

GEOCACHE ALASKA! INC.

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APRIL 2012 NEWSLETTER

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS VACANCY

The GeocacheAlaska! Board of Directors still has a vacancy in the Vice President or Member-at-Large position. If you're interested in recommending a hard-working Alaskan cacher for this position let us know in an email to president@geocachealaska.org. Don't hesitate to volunteer yourself, a serving member of the board, or any other GeocacheAlaska! member whom you believe will work hard to build up geocaching in the Great Land. Vice presidential and member-at-large accountabilities can be viewed in the by-laws which are downloadable by clicking [here](#).

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

During March, GeocacheAlaska! hosted a survey on land use issues, events, bling, the Board of Directors, and other topics on SurveyMonkey.com, and 26 members (16.5%) took time out of their busy schedules to complete it.

The highlights of the survey include:

Only five responses came in after the link was published in the March newsletter and 21 of the responses came in after the direct e-mail went to members, confirming the overwhelming response to Question 46 (95.5%) that folks want to hear from us via direct e-mail. Interestingly, despite Facebook's popularity, only one person said Facebook is their preferred means of getting information.

1. Trails...primary points are trail user conflicts in the winter months due to a lack of alternative trails going to the same locations, homeless camps, and maintaining existing access points of access.
2. Events...Our members like our events with Geofest being mentioned more than other events. There was a comment about some of the "groups" of cachers that form at some events. Let's all be aware about forming cliques at events and be welcoming to all who attend, especially newcomers. About half of respondents said they'd be willing to pay \$10-\$15 each for an event, which is less than half of what it would cost to host an event at a different venue. This is in agreement with 82% of the respondents saying we should stay at the BP Energy Center. However, several people did say in their extended comments that the venue should grow to allow the event to grow. No alternative event locations were recommended by respondents.
3. GeocacheAlaska! Bling...local cachers like it! Most purchase items for their own collections/personal use and 1/3 to 1/2 trade with others.

4. Board of Directors...Several people listed themselves or other members as potential candidates for service on the Board or on Committees. These people will be contacted by a member of the Board in short order.
5. Online presence...folks most often visit for the website for the education and permit information and the forums for breaking news, banter with other cachers, and milestone recognitions. 55% of respondents visit Facebook at least monthly, but one-third don't have a Facebook account.

The complete survey results may be downloaded from the GeocacheAlaska! website by clicking [here](#).

Many thanks to all of you who took time to complete the survey! The Board of Directors is already considering your feedback and will be working hard to meet the needs.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR--EVENTS

[Trail Aware Flashmob](#), Tuesday, April 10, 6:15 p.m. followed by Anchorage Trails Plan Meeting. Additionally, you are invited to join us at a planning meeting with MOA representatives at 7:00 p.m. after the event in the MOA Planning & Development Center at the northwest corner of Elmore Road and Dr Martin Luther King Jr Ave.

[Geocache Placement FUNDamentals - Anchorage](#), Thursday, April 19, 7:00 p.m., at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage. Some of the topics to be discussed at this EduVent include cache site selection, permits and permission, container selection, camouflage, obtaining accurate coordinates, and hiding tips.

Contact [SSO JOAT](#), if you are outside the immediate Anchorage area, but would like to attend via free WebEx streaming.

[GW X or BUST!!! - Anchorage](#), Sunday, May 13, 2:00-3:00 p.m. at Margaret Egan Sullivan Park. Let's give Cavyguy and other local cachers a rousing send off to Geowoodstock X in Sellersburg, Indiana, which will be held during Memorial Day weekend.

[WWFM IX - Anchorage AK - Town Square Flash Mob 3](#) and [WWFM IX - Big Lake, Alaska](#), Saturday, June 9, at 9:00 a.m. Join cachers from around the world in a large coordinated Flash Mob. Contact [NorthWes](#) for details about how to host a World Wide Flash Mob in your community. It's easy, it's free, and GeocacheAlaska! will provide prizes.

Mo'Pie 2 Tailgater Flash Mob

by akgh519/Ray Menzie

WOW!!! What a wonderful ful(l)filling event by Tomanoble, Blazingpathways and GeocacheAlaska! This was the 2nd annual [Mo' Pie 2 Tailgater Flash Mob](#) pi day event and I have a suspicion it won't be the last! Thirty of us and several of our four legged friends braved the snowy weather to enjoy more than one 'tailgate' of pies. The weather was a bit snowy in some parts of town but things were ready for a party in midtown. This was my first pi event and I will not miss another. We sure have a great bunch of cooks within our caching community. We might have to schedule an event of a different kind after the next one to burn off all the calories!!!



While we were there visiting and sampling, a muggle dog walker walked by and asked what the occasion was to which she was replied, it is pi day so we are having some pie. She laughed and said any reason for a party. We offered her a piece of pie and on her way back by, she joined us for several pieces while we told of our wonderful fun called geocaching!



There was so much pie for the event; we had enough to enjoy it again at the eduvent the following evening!!! Thanks to Tomanoble, Blazingpathways, GeocacheAlaska! and all of YOU who attended and participated making this another wonderful event! Remember, we Alaskan geocachers love a party and an event. See what you can come up with and host one of your own!!!



Reviewer's Corner

With the days lengthening and the snow melting, this is a great time to check on your caches. One quick indicator that your cache might need attention is that the "Needs Maintenance" attribute appears on your cache because another cacher wrote a "Needs Maintenance" log on

your cache. This attribute looks like this: 

Currently, there are more than 300 out of nearly 4600 caches in Alaska are showing this attribute which means that one out of every fifteen caches may have an issue with it.

In some cases, you may have already performed maintenance and the cache is all right. If that's the case, you can clear the "Needs Maintenance" attribute from your cache page by clicking on "log your visit" and writing an "Owner Maintenance" log.

If you haven't checked on your cache since a cacher wrote a "Needs Maintenance" log, please do so soon so your cache is ready to go when the cachers come out in the Spring with the leaves.

Clearing the "Needs Maintenance" attribute when your cache is all right keeps your cache page accurate and will potentially bring more cachers to your hide since some cachers filter out caches that have this attribute set.

There are also 74 "Temporarily Disabled" caches in Alaska. Please check the status of your caches and fix up or archive these caches, especially if Greatland Reviewer has already written a Reviewer Note to the cache page. Greatland Reviewer will perform a cache maintenance sweep during the month of April and will archive caches that have a Reviewer Note that has not been responded to with a Note Log to the cache page describing the cache owner's cache maintenance plan.

GeocacheAlaska! Teaches Beginner Course at Eagle River Nature Center by NorthWes/Wes Skinner

GeocacheAlaska! Inc. received a request late in 2011 from the Eagle River Nature Center (ERNC) to conduct a one-hour Introduction to Geocaching course as a part of the Center's regular program series teaching visitors about outdoor recreation. On Saturday March 24, 2012 local geocachers NorthWes, Polgera, and AKGH519 presented the course and took a dozen new cachers out to find a nearby geocache. Following the class, the three GeocacheAlaska! members took advantage of the warm spring sunshine and hiked the Albert Loop, a 3-mile trail accessed from the ERNC on Mile Twelve of Eagle River Road.



ERNC Introduction to Geocaching Class at the Beaver Pond Viewing Deck near 'A Rodak Moment' – NorthWes 3-24-12

The Albert Loop trail offers hikers easy access to Eagle River and accompanying wetlands of the valley floor. Geocachers have placed just over a dozen caches along this loop, making for a fun-filled afternoon combining a nice hike with a series of (mostly) winter-friendly cache hides (including a very simple introductory-level EarthCache). The trail is suitable for families with children (keep children in view at all times due to the wildlife commonly encountered here), and dogs are welcome as long as they're on leash during the entire hike. Be sure to check the ERNC [website](#) for current operating hours and trail conditions before visiting, and review each cache you plan to visit for its most recent status. An online [PDF map](#) of the Albert Loop Trail should be studied in advance of your visit, and the trail is shown on [Switchback's](#) free downloadable Northwest Trails overlay map for your GPS.

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(ERNC Event, continued from previous page)



Beaver Pond view – Albert Loop Trail - NorthWes 3-24-12

The trail is reached by walking a portion of the [Rodak Nature Trail](#), which descends gently from the Nature Center to the floor of Eagle River valley in a quarter-mile stroll past interpretive signs and geology lesson waypoints (following a geology trail guide available from the Nature Center). Rodak links with the Albert Loop at the Beaver Pond viewing deck, where a picture-postcard view to the southeast up the valley complements the mandatory stop to find the first cache on this hike (aptly and ‘punnily-named’ [A Rodak Moment](#)). The Albert Loop trail turns northwest from the viewing deck winding its way alongside a stream, and then takes a right-hand turn across the stream towards the west. It continues across the valley floor wetlands and eventually reaches the east bank of Eagle River. Here the trail angles southeast to follow the river upstream for just over a mile; this portion of the trail is often wet in the summer months. A gooseneck bend in the trail brings the hiker around towards the northeast as the trail reaches back towards the east side of the valley. A lengthy boardwalk system lifts the trail above the extensive wetlands found on this leg of the loop. A 30-second [video](#) starring Polgera and narrated by NorthWes depicts a benign early-spring moose encounter during a recent caching visit on a portion of this boardwalk. Reaching the east side of the valley and intersecting with the Iditarod / Cross Pass trail, hikers turn left and head back northeast towards the Rodak Nature trail and a return uphill to the Nature Center just a mile away.

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Wildlife on the Albert Loop trail - NorthWes 3-24-12

The trail is groomed during the winter months as a multi-use trail for hiking and cross country skiing. Depending on the extent of beaver activity and rainfall, this trail may be muddy with standing water in places during summer months. The trail traverses rich undisturbed habitats, offering visitors a winter and summer contrasting view of wildlife and botanical activity on the valley floor of a large glacial stream. Albert Loop trail is regularly closed from August through October to allow bears to feed in salmon-filled creeks without creating potential bear-human conflicts. Please carefully observe this closure – it's done for your safety and to allow bears unimpeded access to salmon as the bears feed in preparation for winter hibernation. Caches are placed on this loop with the understanding they will not be accessible during trail closures!

There is a day use fee of \$5 for parking at the Eagle River Nature Center (note that your annual State Parks parking pass is not applicable here). Your parking fee helps fund the operation of this nonprofit teaching and trailhead activity facility. This is one of the most secure parking lots accessing the backcountry of Chugach State Park. The Nature Center operates a year-round educational program series for individuals, families and school groups. The facility features a small gift shop with nature-oriented products and snack foods, indoor restrooms and a drinking fountain in addition to its visitor lobby and teaching facilities. Snowshoes are available to rent for a nominal fee in the wintertime, making this a great place to try out that form of winter travel off-trail. Be sure to ask at the counter for the [Trailhead Maker](#) cache, placed in 2009 by The Central Landmark Program, a course on Geospatial Technology offered at Central Middle School in Anchorage, Alaska. ERNC Winter hours of operation (October – April) are Friday through Sunday, 10am-5pm (Closed Monday-Thursday), while summer hours (May – September) are Wednesday through Sunday, 10am-5pm (Closed Mondays and Tuesdays). The Center is closed on major holidays.

STATE PARKS PERMITS

Remember, if you want to hide a cache in a State Park, you may need a permit number for your cache page and the geocache. The 2012 permit number for the Chugach State Park is **12-044** and it must be on the cache container and the cache page. The 2012 permit number for the Mat-Su State Parks is **S12-010** and it must be on the cache container and the cache page. Downloadable copies of the permits can be obtained from the GeocacheAlaska! [Land Manager webpage](#) or the GeocacheAlaska! [Land Use Forums](#).



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!

Follow GeocacheAlaska! Inc. on [Facebook](#)! Stay in touch and share your activities with fellow members of the geocaching community by visiting our [page](#) and clicking 'Like'. Stay tuned for more Facebook fun as our webmaster develops a new Facebook Group page where GeocacheAlaska! members can plan caching adventures, post photos, and pass messages within the membership ranks. This Facebook Group is designed to be yet another member benefit for Sourdoughs and Cheechakos alike.

GEOCACHEALASKA! MEMBERSHIP

There are two membership levels at GeocacheAlaska! Inc.

Sourdough Membership (formerly known as Premium Membership) affords you discounts in the GeocacheAlaska! online and traveling stores and events that have an entrance fee (Geofest, etc.), voting rights in Board of Directors elections and a warm fuzzy feeling for helping underwrite the organization's operating expenses that include web hosting, printing, banners, post office box fees, event prizes and lots of other things that are required to make things happen. Because GeocacheAlaska! is an incorporated 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, your membership dues are tax deductible.

If you cannot join as a Sourdough at this time, you may support GeocacheAlaska! by joining as a Cheechako (formerly known as Associate) Member. This will allow you to receive the monthly newsletter and e-mail announcements. More members at any level gives GeocacheAlaska!'s more clout and credibility during land manager conversations, so sign up today!

There are four ways you can join GeocacheAlaska! at the Sourdough level for \$20/year.

1. Navigate to the GeocacheAlaska! [webpage](#) and click on the "Subscribe" button to set up an automatic subscription which will renew annually. Please enter your caching name in the provided box.
2. Navigate to the GeocacheAlaska! [webpage](#) and click on "Add to Cart" to purchase an annual membership that will run through December 31, 2012.
3. Navigate to the GeocacheAlaska! [webpage](#) to download a membership form you can print and mail with your payment.
4. Attend one of the upcoming April Events at [GC3E93N](#) or [GC3ENRR](#) and speak to any Board Member.

ONLINE ARCHIVES

Previous editions of "Around the State" are now on our website. If you have missed previous newsletters, check out the series (including previous Trail Reports) [here](#).

The editors of 'Around the State' welcome your articles and photos. We'd love to publish your favorite trails in your own back yard! Send your articles, photographs and ideas to ladybugs@geocachealaska.org, attention "Around the State."

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Find us online at:

1. GeocacheAlaska! Website: <http://www.geocachealaska.org>
2. GeocacheAlaska! Forums: <http://geocachealaska.proboards.com/index.cgi>
3. GeocacheAlaska! on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/GeocacheAlaska-Inc/180089884756>
4. E-mail to contact@geocachealaska.org