

News about the
BLM's Campbell Tract
Anchorage • Alaska

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The Campbell Tract Leaf

STOP! Active Runway

There's an important safety issue brewing at the Campbell Tract and we need YOUR help.

The Campbell airstrip is an active runway. The problem is, some recreationists think otherwise and occasionally venture onto the runway while hiking or walking the family dog. Last June, a Cessna passenger transport bound for Sleetmute during fire season had to abort takeoff when a pedestrian with a dog walked onto the south end of the runway. A similar incident occurred again just two weeks later.

The BLM has since taken precautions to reduce pedestrian use of the runway. But without your cooperation, we cannot guarantee a safe recreational experience for trail users and a functional airstrip for use during field season or emergencies.



A National Guard Pavement Hawk hovers while volunteers from the Alaska Mountain Rescue Group attach a litter during a medevac exercise April 11. The event was one of numerous aviation training exercises at the airstrip each year.

Why not just close the airstrip?

The Campbell airstrip is an active runway used on an intermittent basis for federal operations. Most are non-emergency uses by the BLM or other agencies, such as aviation training and certification or transporting equipment or personnel to and from field assignments. Last summer BLM dispatchers logged 125 flights at the airstrip and another 17 from the adjacent heliport.

The Campbell airstrip also plays an important role during emergencies or natural disaster.

- Each summer, several unplanned landings occur on the runway when pilots encounter mechanical failure or fuel problems (the airstrip is closed to general use by the public, but may be used for emergency landings).
- Should a large wildfire occur on the Anchorage hillside, the airstrip could serve as a staging area for getting critical supplies, equipment and personnel on the ground to protect homes and other structures.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security) sponsors a Disaster Medical Assistance Team in Alaska. The Alaska DMAT stores a portable field hospital at the Campbell Tract warehouse adjacent to the runway for quick retrieval via C-130. DMATs are deployed to help local emergency responders provide medical care during disasters.
- The airstrip's gravel runway could one day play an important role in aiding disaster relief efforts should paved runways in the Anchorage area be damaged by another major earthquake like the 1964 event.

So the maintained gravel airstrip at Campbell Tract is an important resource to all of us. But it also presents maintenance and management challenges. The BLM spent \$1.3 million in 2002 and 2003 to resurface the airstrip. This was a necessary investment given the greater emphasis on emergency preparedness by federal, state and municipal authorities since September 2001.

The BLM will continue to commit the resources needed to maintain a safe and functional airstrip for both emergency and non-emergency uses in the future.



What has BLM done to protect recreationists?

Our outdoor recreation staff has taken several important steps to provide a quality and safe recreational experience for visitors who use the trail system.

- We rerouted several trails to direct recreationists away from the runway.
- We placed additional signs at critical points around the runway. Fourteen signs clearly mark the runway as “Active” and closed to pedestrian use (“Authorized Personnel Only”).
- We installed a radio-activated strobe warning light system at both ends of the airstrip. The lights can be activated by our dispatcher or by incoming aircraft. But don’t assume it’s safe to enter the runway when the strobe isn’t activated. Steer clear of the airstrip at all times!
- We plan to install barrier gates at some trail segments that previously connected to the runway and will revegetate these areas to eliminate the trail connections entirely.

So why haven’t I seen aircraft using the runway?

Most, though not all, flights at Campbell airstrip occur during daytime hours. And many, though not all, recreationists use the trail system evenings and weekends. So some trail users may think the airstrip isn’t active if they haven’t personally seen aircraft arriving or departing the runway.

However, flights often occur on very short notice and smaller aircraft land very quietly compared to jets. Don’t be caught by surprise and find yourself having to duck for cover. For your safety and the safety of others, stay off the runway at all times!

Ok, I’m convinced. What can I do to help?

There are a number of ways you can help the BLM get some important safety messages out to our friends and neighbors who use the Campbell Tract trail system.

- Pick up a current trail map at the BLM field office or Campbell Creek Science Center. Familiarize yourself with the trail routes and use those trails to steer clear of the runway at all times.
- Comply with leash laws at all times so you won’t be tempted to sprint across the runway to retrieve your wayward canine.
- Help spread the word that the airstrip is indeed an active runway and trail users MUST avoid the area at all times.

By working together, we can keep the airstrip safe and continue to provide a quality and safe recreational experience for those who visit the Campbell Tract.

Breakup blues

Doug Ballou and Brad Muir are the BLM’s outdoor recreation team at the Campbell Tract. Doug and Brad remind recreationists that many trails are extremely fragile and vulnerable to damage during April and May.

“Damage that occurs now usually remains well into the summer,” Doug explains. “Please help us take care of your trails by limiting your use during breakup.”

Want to do more? Join us for National Trails Day on June 4. Each year on this day community volunteers help the BLM spruce up trail segments in need of a little TLC. If you’d like to help, give Brad Muir a call at 267-1467.

Have a question about the trail system? Need to report unsafe trail conditions or activities? Want to know more about the airstrip? Here are a few contacts and phone numbers to keep handy:

Doug Ballou, outdoor recreation 267-1398
Brad Muir, outdoor recreation 267-1467
Teresa McPherson, public affairs 267-1420
Anchorage Field Office 267-1246



Campbell Creek Science Center

A TIP ‘O THE HAT — Students from Holy Rosary Academy spent ten Fridays over the winter cleaning up trailheads on Campbell Tract under the Campbell Creek Science Center’s Adopt-A-Trailhead program. If your group would like to adopt a trail, contact the science center at 267-1247.



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