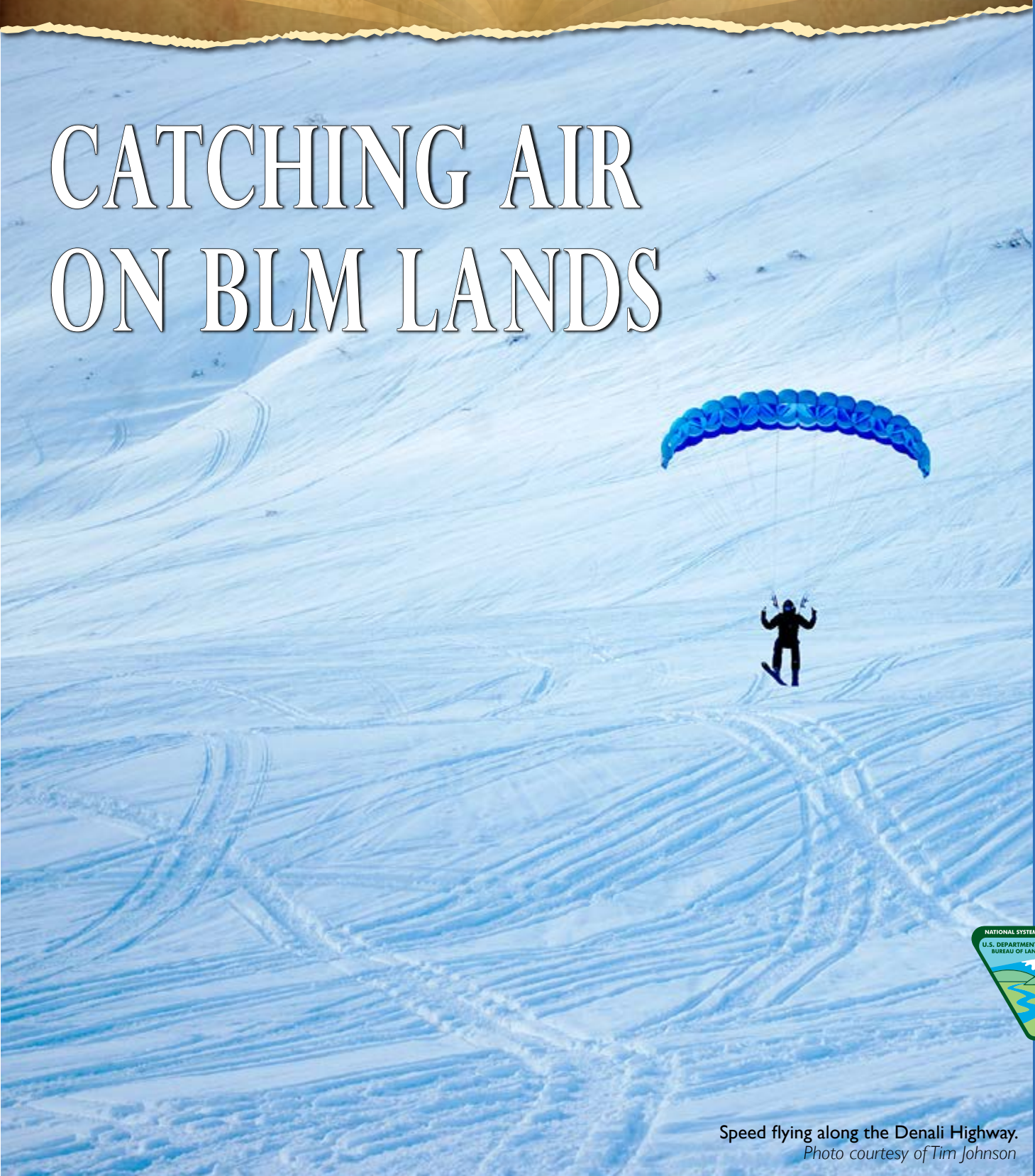
FRONTIERS

News about BLM Public Lands in Alaska • Issue 118 • Fall 2013 • www.blm.gov/ak

CATCHING AIR ON BLM LANDS



Speed flying along the Denali Highway.
Photo courtesy of Tim Johnson

BLM

Alaska

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

ISSUE: 118

what's inside

4 Skiing to New Heights Along the Denali Highway

5 Better Safe Than Sorry

7 Capturing Auroras

8 A Wild Horse Adventure Becomes a Lifestyle

10 Public Land Event Planning

11 Giving Back to Galena

12 Join the BLM Team

14 Frontier Flashes: News From Around the State

Back Cover
Alaska Campground Icons Retire

Viewing green and red auroras near BLM's Wickersham Dome trailhead is just another unique activity people can enjoy on BLM-managed lands in the far north.

Welcome to Frontiers

Welcome to the Fall 2013 issue of *FRONTIERS*. Our goal with this issue is to prepare you for an awesome winter! From speed skiing to aurora photography, there's a recreation opportunity for everyone on public lands in Alaska.

We've enlisted some Alaska adventurers to bring you first-hand stories about winter activities. Did you know that the White Mountains Recreation Area has public use cabins, and is a great place to view and capture auroras? Who knew there was a thing called speed flying involving a paraglider and that some of the best snow runs are along the Denali Highway. Our guest author, Tim Anderson, briefly describes his extreme sport in this issue. In addition, we have a cross continental trail ride adventure, the heroic deeds of the Alaska Fire Service in the face of a devastating flood, and all the latest news to update you on our policies, projects, and planning efforts.

We also are hoping to entice our readers into taking your relationship with public lands to the next level. We bring you several ways to get more involved with the BLM in Alaska through internships, volunteering and even employment. Hope one of our ideas resonates with you.

See you on the trails this winter!

Erin Curtis
Guest Editor

@BLMAlaska

The Total BLM-Alaska Social Media Experience

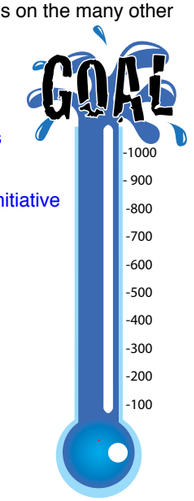
BLM-Alaska now has over 1,100 Facebook Likes!!! To keep up with popular demand, BLM-Alaska has expanded its social media presence to match your focused needs. Looking for fun outdoor opportunities near Fairbanks? Check out the BLM White Mountains National Recreation Area Facebook page. Need updates, pictures and Alaska wildfire information? Go to the BLM-Alaska Fire Service Facebook page. Want information on Arctic Science as it relates to development activities on Alaska's North Slope? Like the BLM's North Slope Science Initiative Facebook page. For everything else BLM-Alaska visit and Like the BLM-Alaska Facebook page or follow us on the many other social media outlets.

Alaska Specific

- www.facebook.com/BLMAlaska
- www.facebook.com/BLMWhiteMountains
- www.facebook.com/BLMAFS
- www.facebook.com/NorthSlopeScienceInitiative
- www.twitter.com/BLMAlaska
- www.twitter.com/NSlopeScience
- www.youtube.com/BLMAlaska
- http://www.flickr.com/photos/blmalaska

National

- https://www.facebook.com/BLMNational
- http://mypubliclands.tumblr.com
- http://instagram.com/mypubliclands
- http://www.pinterest.com/mypubliclands/



CREDITS

Managing editor
Karen J. Laubenstein, (907) 271-3318
klaubens@blm.gov

Contributing writers and editors
Jake Schlapfer, Karen J. Laubenstein, Karen Deatherage, Marnie Graham, Matthew Vos, Tim Johnson

Photographers
AIVC Staff, Gunter Wamser, Jeremy Ziddek, Jimmy Anderson, Karen J. Laubenstein, Kim Mincer, Marnie Graham, Mary Annala, Matthew Vos, Rachel Stumpf, Sonja Endlweber, Tim Johnson, Whitney Root

Design/Illustration
Vanessa Rathbun

BLM/AK/GI-94/005+1120+912

BLM-Alaska *Frontiers* may contain copyrighted material that is used with permission of the copyright owner. Publication in a government document does not authorize any use or appropriation of this copyright material without consent of the owner and they are not in the public domain. Any text and photos without attributed copyright may be reproduced in whole or in part as they are in the public domain. Please credit BLM-Alaska.

TO SUBSCRIBE (free), please send an e-mail to the managing editor. Indicate if you want to receive notification when Frontiers is online, or a copy mailed.

www.blm.gov/ak/frontiers

calendar

December

4 Public Scoping Meetings
In Anchorage at the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center from 4 p.m.-8 p.m. Joint meeting for the Central Yukon and Bering Sea-Western Interior RMPs.

9 Central Yukon RMP Scoping Meeting
Fairbanks at Morris Thompson Cultural Center from 4 p.m.-8 p.m.

11 Central Yukon RMP Scoping Meeting
Tanana at the Community Center from 5 p.m.-8 p.m

12 Public Scoping Meetings
McGrath at the Native Village Community Service Center at 6 p.m.

Evansville/Bettles at the Evansville Community Center at 3 p.m.

13 Central Yukon RMP Scoping Meeting
Galena at the Community Hall at 6 p.m.

16 Central Yukon RMP Scoping Meeting
Hughes at the School at 3 p.m.

17 Public Scoping Meetings
Allakaket at the Tribal Hall at 12 p.m.

Grayling at School at 6 p.m.

18 Bering Sea-Western Interior RMP Scoping Meeting
Holy Cross at the School at 4 p.m.

19 Bering Sea-Western Interior RMP Scoping Meeting
Russian Mission at the School at 4 p.m.

January

11 Copper Basin 300
Sled Dog Race starts in Glennallen and runs clockwise up through Paxson to finish back in Glennallen. Race begins at 10 a.m.

17 Bering Sea-Western Interior and Central Yukon RMP Scoping Deadline
The scoping periods close for both land use plans. Schedules posted at www.blm.gov/ak/planning.

22 Fireside Chat: Alaska's Charismatic Microfauna
Program begins at 7 p.m. at the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center.

Winter Safety Tips from Safety Jake

When I hear riders say "this snowmobile will go anywhere or pull anything" my hair immediately goes up. No…it won't. It will fail you at the first opportunity. All brands of snowmobile manufacturers offer a huge variety of snowmobile models because they are purpose-built. Talk to your local dealer about the type of riding you wish to enjoy and the best model to satisfy that need. Find training courses and practice, practice, practice. Here's what else you'll need to stay safe:

- **Weather:** Get updated weather reports setting out and don't go if the weather is threatening.
- **Navigation:** Maps (protected from becoming wet) and GPS unit; not only for navigation but for live tracking of yourself and others.
- **Communication:** Have a trip plan and communicate that plan with capable people. In-helmet/voice activated communication systems can communicate hazards on the fly.
- **Emergency Locator Transmitters:** These emergency devices use satellites to send your exact location to contacts of your choice as well as emergency services. They can also send and receive text messages.
- **Sun Protection:** Assure you have the proper sun block and sun glasses. Snow has incredible reflective qualities that can burn your skin and eyes in short order.
- **Protective clothing layers:** 100% water proof outer layer, insulated wear such as fleece, down, wool and other non-cotton layers. Make sure your most important layers are easily accessible. You never want to unload all your gear to find a pair of warm gloves or dry socks!
- **Illumination:** Head lamps, both remote and hard-wired into snowmobiles, are priceless. Make sure you have a back-up and that they are easily accessible.
- **First Aid Kit**
- **Training:** You will drastically improve your riding skills by finding training opportunities and practicing! Take a winter survival course: http://www.survivaltraining.com/files/Cold_Weather_Survival_Program_2013.pdf.
- **Fire Starter**
- **Food and Water**
- **Shelter:** Four-season tent with extra poles and stakes. Snow shovel to secure tent depression or cave.

—Jake Schlapfer is the BLM State Safety Officer

SKIING TO NEW HEIGHTS ALONG THE DENALI HIGHWAY

By Tim Johnson

Courtesy of Tim Johnson

It's a winter playground along the Denali Highway for speed fliers.

While Alaska has thousands of roadside mountains to explore, in my experience the Denali Highway is a roadside mountain experience unlike any other road in Alaska. The mountains are most easily reached by snow machine on the Denali Highway, and the best skiing and para-skiing seem to be around 20 miles east of Alpine Creek lodge. On a blue bird day with fresh powder, you won't find more pristine roadside skiing and speed-flying runs. It turns out that hardly any people ski these mountains. Speed flying (also know as ski gliding, speed riding and para-skiing) is a newer sport that combines skiing and flying, using a small paraglider that is made to descend very quickly. Speed flying has become a new passion in the winter and I have yet another reason to enjoy this state, especially remote winter areas like the Denali Highway.

—Tim Johnson
Guest Author

Learn more about the sport from the U.S. Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association *http://www.ushpa.aero*

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

By Matthew Vos

Matthew Vos

Jimmy Anderson

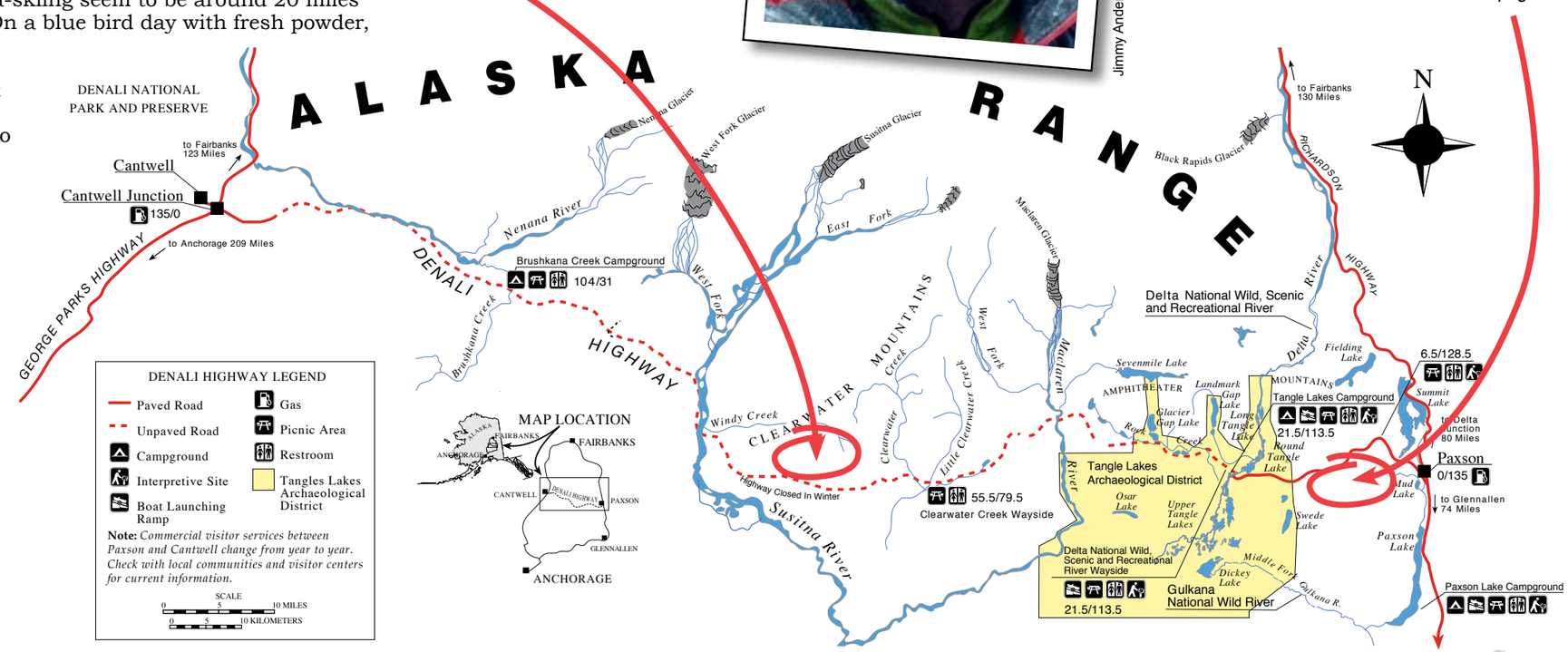
The frosty faces of optimistic Alaskan hunters. Jimmy *(above)* looking forward to filling two tags with Matt *(right)* along for the ride and to help out.

Subsistence hunting in Alaska can be rewarding for those willing to brave the elements. But when Mother Nature throws you her worst, making the decision to wait it out is sometimes best.

That's exactly what happened last March during the end of federal subsistence hunting season for caribou as my friend Jimmy Anderson embarked on a mission to fill his tags with me and my snowmachine for support. The day started off at Jimmy's house in the small town of Copper Center located around 90 miles south of the Denali Highway, where we intended to hunt. The late rising winter sun lit up the Wrangell Mountains as we made our way north but the skies soon grew dark gray as we approached Paxson. This was to be the base from where we would set out down the unmaintained Denali Highway on our snowmachines.

As we layered up and began to unload the machines, the flags went stiff as the wind began to howl. Still, visibility was OK and we knew from reports that the herd of caribou was located around ten miles down the highway. Generally this is a quick trip by snowmachine, but Mother Nature had other plans. Shortly after leaving the lodge, the snow picked up and reduced visibility

—continued on page 6



Matthew Vos

White out conditions along the Denali Highway.

Matthew Vos

The flags blew stiff with the cold wind at the Paxson Lodge.

Mary Annala

Jimmy with his successful hunt the next day when the weather cleared.

Continued from page 5—

significantly. We made it three miles before coming across two men on one machine headed back toward the lodge. They flagged us down as we approached and told us not to go any further, that the conditions were impassable a mile ahead. They said they had driven off the road in complete whiteout conditions and were lost for 45 minutes before being able to find the highway again. At this point, the wind was still howling and snow coming down hard but the highway was still quite defined and it was hard to imagine the conditions could get any worse.

Jimmy and I, who both know the area quite well, had to see it with our own eyes. We asked the other men if they were willing to give it another shot with the added help. Not only would having three machines be much safer if one were to break down or get stuck, I was pulling a trailer with cold-weather emergency survival equipment and food. The men agreed and we slowly progressed for another mile. Sure enough, the highway completely disappeared, and it was snowing and blowing so hard that it was tough to even see the front of our machines. Now we were convinced…

We turned around and slowly made our way back to the Paxson Lodge where we sat and drank coffee hoping the weather might improve. After a few hours of worsening conditions, we made the decision to pack up and return south, knowing that it wasn't worth risking our lives for a couple caribou and that there were a few days left in the season anyhow.

The next day as I made the four hour journey back west to Anchorage, Jimmy headed north to Paxson to see if conditions had improved. It was a calm, clear day in Paxson, and Jimmy successfully filled his tags by harvesting two caribou. Being the nice guy that he is, Jimmy shared some of his bounty with me for my efforts in the blizzard conditions the previous day.

—Matthew Vos
is a Public Affairs Specialist
for BLM Alaska State Office

All photos by Karen J. Laubenstein

CAPTURING AURORAS

By Karen J. Laubenstein

In the 18 years I've lived in Alaska, I've seen some spectacular photos of the auroras (northern lights). It's only recently that I took a S*hooting the Auroras* photography course and spent that evening in the midst of an aurora storm outside of Fairbanks, Alaska.

This time, I took the photos! Imagine that cold, invigorating wind on your face, the auroras dancing overhead, the snow crunching underfoot, and an energy that fills the air that you can't capture in digital! There is incredible aurora-viewing from BLM-managed lands near Fairbanks, Alaska.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute estimates the auroras are visible 243 nights a year from the Fairbanks area. Many photographers escape Fairbanks's ambient lights by traveling the Elliott or Steese Highways to capture the auroras. A popular destination is the Wickersham Dome trailhead parking lot at Mile 28 and nearby pullouts on the Elliott Highway. Those trails lead into the BLM-managed one-million-acre White Mountains National Recreation Area and its winter trails. For the truly adventurous, a trip up BLM's Dalton Highway Corridor offers aurora seekers an unparalleled opportunity to see aurora borealis dancing across the Arctic skyline.

Although prime aurora viewing is typically around midnight or later, this aurora storm began before dark. By 8:30, the auroras were going strong, dancing and radiating across the skies over the Wickersham Dome trailhead and throughout Alaska's Interior. In the midst of the show, scientists studying the aurora at the Poker Flat Research Range about 30 miles north of Fairbanks launched a two-stage, 46-foot National Aeronautics and Space Administration sounding rocket into the aurora. The rocket gathered information on space weather conditions that affect satellite communications by recording how radio waves travel through the plasma. Four 18-foot wire antennas helped measure the strong electric fields generated by the aurora. Photographers throughout the area caught the light stream of the rocket as it entered the auroras.

—Karen J. Laubenstein is a Writer-Editor
for BLM Alaska State Office

Aurora Photography Tips

- Never use flash photography with auroras.
- Remove any filters and use a lens with a focal length as wide as possible (I used an 18mm; ideal is 24mm or less), and shutter speeds of about 3-5 seconds to capture as much of the sky as possible.
- Manual settings – as wide open an f-stop as your camera will go; fast ISO settings of 800 or more. If you open the shutter too long, it will blur or pick up star tracks, so it is a fine-balance to get your ISO, f-stop, and exposure settings fine-tuned for optimal aurora photos.
- Prefocus before dark if possible on stars or the horizon, do not set the 'infinity' setting as it will likely not be in focus. If you can't prefocus, focus on the stars.
- Learn how to hunt the auroras. Tools available include Facebook, Twitter alerts, the "salmon cam," University of Alaska Fairbanks geophysical institute aurora forecasts, and in Fairbanks, some hotels will alert guests when the auroras become visible. Study the forecasts; learn the levels of aurora activity and moon phases.
- Most auroras have the best viewing when the sun has geomagnetic activity; during the five days before and after a full-moon; with clear skies and subzero temperatures; and between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 am.

Green auroras taken at the Wickersham Dome trailhead in BLM's White Mountains National Recreation Area.

A Wild Horse Adventure Becomes a Lifestyle

By Marnie Graham

The adventure started in 1994 in Ushuaia, Argentina, when Gunter Wamser of Germany set a goal to ride wild horses from the tip of Argentina to Alaska. On September 4, 2013, nearly two decades later, Gunter arrived at his destination in Healy, Alaska, with his partner Sonja Endlweber on four horses adopted from the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wild Horse and Burro Program. I was fortunate enough to meet up with Gunter and Sonja during the final stages of this adventure. So, of course I asked, "How does it feel to be nearing the end of a two-decade long journey?" Gunter simply smiled and replied, "Healy is not the end of the journey. I have discovered, this is my way of life."

Gunter started out in South America and rode adopted native creole horses to the United States border. He was unable to bring the creole horses into the United States, at which point he almost quit his goal. This is when he met Sonja and together they adopted four mustangs from the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program in Cañon City, Colorado and set out to finish the journey.

"They have a good program in Cañon City with the prison, where the horses are socialized," explains Gunter. "Sonja and I were both amazed by what the horses knew when we adopted them." Sonja added, "With the horses being from the wild, they are perfect for backcountry expeditions because they are already comfortable with the wilderness."

For seven seasons since that time, Gunter and Sonja have been riding through the United States and Canada with the adopted horses and their dog, Leni. As adventures often go, this last season of their journey posed some challenges. After leaving the Canadian border and making it almost 100 miles into Alaska, they couldn't cross the Nabesna River. Gunter summarized the hardship, "We made it to the Nabesna River and for several days we tried to cross it under different conditions and water levels. We even went upstream and tried to cross the Nabesna Glacier. In the end, we had to back track all the way to the Canadian border and truck the horses around to pick up where we left off."

I watched Sonja and Gunter pack and repack for the next leg of the journey. They had worked out a plan with the help of BLM Glennallen Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner, Cory Larson, to cross the Gulkana Wild and Scenic River and ride about seven days on a network of trails to pick up their next food drop near the Delta Wild and Scenic River. From there they would ride south of the Denali Highway and cross over the Alaska Range to Cantwell, then ride through Denali National Park, ending in Healy. Exasperated, Sonja explained, "Pack and repack. It's all I do! It's difficult. You never know how much food we will need. It's never the exact amount of days you think. Rivers and creeks swell six times their size and you have to wait for them to go down."

Once the horses are packed, the journey begins again. Sonja and Gunter are in no hurry. I'm given all the time I need to take photos, readjust lenses, and stage myself in various locations along the trail for a better photo. Suddenly I realize I'm on this expedition! I'm part of this journey. I can feel the peaceful, persistent, plodding and meandering pace of the adventure. The hustle and bustle of life is behind us. The blue sky is above us. The occasional fly attacks, and every few steps a horse is allowed to take a bite of grass as it trails along. We stop several times in the first half mile to make adjustments, take photos, and to give horses a drink and a chance to eat wherever there is abundant grass. Gunter and Sonja are delighted to be on such a good trail. Sonja explains, "I enjoy walking as much as riding. It's nice to be on a trail again where we can walk with the horses whenever we choose."

As we meander along, I ask about their future plans. Gunter states, "We plan to take a three year break to be with family and to be in my home country in the summer. We want to find a place in British Columbia where the horses can roam freely on a large piece of land. "

Before I know it, we have walked and ridden a little over a mile and I realize I need to say goodbye and turn back. I have known Gunter and Sonja for such a short time, that I am surprised to find myself a little choked up and reluctant to leave them and this great adventure. We stop at a good spot for the horses to graze, take a few pictures, and exchange some last minute conversations, hugs, and well wishes.

As I hike back to the trailhead, I glance back several times. Once to wave a hardy goodbye and then several times to watch them slowly meander out of sight. While I hike back to the car I reflect on how grateful and fortunate I feel to have been a small part of this great adventure and to have had a glimpse into Gunter and Sonja's way of life.

—Marnie Graham is a Public Affairs Specialist for BLM Glennallen Field Office

1. Sonja and Gunter riding through Alaska. *(Photo: Marnie Graham)* 2. Gunter Starts his journey in Ushuaia, Argentina on adopted creole horses. *(Photo: © abenteuerreiter.de)* 3. Gunter and Sonja adopt Dino, Mac, Tennessee, and Lightfoot in Cañon City, Colorado. Gunter renamed Mac Azabache, which is Spanish for black/brown and Tennessee is now called Rusty. *(Photo: © abenteuerreiter.de)* 4. Sonja and Gunter were grateful to local outfitters who kept bringing them supplies and flying over checking on them for several days while they tried to cross the Nabesna River. *(Photo: © abenteuerreiter.de)* 5. Gunter and Sonja's way of life has been a trail ride. *(Photo: Marnie Graham)* 6. Gunter and Sonja consulted several times with BLM Glennallen Field Office Outdoor Planner, Cory Larson (pictured right), on trails and routes from the Richardson Highway over to Cantwell through the Alaska Range and along the Denali Highway. *(Photo: Marnie Graham)*

PLANNING AN EVENT ON PUBLIC LANDS? HELP THE BLM HELP YOU!

By Marnie Graham

The BLM works with stakeholders to ensure successful and safe events on public lands

Competitive and organized group activities or events that are held on public lands managed by the BLM may require a BLM Special Recreation Permit (SRP). The BLM wants to help you submit a successful application so that your services help Alaska's residents and visitors enjoy public lands! The SRP ensures the public that your event is safe and minimizes user conflicts and impacts to public natural resources.

To ensure adequate time for the BLM to process your application, you should submit a complete application at least **180 days** (6 months) in advance of your event. The permitting process can vary depending on your event's complexity. Vendors or other commercial activities (such as commercial filming) associated with your event may also require separate permits. If this is your first BLM permit, its a good idea to call ahead of time to talk to an outdoor recreation planner about the permit process.

There are common considerations you can plan for in advance of submitting an application that can speed up the process. For example, how will your event handle human waste, garbage, and clean-up? What forms of transportation will occur on public lands and how will resource damage be avoided? How will you handle parking, camping, or staging for the event? What safety measures are planned to ensure public safety? You will also need to provide proof of liability insurance. Once you are permitted and have demonstrated a well-organized, safe event, your permit can often be issued for multiple years.

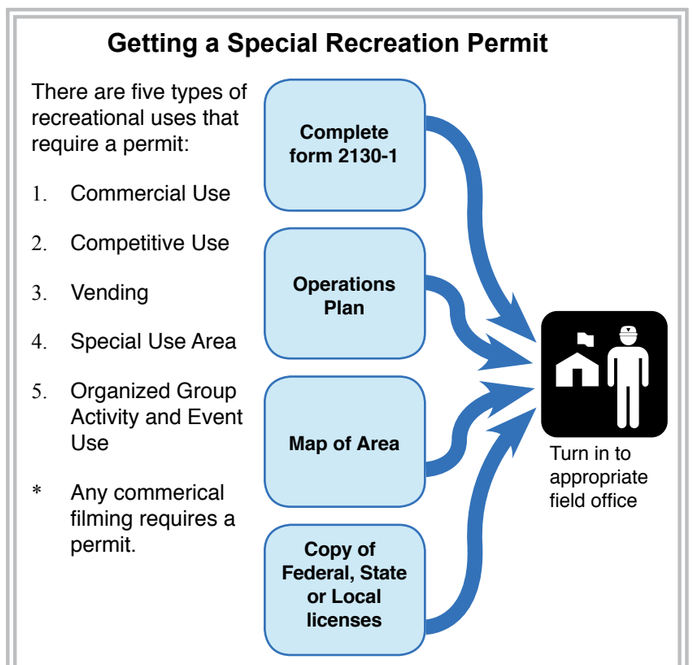
The BLM welcomes your questions. Call any field office for more information about permits for their region:

Anchorage Field Office: 907-267-1459
Glennallen Field Office: 907-822-3217
Fairbanks District Office: 907-474-2223

For more information visit: www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/recreation/permitted_commercial.html.

—Marnie Graham is the Public Affairs Specialist for BLM Glennallen Field Office

Exciting Alaskan events like the Yukon Quest Sled Dog Race are successfully and routinely permitted through the BLM.



GIVING BACK TO GALENA

By Matthew Vos

The focus of the BLM-Alaska Fire Service (AFS) recently turned the focus of its interior wildland fire fighting logistics and operations center in Galena away from fire fighting and towards helping with flood relief to the devastated village.

Early this summer, the AFS Galena Station was temporarily closed due to the flooding of the Yukon River after a massive ice jam sent water over the 100 year flood plain, inundating most of the town in late May. The seasonal field station, which consists of barracks, a dining hall, warehouse, smokejumper outstation, helibase, fixed wing ramp, administrative building, as well as several outbuildings was spared from the flood because it sits within the protection of a dike.

AFS saw an opportunity to help the community and through an agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided assistance to Galena residents. The Galena Zone is the largest of the AFS fire management zones, with an area of approximately 93 million acres. The zone normally has 27 personnel at Galena during the fire season, but relocated 17 staff to handle fire operations at the main AFS base, 300 miles away in Fairbanks, to make room for the relief effort. The 10 remaining staff aided in support that included housing, meals, and warehouse operations.

The AFS barracks housed displaced residents and the dining hall provided approximately 750 meals per day. The Galena Station warehouse also provided support with equipment, supplies and fuel to the relief effort.

Alaska Fire Service Manager Kent Slaughter said, "This support to Galena residents was an opportunity for the BLM-Alaska Fire Service to help support Galena in ways not associated with wildland fire. It was extremely important to us as members of the community to participate in this operation."

With the rapid approach of winter, the AFS support has wound down. However, the recovery is a long term effort, and AFS expects to continue to be involved and provide support as Galena continues to recover.

—Matthew Vos is a Public Affairs Specialist for BLM Alaska State Office

Matthew Vos

One of the many devastated homes along the might Yukon River.

Jeremy Zidekk, AK Dept of Homeland Security&Emergency Management

Workers repair a house that had severe water damage but was salvaged.

Matthew Vos

What's left of the back road out of town, which was created to be an evacuation route from flooding.

JOIN THE BLM TEAM

Photos Credits: Whitney Root, AVIC Staff

INTERNSHIP

BLM's Arctic Interagency Visitor Center (AIVC) in Coldfoot, Alaska welcomed intern Christie Andy this past summer. Christie's eight-week internship represented a first-ever partnership between the AIVC and First Alaskans Institute. First Alaskans is an Alaska Native organization located in Anchorage with a mission to increase leadership capacities in Alaska Native communities.

Christie assisted hundreds of Dalton Highway travelers at the visitor center. She greeted visitors near the Arctic Circle, distributed certificates, and helped people realize their dream of crossing this imaginary line across the globe. She took on numerous other duties, including delivering short interpretive talks on local Alaska Native culture, serving as project lead for the AIVC's new recycling program, participating in a snowshoe hare field study, and presenting backcountry orientations to hikers traveling to Gates of the Arctic National Park. Christie also collaborated with visiting environmental educators to expand and improve youth Discovery Boxes. Whether collecting roadside trash or pulling invasive plant species, Christie brought energy and enthusiasm to every task at hand.

Christie is Yup'ik and her extended Alaska family lives in the village of Newtok along the coast of Alaska just west of Bethel. After her summer internship she returned to George Fox University in Newburg, Oregon.

—Karen Deatherage is a Park Ranger, Interpretation for BLM Central Yukon Field Office

Volunteers are Making a Difference on America's Public Lands

If you love to be outdoors, want to make a difference in your community, and love being on America's public lands, join the more than 30,000 volunteers annually who help make all that possible with the BLM. Whether it's sharing your experiences as a campground host (see back page story), sharing auroras and Alaskan lore with a fascinated audience, helping protect and explore an archaeological site, keeping your favorite outdoor paradise clean, or fixing up your favorite local trail, the BLM has an opportunity for you to use your skills and share your passion to protect America's treasures!

Want to become involved in Arctic Science and Policy related issues? Join the STAP!

The Science Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) is an independent science review and advisory group to the North Slope Science Initiative and is comprised of 15 experts in subjects varying from marine mammals to terrestrial vegetation, permafrost to hydrology to remote sensing, and landscape ecology to traditional ecological knowledge. STAP members serve based on their expertise and come from a wide cross-section of society, with members from environmental non-government organizations to state and federal agencies to industry. To check on position availability, follow us on social media or visit http://northslope.org

Be a BLM RAC star!

Interested in Alaska's public lands? BLM-Alaska has a Resource Advisory Council that meets to provide feedback on BLM programs and projects. The council consists of 15 members from industry, state government, non-government organizations, and members of the public appointed to three-year terms by the Secretary of the Interior. Each year, five seats are available for appointment. If you would like to be notified when the nomination period opens, contact the RAC coordinator, Thom Jennings, at tjenning@blm.gov or call (907) 271-3335. Find additional Information about RAC membership at: http://www.blm.gov/ak/RAC

Think you're a hot shot? Prove it!

The BLM Alaska Fire Service can provide a rewarding career where you can enjoy working outside, while helping to protect and manage some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. Opportunities include Hotshots, Smokejumpers, Fire Specialists, Fire Fighters, and support positions like dispatchers, cooks, motor vehicle operators and more. The BLM Alaska Fire Service recruits for most of its temporary and career seasonal positions between October and January. Advertising for permanent full-time positions happens when vacancies occur. Always check www.usajobs.gov for the "hottest" career you can have!

GET INVOLVED

FRONTIERS FLASHES

News from around the state and our field offices

BLM Outlines Aggressive, Flexible Strategy to Clean Up Legacy Wells

In September, the Bureau of Land Management released the final strategic plan outlining priorities and actions it will take in the near-term to plug and clean up legacy wells in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A). "We appreciate the feedback we received from the State of Alaska, the North Slope Borough and other stakeholders," said Bud Cribley, BLM-Alaska State Director. "While this final plan lays out an aggressive strategy to address 16 of our highest priority wells, we continue to work with our partners to determine the next steps on the remaining wells requiring remediation." Cribley said full remediation of the wells the BLM has inherited will require tremendous resources over the coming years, but the BLM is committed to getting the job done. The final plan is available online at http://www.blm.gov/ak/legacywells.

NPR-A Lease Sale generates nearly $2.9 million

Matthew Vos

Branch Chief of Energy and Minerals, Wayne Svejnoha *(right)* hands Associate State Director Ted Murphy *(left)* one of the several bids.

In November, the BLM held a lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) that generated nearly $2.9 million. The BLM offered 408 tracts comprising about 4.5 million acres in this sale. Three companies submitted 22 bids for the right to develop oil and gas lease tracts in the federal petroleum reserve managed by the BLM on Alaska's North Slope. The high bids totaled $2,885,153 on 22 tracts encompassing about 245,293 acres. The highest bid of $200,103, or $52.11 per acre, was offered by ConocoPhillips Alaska. The State of Alaska will receive 50 percent of the NPR-A lease sale bid receipts, or $1,442,576. Currently, 185 leases cover more than 1.5 million acres in the NPR-A. A map and table with complete sale results by tract are posted at the BLM-Alaska NPR-A website at: http://www.blm.gov/ak/NPR-A_leasing_docs.

New Date for Close of the Comment Period for Bering Sea Western Interior and Central Yukon Plans as a result of the Federal Government Shutdown

The BLM has extended the scoping periods for the Central Yukon and Bering Sea-Western Interior resource management plans due to the government shutdown. The BLM initially scheduled 180 days for scoping, and the original date for the close of the scoping periods were in December 2013. The scoping periods for both land use plans are now open through January 17, 2014. Scoping meeting schedules and information about both land use plans are posted on http://www.blm.gov/ak/planning.

BLM fulfills final ANCSA entitlement for Sea Lion Corporation and facilitates refuge land exchange

The BLM made a final land transfer in November to Sea Lion Corporation to complete the corporation's land entitlement under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). Sea Lion Corporation was formed under ANCSA to represent the Alaska Native village of Hooper Bay. In addition to the transfer of the final entitlement acreage, Sea Lion also participated in a land exchange with the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. The land exchange gave the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service important habitats, including wetlands for the conservation of threatened spectacled and Steller's eiders. In addition, Sea Lion obtained ownership of sub-surface lands important to the future of the corporation and Hooper Bay.

The signing ceremony was held at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Region 7 office in Anchorage. Myron Naneng accepted the land transfer documents for Sea Lion Corporation. BLM Principal Deputy Director Neil Kornze signed the patents for a total of 5,796 acres, including the 1,280 acres received in an exchange of prime coastal waterfowl habitat for higher elevation lands east of the village.

"To visitors, the land may not appear to have much value, but it is very productive and highly valued land to us," stated Naneng.

Matthew Vos

BLM Principal Deputy Director Neil Kornze *(left)* with Sea Lion Corporation board members Myron and Nick Naneng.

Glennallen Field Office Welcomes New Field Manager

Dennis Teitzel joined BLM-Alaska in November. After 30 years in the United States Marine Corps he retired in 2007 and was hired by BLM Montana as a District Administrative Officer and Branch Chief. He has a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis in Adult Education and a great deal of his natural resource management experience is from working as the Range Management Officer for 6 years on the Twentynine Palms Marine Corp Air Ground Combat Center in the Mojave Desert. Teitzel is accustomed to rural America and has been to Alaska many times while in the military. He has experienced interior winters, summers, and coastal rains.

"I have never met anyone that I can't get along with," states Teitzel. "With me, what you see is what you get. I look forward to getting to know the communities in this management area."

National Public Lands Day in Anchorage

Rachel Stumpf

Youth volunteer planting spruce trees. Volunteers planted more than 250 trees, alder, willow, and prickly rose plants to reduce steambank erosion and social trailing.

There were 133 volunteers who showed up on a sunny September Saturday for the 20th Anniversary of National Public Lands Day at the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center. Volunteers worked on several projects including spreading gravel on trails, planting trees to reduce streambank erosion, and installing park benches and an interpretive sign.

"We always have a backlog of trail and maintenance projects that is impossible to get done without the dedication and hard work of local volunteers," says Jeff Brune, manager of the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center. "We really appreciate all the time people give to care for this land!"

BLM fulfills final ANCSA entitlement for Oceanside Corporation

Kim Mincer

Francisca Demoski from Bristol Bay Native Corporation shakes hands with BLM Alaska State Director Bud C. Cribley.

The BLM made an important land transfer to Oceanside Corporation, completing the corporation's land entitlement under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). Oceanside Corporation was formed under ANCSA to represent the Alaska Native village of Perryville. The signing ceremony was held in Anchorage in October. Oceanside's corporate board was present, as well as attorney Sam Fortier and Francisca Demoski from Bristol Bay Regional Corporation. BLM-Alaska State Director Bud C. Cribley signed the final patent for 6,880 acres.

2013 Fire Season Wrap Up

This year's fire season was somewhat unusual, starting slow, dying down and then kicking up again late in October.

In April, Fairbanks broke two daily low temperature records, and had nearly 10 inches of snow, well above normal. Anchorage and Fairbanks finally melted out by the second week in May. But by June across the state—from Homer, to Barrow and the Panhandle, new daily high temperature records were set and then broken again. June proved to be the busiest month with the most fires reported and the most acreage burned. In late October, a fire that started in May on the Mississippi Range near Delta Junction flared up, driven by unusually gusty winds. Firefighters were mobilized, and the fire burned another 300 acres before winds died down and new snow fell.

"Historically, this was extremely late in the year for us to be staffing fires," said Kent Slaughter, Alaska Fire Service Manager.

In total for 2013, 601 fires covering 1,318,000 acres occurred in Alaska. Although most of the fires were caused by humans (389 fires) more acreage was burned due to lightning (1,159,384.6 acres). The largest fire this season was a lightning caused fire in Lime Hills, burning over 200,000 acres.

ALASKA CAMPGROUND ICONS RETIRE

By Marnie Graham

L to R: Marcia Butorac, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner, Cathy Leonard, Campground Volunteer Host, and Jim Leonard, BLM Seasonal Maintenance Worker.

If you have visited the popular BLM Sourdough Creek Campground on the banks of the Gulkana Wild and Scenic River in the past 14 years, you have probably been lucky enough to meet Volunteer Campground Host Cathy Leonard and her husband, BLM Seasonal Maintenance Worker, Jim. In 2000, Jim and Cathy started as volunteer hosts for the BLM Glennallen Field Office (GFO). Over the years, Cathy has volunteered 12,000 hours as a host and Jim volunteered over 3,000 hours before he was hired in 2003 as a BLM seasonal maintenance worker. Together they have become icons for the campground. They have greeted over 20,000 visitors each summer. Routine visitors consider Jim and Cathy as friends. In 2012, Cathy received the BLM National Volunteer "Making a Difference" Award recognizing her for her dedication and quality volunteer service to the public.

This year, Jim and Cathy declared it would be their last season here. They had achieved several goals and were ready to try something new. Ironically, this last year proved to be one of their most interesting and challenging. It started when Alaska refused to thaw in May and then temperatures suddenly jumped upwards of 70 degrees. Paxson Lake and the Gulkana River went into a record flood stage. The campground boat launch area went completely under ice and water. A picnic table was deposited 12 feet up in a tree, interpretive panels were mowed over and Sourdough Creek threatened the access bridge to the campground. At Paxson Campground culverts were washed-out, preventing access to the second camping loop. It was the first time in the history of the campgrounds that they were closed for Memorial Day weekend. Jim and Cathy helped to tackle all of these challenges with their normal tenacity.

Jim poses with break-up ice deposited well above the Sourdough Creek Campground boat launch.

On September 17, 2013, Cathy and Jim hung up their BLM-GFO hats and were recognized by their friends and coworkers. "It's the end of an era," lamented BLM GFO Outdoor Recreation Planner and Volunteer Host Coordinator, Marcia Butorac. "Your work ethic, enthusiasm, quality customer service, and commitment to excellence right to the last day cannot be duplicated."

Office of Communications
Alaska State Office
Bureau of Land Management
222 W. 7th Ave., #13
Anchorage, AK 99513
http://www.blm.gov/ak

Official Business

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
Postage & Fees Paid
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Permit No. G-76