



## IDITAROD HISTORIC TRAIL ALLIANCE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Partnership with the Iditarod Trail Committee

**Anchorage, Alaska** – Tuesday, March 3, 2015 – The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance’s partnership with the Iditarod Trail Committee has resulted in improvements to some of the most difficult trail segments along the Iditarod National Historic Trail. Most recently, in 2014, the Alliance provided critical match funding to the Iditarod Trail Committee who coordinated a multi-partner effort to secure funds and perform trail maintenance and improvements along twenty miles of trail damaged in the 2010 Turquoise Lake Fire and subsequent erosion. The Alliance contributed financial assistance, through a BLM grant, to the Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC), which matched major funding from the Department of Natural Resources.

Additional trail work completed in 2014 in another problem area was a major overhaul of 16 miles of the historic trail over the mountainous Rainy Pass. The primary accomplishment was the clearing of a six foot wide treadway to the ground, through miles of otherwise nearly impassible 6-to-12 foot tall alder and willow shrubs. This project marks the first time in over a century that the trail corridor over Rainy Pass has been entirely cleared. The project took place on State of Alaska lands, with Alaska DNR providing a permit for operations.

Judy Bittner, President of the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, said “Through the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance’s partnership with the Iditarod Trail Committee and with the grant funding the Alliance provided ITC, improvements to the most remote and difficult segments of the trail have been accomplished.”

In prior years, Iditarod trail work completed through this partnership includes the Rohn River to Puntilla segment, the Happy River area, and the Dalzell Gorge.

The Alliance administers grants for trail maintenance and marking with funds from pass-through grants from the Bureau of Land Management, the federal administrator of the Iditarod National Historic Trail, and funds raised from private sources. Assisting the Alliance, ITC and other land managers in the trail maintenance and marking projects are the residents from communities along the trail. The trail maintenance and marking work provides safer travel for all users, and was especially important this year for the trail users in a low snow year.

**Plans for 2015.**

**Trail Marking.** The Alliance, in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management and communities along the Iditarod Trail, will be marking the trail along the Ophir to Ruby and Kaltag to Unalakleet segments of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

**Education Program.** The educational program, Iditarod Trail to Every Classroom (iTREC!), supported by the Alliance and its partners, the Chugach National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management, is recruiting for the 2015-2016 school year, the sixth year of the program. iTREC! is a year-long professional development program that provides teachers with place-based service learning skills to help today's youth become lifelong stewards of Alaska's public lands, natural resources and cultural heritage. In the first five years iTREC! has trained 65 teachers who are now effectively reaching over 5800 K-12 students in 10 rural and urban communities along the trail.

Soon to be released are two products on the history of the Iditarod Trail. (1) A DVD "Iditarod National Historic Trail: A History" is a 26 minute film on the history of the trail and (2) a monograph publication on Walter Goodwin's blazing and constructing the Seward to Nome government trail, 1908 to 1911. They will be available in the spring of 2015.

**Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance's mission** is to promote and support public awareness of the Iditarod Trail and its gold rush and Alaska Native heritage by encouraging education programs and historical research; assisting in the protection, improvement, maintenance and marking of the trail; and developing partnerships that foster stewardship commitment and support from land owners, local communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

**Goals of IHTA are to:**

Promote the understanding of the historic significance of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

Collaborate with federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions to continue stewardship through education, volunteerism and trail maintenance.

Build partnerships and obtain sponsors to provide funding for the next century of the historic Iditarod Trail.