to honor the late Dan Seavey. Photo by Willie Dalton, Alaska Trails. The bottom photo illustrates the new and ongoing construction on Turnagain Pass. Photo provided by USFS.