

Planning for the Future of the Eagle River Nature Center

Growth

From early on, it was apparent that the Nature Center's physical facilities were becoming less and less able to accommodate all the various groups being served. Its aging structure and utilities, plus constricted and inefficient spaces, have been ongoing concerns. Most importantly, the facility has not been able to accommodate the programming needs of recent years.



Two years ago, **Friends of Eagle River Nature Center, in partnership with Alaska State Parks**, embarked on a project to identify and evaluate the Center's shortcomings and needs. Hundreds of visitor surveys, vehicular and pedestrian counts were collected, and the organization's operations were examined. Nature Center staff and board members envisioned ways that a renovated and/or new building, with adequate parking and trail access, could better serve the thousands of visitors who make use of the facility and trails. This process provided the foundation for Alaska State Park designers to examine site plan options which would address:

- Safe & adequate parking
- Reduction of pedestrian & vehicle conflicts
- Trail access for various user groups
- Accessible program & trail system (ADA compliant)
- Existing character of the Nature Center
- Interpretive programming needs & their enhancement
- Lack of space and space conflicts
- Screened maintenance facilities
- Uninterrupted access for neighbors

Public Participation

A series of open houses and presentations by Alaska State Park designers are slated to begin in August 2009. Public input is important to this process so that the concerns of members, supporters, park users, neighbors, local governing bodies, and the public at large may be considered.

All comments and inquiries regarding this process should be directed to the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation - Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Please visit their website at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/> - **"Special Notices"** for more information and a schedule of open houses and presentations.





Background

Since 1996, the Eagle River Nature Center's programs, staff and volunteers have touched the lives of many people in unique ways. Through school field trips, youth naturalist programs, astronomy programs, hiking trips, special events such as the annual Winter Solstice Lantern Walk, and more, the Nature Center has created meaningful experiences for countless people.

Throughout the years, staff and board members have kept the organization relevant and financially stable, with major assistance from local businesses, foundations and individuals. Accommodating growth and changes in programs and audiences has been a natural part of the evolution of the organization.



Eagle River Nature Center



Visit dnr.alaska.gov/parks/ for more information and a schedule of public forums starting in August 2009.



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Eagle River Nature Center



Providing connections to nature through excellence in education, resource protection, and outdoor opportunities.



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