



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Region 10
Chugach National Forest

3301 'C' Street
Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99503-3998

File Code: 1950 - NEPA

Date: November 26, 2002

Subject: Planning, Development and Management
of the Iditarod National Historic Trail: Seward to Girdwood

Public Scoping Letter and Request For Public Comment

Hello,

We are writing to inform you of the Chugach National Forest's proposal for the preservation, development and management of the Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) between Seward and Girdwood, Alaska.

Since the INHT designation as a National Historic Trail in 1978 and the development of the INHT Seward to Nome Route Comprehensive Management Plan in 1986, there has been subsequent development of a variety of agency, community and advocate plans and activities associated with the INHT. Some of you have been involved with the INHT for many years. Some of you may be receiving information on this project for the first time. Please let us know if you would like to continue receiving mailings by filling out and returning the enclosed form.

During the past year, we have completed extensive field reconnaissance along existing and potential trail locations, as well as survey and inventory of heritage resources. As a result, we have verified and identified potential locations for the establishment of a continuous trail connection between Seward and Girdwood. In addition, we have identified associated opportunities for the preservation and interpretation of INHT- heritage resources, and for the development of trailhead and recreation facilities.

Attached you will find our proposal for the preservation, development and management of the INHT and associated heritage resources, crossing primarily National Forest land, between Seward and Girdwood. Our intent is to validate and implement selected recommendations identified in the INHT Comprehensive Plan, while meeting Chugach Forest Plan direction. We are taking into account legislation, guidelines and plans identified for and by adjacent landowners and managers.

Based on our preliminary assessment, we are planning to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project. As part of the requirements of preparing an EA, we are initiating a public comment period with this Scoping Notice and by filing a Public Notice in area newspapers. We anticipate the Public Notice to be published November 26th, 2002.

We welcome public input into this planning and analysis process. **We would like to receive your comments by December 27th, 2002** so we can consider them early in our analysis.



Once we receive comments, we will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA will include alternatives to our proposal, developed from comments received during this scoping phase, and will disclose the environmental effects of all alternatives. Once that is published, you will have another opportunity to comment, providing feedback on the EA. We will then respond to those comments, and a decision will be made by the Chugach Forest Supervisor.

Please review the enclosed information. If this project is of interest to you, please take the time to give us your comments. We encourage you to use the enclosed comment form, send an e-mail, call or visit. Give your comments to Alison Rein or Pat O'Leary, project Recreation Planners, who can be reached at:

Alison Rein, Recreation Planner

Glacier Ranger District
P.O. Box 129
Girdwood, AK 99587-0129
Phone: 907-754-2329
e-mail: arein@fs.fed.us

Pat O'Leary, Recreation Planner

Seward Ranger District
P.O. Box 390
Seward, AK 99664-0390
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e-mail: poleary@fs.fed.us

We recognize the tremendous potential for preserving and developing this portion of the Iditarod National Historic Trail, and for active involvement of trail advocates and partners in this effort. We welcome your comments on the project and your ideas for partnership opportunities. Thank you.

Sincerely,

JAMES M. FINCHER
Glacier District Ranger

MIKE R. KANIA
Seward District Ranger

Enclosure