

The Southeast Steward

a Special Ketchikan Edition

January 2006



The glorious hike from Harriet Hunt to Leask Lakes.

Leask Lakes: A Project

The Leask Users Coalition has been working for almost two years to develop a long-lasting and effective access plan for specific areas within the Leask Lakes property, northeast of Lake Harriet Hunt, bordering the Upper George Inlet.

"This project is bringing together government and private entities to shape a plan for Ketchikan's residents and visitors to enjoy another beautiful part of this island," said Laura Baker, Coordinator of the Leask Users Coalition.

The owner, Alaska

Mental Health Trust, is currently building roads in preparation for logging operations of the 4,800-acre tract. The Coalition's goal is to fundraise to enlarge the buffer zone along the lakes and the Leask Creek and to provide permanent public access.

Jack Lee, Co-chairman of the Leask Users Coalition, has been working on a roaded recreation campaign for Leask Lakes for many years. "A public road connection is planned between Harriet Hunt and Shelter cove and Leask Lakes is right in the middle. Providing public

access and recreational opportunities at Leask Lakes would be invaluable for the people of Ketchikan," said Lee.

When the logging is complete Cape Fox plans to buy the entire parcel to include in their private lands management plan. Cape Fox Corporation and Leask User's Coalition are working together to incorporate an easement, which would allow public access to the lakes and the stream.

"This is a chance to maintain public access to the portion of the Leask Lakes tract that has the highest recreation and wildlife value, and keep it

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Coast Guard

Let's make it public!

Coast Guard Beach is a beloved place for Ketchikan residents. Located near the North Point Higgins Elementary School, this beautiful destination has long been used as a special place for family camping, hiking, picnicking, wildlife viewing, kayaking, and overall public enjoyment.

The Alaska Mental Health Trust owns the majority of the Coast Guard Beach uplands with no long-term protections for public use. The Ketchikan Outdoor

Coalition and the Coast Guard Beach Working Group hopes to work with the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and Southeast Alaska Land Trust to acquire Coast Guard Beach and retain it as public land. The State Parks Advisory Board has also had Coast Guard Beach on their priority list, but have not had the financial resources to manage the property.

"Right now I think many people just assume they will be able to continue to use and enjoy the trail and beach area. But with the rising price of real estate and demand for beach property, it seems increasingly likely that the Trust will someday decide to develop the



Student takes a leap at Coast Guard Beach.

beginning of a process that will ensure Coast Guard Beach continues to be available to everyone in Ketchikan, especially for our kids and grandkids." Jim Mitchell, President of the Trails Coalition.

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough has a revocable license granted by the Mental Health Trust to improve the trail and allow public access through a 30 foot wide corridor down to the beach. The Trails Coalition is organizing volunteers to construct improvements and maintain the trail under an MOU with the Borough. The revocable license expires in 2007 and automatically expires if the Mental Health Land Trust determines that the property has a higher and better use or if the trail

interferes in any manner with a future proposed use of the Trust property.

"Trails Coalition members and residents of the beach neighborhood have for several years been organizing work parties of volunteers to upgrade the rough trail from the North Point Higgins Elementary School to the beach. Donated materials have been used and volunteers have persistently worked to make steady progress toward the beach," said Harold Adams, devoted outdoor enthusiast with the Trails Coalition.

Coast Guard Beach is one of the last, undeveloped beaches that still feels remote, even though it is less than a

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Jim Mitchell
Trails Coalition
President

Leask Lakes Update

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in a natural or near natural condition. Meanwhile, the timber harvest operation proceeding on the tract not only provides jobs and timber to the economy, but if managed well, can also enhance future public use of the easement area. This is real conservation at work ” said Eric Muench, LUC volunteer and long time Ketchikan resident.

Many hours of volunteer work have been poured into the development of this project. We have received two resolutions of support from the Ketchikan Gateway Borough.

“We invited the Borough to be a partner in this project in order to increase local input and planning, have continuous local support, and increase eligibility for grant funding,” said Baker.



Momentum for the project has led to a signed memorandum of understanding between Leask Users Coalition, Southeast Alaska Land Trust, Cape Fox, and the Borough. This is an important step in developing an easement document and fundraising. Also, Leask Lakes placed high in a recent grant request.

“We recently applied for a grant Program called the

Forest Legacy Program and did very well. It is specifically designed for working forests, where forestry and recreation and wildlife values are combined. Our high rating was an indicator that the grantors see the value of our project, which has been confirmed by further conversations with their organizations,”

said Bill Rotecki, Co-chairman of the Leask Users Coalition. “This project can still be a win-win situation. We are working towards designation of a special place that Ketchikan residents will have access to and be able to enjoy in perpetuity, while forestry can still take place around it.”

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“Future generations may not know how it got there, but they will be extremely grateful for our efforts when they find themselves canoeing across the lake, fishing the creeks or hiking from Harriet Hunt through to Loring,”

Bill Rotecki, Co-chairman of the Leask Users Coalition.

“Stewarding Lands You Cherish”

Perhaps you're a member of the Southeast Alaska Land Trust, or thinking about joining, but don't know much about what SEALTrust does. Our mission statement is a good place to start:

“The Southeast Alaska Land Trust cooperates with communities and landowners to ensure that vital natural areas remain in place for the well-being of each generation.”

How does SEALTrust fulfill this mission? One important tool we use is a voluntary landowner agreement, called a conservation easement, in which a property owner willingly limits the right to engage in certain development activities on his/her property.

SEALTrust holds the easement and ensures that activity on the property, by its current or future owners, is conducted in accord with the terms of the agreement. In this way, certain values of the land will be conserved, and protected, in perpetuity.

Conservation easements specify what activities are allowed, and permanently restrict others that would damage the conservation values of the land. SEALTrust's role is to safeguard these agreements through

routine monitoring visits. We are stewards of the easement terms for the property over time, even if ownership changes hands.

Currently, Ketchikan Borough residents are working with the Southeast Alaska Land Trust on several projects. SEALTrust is assisting the Leask Users Coalition with the process of buying a conservation easement on the Leask Lakes tract from the Alaska Mental Health Trust. Ketchikan planners and volunteers are also discussing a local advisory board for SEAL Trust. This board would provide an effective structure to address local land conservation measures and help make available land management resources for private landholders in Ketchikan.

For example, the Alaska Mental Health Trust owns the uplands to Coast Guard Beach and South Point Higgins Beach. The Mental Health Trust has a mandate to maximize revenue from their lands and potential development could inhibit public access and right-of-way. Volunteers from the Ketchikan Outdoor Recreation and Trails Coalition are beginning to work with SEALTrust in

developing a long-term conservation strategy to maintain Coast Guard Beach and South Point Higgins for everyone's enjoyment.

Think about the unique land values around your community. How might SEALTrust's mission help keep those vital natural areas intact for the next generation? We welcome your ideas.

For further information on volunteering and planning for the projects mentioned above, please contact Laura Baker, Ketchikan project coordinator at (907) 617-4310 or Jim Mitchell,

president of the Ketchikan Outdoor Recreation and Trails Coalition at 225-6808 or visit:

www.southeastalaskalandtrust.org,
www.leasklakes.org, or
<http://www.geocities.com/trailscoalition/index.html>.



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Yes! You can count on my continued financial support to help protect vital natural areas in Southeast.

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Coast Guard Beach

(continued from page 2)

mile away from the road system. Ensuring that Coast Guard Beach is protected in the future will require planning efforts with residents, community leaders, the Borough planners, and the Mental Health Trust.

Adams also noted that, "This is a large, quiet beach with interesting rock formations, a small creek, and a protected area under the trees. What an opportunity we now have as a community, with Trails Coalition and Southeast Alaska Land Trust support, to buy this land and make it a public beach into the future".



Trail blazers Laura Baker and Alethea Johnson.

Coast Guard Beach Working Group
Informational Meeting
Thursday, January 12
7:00 pm
Point Higgins Elementary School
Library
Come, learn more and share ideas for this project.



Ownership map of Coast Guard Beach area.



Winter Fun Winter Funds

You Are Invited To A Winter Fundraising Auction for Leask Lakes

Friday, February 17, 2006
6:00 PM at the Ted Ferry Civic Center

Tickets: \$10 for 1 or \$15 for 2
hors d'oeuvres provided and beer and wine at cost

How Can You Help?
Join us for the Winter Auction or donate something interesting!
Call LoAnn Swanson
Auction Organizer
(907) 247-8189

Proceeds from this Auction will help pay for the Leask Lakes Conservation Easement project costs, including an appraisal and a project manager. Every local dollar donated will be equally matched with federal & state grants. The conservation easement acquisition costs are being sought from federal programs.

Sponsored by:

Leask Users Coalition
www.leasklakes.org

Ketchikan Outdoor Recreation and Trails Coalition
www.geocities.com/trailscoalition/index.html

The Southeast Alaska Land Trust



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