

**Agency: Department of Natural Resources****Project Title:****Project Type: Other**

# Iditarod Trail Easements Project

**State Funding Requested: \$274,000****House District: Statewide (1-40)**

Future Funding May Be Requested

**Brief Project Description:**

Secure the necessary, proper easements through negotiation and adjudication processes to create legally defensible public access and to protect the economic viability and revenue contributions to the state by the annual Iditarod Sled Dog and Iron Dog Snowmachine races.

**Funding Plan:**

Total Project Cost:	\$1,374,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$1,100,000)
FY2014 State Funding Request:	<u>(\$274,000)</u>
Project Deficit:	\$0

*Funding Details:**Total Cost of Project: \$274,000***Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

The Iditarod Trail is a large system of trails and roads consisting of the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the Iditarod Sled Dog Race Route, inter-village travel corridors, Revised Statute 2477 trails, state roads, and numerous local trails and roads. Many of these trails and roads are still in use today. The State of Alaska is the largest landowner along this transportation system and manages 2107 miles of trail, 522 of which are on state navigable waters.

The state entered into an agreement, per AS 38.05.027, with the Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC) in 2006 and established the Iditarod Easements Group within the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in 2007. The goal was to identify, protect, and preserve historic, current, and future trail corridors and safety cabins to the extent necessary and practicable on state-managed lands for the use of all Alaskans. A set of criteria was established to prioritize segments of the Iditarod Trail that do not have easements and standards were set for which segments would be adjudicated. To date, state easements and rights-of-way exist on 1,900 miles of trail.

The Iditarod and Iron Dog races provide a financial stimulus to the local economies along the route. Bed tax, food and fuel sales, and tourism revenues along the entire race route are heavily influenced by this annual event. For example, there is a reported recurring boost of over \$1 million dollars in annual revenues in both the cities of Wasilla and Nome, which host the Iditarod race beginning and end points, respectively.

The Iditarod Trail Committee funded the project with a combination of private funds and federal grant money through FY13. During the first five years of the project, the State DNR focused on adjudicating case files and preparing decisions for approximately 1,569 miles of the total route. Since 2006, DNR has utilized those funds for two staff--a Natural Resource Specialist III and a Natural Resource Specialist II--to identify and resolve the unique land ownership patterns and competing land use issues that must be addressed before easements can be issued on segments of the trail route.

Approximately 200 miles of the total route, represented by nearly 100 disconnected segments, remain unresolved. Most of the remaining 200 miles that still require right-of-way adjudication involve regional and village corporation lands. Negotiations with individual private parties must also be undertaken before easements adjoining those private lands can be finalized. Those negotiations, following the priority list, began in FY09. Additionally, the review of approximately 300 miles of older easements that contain hand drawn alignments finalized prior to current mapping standards needs to be completed for the Iditarod Trail. This will require further adjudication work to correct any misalignments, and will assist in resolving current and potential future conflicts.

It is anticipated that DNR will need an additional two years to secure the route with continuous, dedicated easements. This capital budget request would help fund an existing NRSIII position along with some associated costs of doing this work. The NRSIII would assist in the completion of the negotiations and easements and would be available to transition into ongoing management of the established easements if future operating budget funding was secured.

The proposed budget is as follows:

Proposed FY14 Budget --

Personnel Services \$107,000

Travel \$ 17,000

Services \$ 9,000

Supplies \$ 4,000

Proposed FY15 Budget --

Personnel Services \$107,000

Travel \$ 17,000

Services \$ 9,000

Supplies \$ 4,000

Total funding anticipated for completion of this project is: \$274,000.

More information on the adjudication project can be found at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/iditarod/> .

### **Project Timeline:**

Fy 2014 and 2015

### **Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

### **Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

Name: Lesli Schick  
 Title: Iditarod Trail Easements  
 Address: 550 W. 7th Avenue, Ste. 900C  
 Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
 Phone Number: (907)334-2679  
 Email: lesli.schick@alaska.gov

Total Project Snapshot Report

2013 Legislature

TPS Report 60747v1

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority?  Yes  No

**State of Alaska**  
**Department of Natural Resources (DNR)**  
**Division of Mining, Land & Water**  
**Iditarod Trail Easements**  
**Quarterly Report: October through December, 2012**  
**Grant #10795954**

Following is a summary of the accomplishments of the Iditarod Trail Easements project, Alaska Trail Initiative Grant #10795954, for the quarterly period of October through December, 2012.

**Easement Consultation**

- Consultation is continuing with MTNT and Doyon for easements between Farewell and Iditarod. Additional correspondence was sent to MTNT and Doyon this quarter. A request for a meeting between MTNT, Doyon and DNR to discuss these easements was also sent. The proposed meeting will be held in January, 2013.
- Consultation is continuing with Cook Inlet Region Inc (CIRI) on the Egypt Mountain section of trail. An update on the status of this easement has been requested from CIRI.

**Trail Easements**

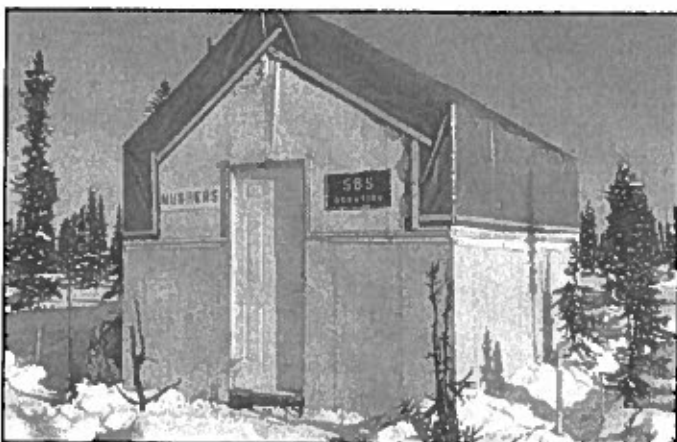
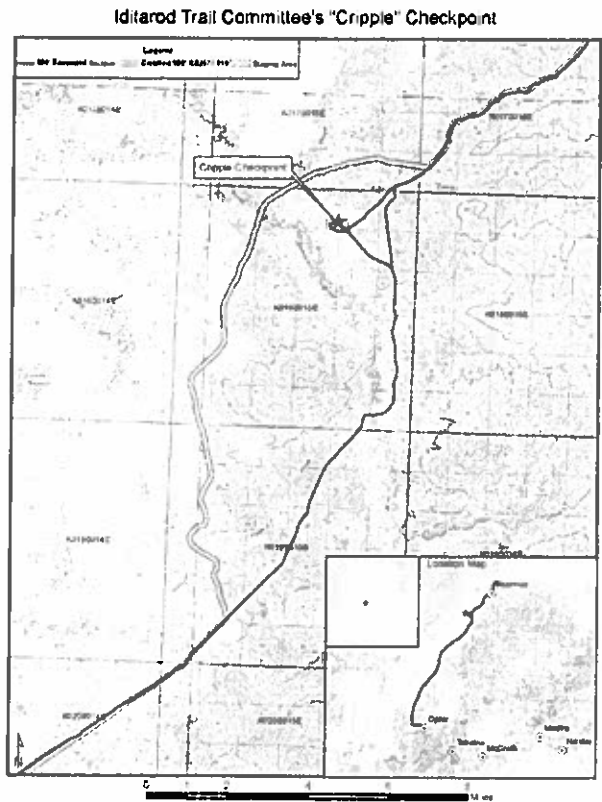
- **RST-1467 Herring Trail**  
A thirty day notice to remove obstructions was sent to a private land owner along RST-1467 near Knik on Oct 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The land owner contacted DNR on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to notify the Department that he was removing the obstructions and would need the thirty days to complete the blockage removal. A field inspection will occur in the next quarter to verify that all of the work requested by DNR has been completed.
- **RST-118 Knik to Susitna**  
A private land owner near Knik has named the State as a defendant in a Complaint to Quiet Title. The Plaintiffs are seeking a judgment in Alaska Superior Court stating that their property is not subject to RST-118 or any other RS-2477 route that is purported to cross the property. DNR has been working with the Department of Law on issues and back ground research pertaining to this lawsuit.
- **ADL 222930 Historic Iditarod Trail: Proposed Bridge at Fish Creek**  
A pre-application meeting occurred on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012 for a proposed trail bridge over Fish Creek on the ADL 222930 Iditarod Easement. A local trail group

has received grant funding for the bridge. An application package and information was handed out to the applicant and initial questions answered. DNR is awaiting the submission of a completed application.

- **ADL 231711 Cripple Checkpoint Management Agreement**

ADL 231711 is a cooperative resource management agreement between DNR and the Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC) for the "Cripple" Checkpoint and safety shelters. "Cripple" is located along the North Route of the Iditarod Trail between Ophir and Poorman (right), along the ADL 230023-A Iditarod Easement. The facilities include 5 wall tents (example below), 1 wall shed, 1 platform and 2 outhouses. The ITC wishes to maintain the wall tents, platform and outhouses for public safety in the face of public recreational use and for use by the ITC during the Iditarod Sled Dog Race.

The agreement describes managing uses at the public staging area in concert with the ADL 230023-A easement stipulations for the purpose of preventing resource damage, unsanitary conditions, and potential public safety problems occurring on State lands; to provide management of a shelter area occupying state surface lands consistent with adopted state land use or management



plans and stipulations; and to manage the checkpoint and surrounding area for concentrated public use and event use, potentially through third party agreements and contracts.

The Director of the Division of Mining, Land & Water signed ADL 231711 on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

- **ADL 222930 Historic Iditarod Trail: Skwentna to Puntilla Lake**

The Iditarod Trail Committee applied for a permit, LAS 28791, to store equipment near Puntilla Lake for the trail work that was approved and detailed in the last

quarter. A land use permit map was completed for LAS 28791 and comments submitted this quarter. The permit decision was signed on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012, and has been submitted to the ITC for signature.

- **LAS 27840 BLM Tripod Storage and Trail Marking**  
The field report and pictures required for the closure of LAS 27840 were submitted by BLM this quarter. A review of the materials submitted noted that the work required to meet the permit stipulations had not been completed. Notification of this and a request for a permit amendment was sent to BLM on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012.
- **ADL 228890 Iditarod Trail**  
A meeting with the Forest Service to review the existing ADL 228890 authorizations occurred on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The meeting was to assist new employees at the agency in determining the status of their easement applications and authorizations, and what materials are still needed from the Forest Service in order for DNR to finalize the easements.
- **ADL 228890-G Vagt Lake Trail**  
The traditional access route used by the public to access this area was blocked by the adjacent land owner, the Alaska Railroad, in June 2012. Multiple meetings between DNR and the Forest Service occurred this quarter. The Forest Service is completing a new design of the Vagt Lake Trailhead. Once the designs have been received, DNR can move forward on establishing an easement on State land to allow for legal access to the trailhead and Lower Trail Lake.
- **ADL 228890-A Iditarod Trail: Nash Road to Mile 12**  
A meeting between the Iditarod Easements, DNR-Surveys and the Chugach National Forest (CNF) surveyor occurred on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012. The meeting discussed the draft survey submitted for the Bear Lake Trail. Comments were sent to the CNF. Work will continue in the next quarter on completion of the final survey.



Tiehack Creek now flowing down trail



Washout hole along ADL 228890-A

Substantial flood damage occurred along ADL 228890-A this fall. The Chugach National Forest submitted documentation and details of the damage on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012. The information was required to determine what authorizations from DNR would be needed to begin addressing the extensive damage to this section of trail.

- **ADL 226933 Divide Ski Area**  
A field inspection was completed to assist in completing the easement map and documenting any additional survey needs that may be required for this authorization. A draft easement location drawing was completed and submitted for review.

### Conveyance Documents

The Iditarod Team is continuing to review conveyance documents from the BLM for lands that contain the Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) and/or Iditarod Race Route. Work this quarter included:

- A meeting with the Kenai Peninsula Borough representatives to discuss the Iditarod Trail and DNR land the borough may possibly select for future transfer.
- A preliminary approval is currently in review for a section of the Palmer Hay Flats.
- The final tentative approval was received for the Winner Creek area in Girdwood.

### Project Reviews

Multiple permit and lease applications were reviewed this quarter for possible impacts to the trail system and facilities. Some of the reviews included:

- **Pt. MacKenzie Rail Extension**  
Quarterly work on this proposed project included review of the current Iditarod Historic Dog Sledding District, Iditarod easement questions and agency reviews and comments.
- **Donlin Gold**  
An agency meeting to discuss the Iditarod Trail and issues associated with the proposed Donlin Mine project occurred on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012.
- **Grant Lake Hydroelectric Project**  
A natural resources studies meeting was held on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The meeting detailed the proposed project and the studies scheduled to be completed in 2013 for the FERC review. Consultation on the Iditarod Trail will continue to be a part of this proposed project in 2013.
- **Chugach Electric Association**  
CEA was issued a permit in a previous quarter for work near the Iditarod Trail in Turnagain Pass. Unforeseen construction issues changed the project description. An additional review was completed this quarter and maps were created to assist in the Office of History and Archeology review of this project.
- **Renewable Energy Grant Reviews**  
Preliminary reviews of the 86 applications for Round VI of the Alaska Energy Authority's Alternative Energy and Energy Efficiency grants were completed for

possible impacts to the Iditarod Trail System. Comments were forwarded to the Director's Office.

## Presentations and Outreach

- **Partners in Conservation Award**

The Iditarod Easements Program has been awarded the 2012 Department of Interior "Partners in Conservation Award" from the Secretary of Interior on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

The award is a DOI Honor Award for outstanding achievements that include collaborative work among diverse entities such as federal, state, local and tribal governments, private for-profit and nonprofit institutions, other nongovernmental entities and individuals. The award recognizes outstanding results that have been produced primarily because of the engagement and contributions of many partners.

The award was presented to four partners: the DNR Iditarod Easement Project, Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, BLM Anchorage Field Office and Chugach National Forest. DNR's contribution was adjudicating 1,600+ miles of easements, restoring two historic safety cabins and issuing management agreements for an additional six safety cabins and authorizing trail work along this important transportation corridor.



**L-R: Marci Lynn Burke, Department of the Interior, Acting Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management; Lesli Schlick, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Iditarod Easements Supervisor; Jalme Schmidt, USDA-USFS Chugach National Forest; Judy Bittner, President, Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance; David Hayes, Department of the Interior, Deputy Secretary; Kevin Keeler, BLM Iditarod NHT Administrator; Rick Thompson, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Regional Manager; Karen Kelleher, BLM Anchorage District Manager; Mike Pool, BLM Acting Director**



- A presentation was made at the annual meeting for the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The presentation updated the Alliance (the non-profit that speaks on behalf of the Iditarod National Historic Trail) on easement adjudication along the historic routes in 2012 and overviewed the Iditarod Easements project results during the INHT Centennial (2008-2012).
- Large format maps and smaller handout maps of the trail system were supplied this quarter to the ITC. Large format maps were also sent to the Division of Forestry and multiple maps for schools were finalized.
- Current photographs of the Skwentna Crossing Safety Cabin were sent to the USFWS.

### General Information

Iditarod Website: The Iditarod Easement Project website contains administrative decisions, open and past public notices, final easement documents, maps, photographs, quarterly reports, factsheets, and general information. Please see our website for updates at: <http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/iditarod/>

**QUARTERLY GRANT FINANCIAL REPORT**  
DNR/DMLW

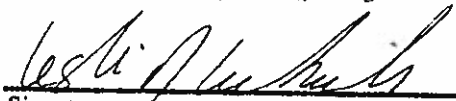
<b>Grantee:</b> Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land & Water	<b>Report Number:</b> <b>Final:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Project Name:</b> Alaska Trails Initiative Grant Program - Iditarod Trail Committee	<b>Report Period:</b>  October to December 2012
<b>Grant Number:</b> 10795954	

<b>FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS</b>				
Budget Line Item	Authorized Budget	Expenditures this Report Period	Total Expenditures to Date	Balance of Grant Funds
Personnel Services	104,236.00	32,300.00	65,496.00	38,740.00
Travel				
Contractual	2,245.00	0.00	0.00	2,245.00
Equipment				
Construction				
Supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total this Report</b>	<b>106,481.00</b>	<b>32,300.00</b>	<b>65,496.00</b>	<b>40,985.00</b>
Less/Advance/DVP				
Net Reimbursement				

**PROGRESS REPORT:** Describe activities which have occurred during this reporting period. Include a discussion of any problems you may be experiencing, any foreseen problems, and/or any special requests i.e., direct vendor payment. Attach additional pages if necessary.

See attached quarterly report

*Grantee Certification: I certify that the above information is true and correct, and that expenditures have been made for the purpose of, and in accordance with, applicable grant agreement terms and conditions.*


12/31/12  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature Date

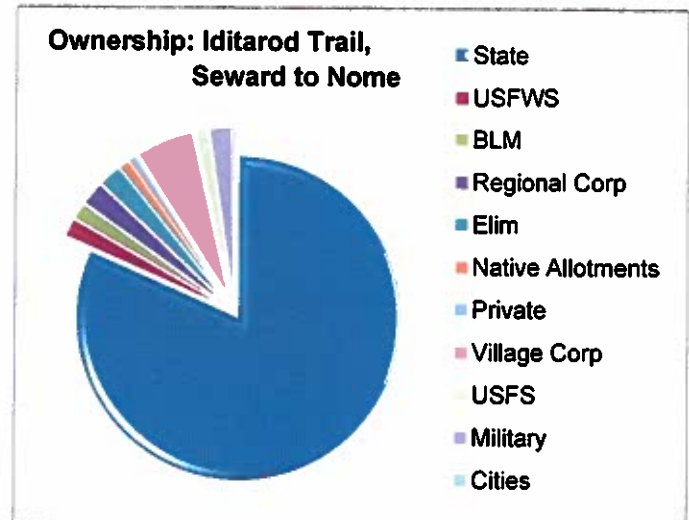
Lesli J Schick, Iditarod Easements Supervisor  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name and Title

Grant Staff Use:	
<b>Encumbrance No:</b>	_____
<b>Payment Amount:</b>	_____
<b>Approval:</b>	_____
<b>Date:</b>	_____

## Background

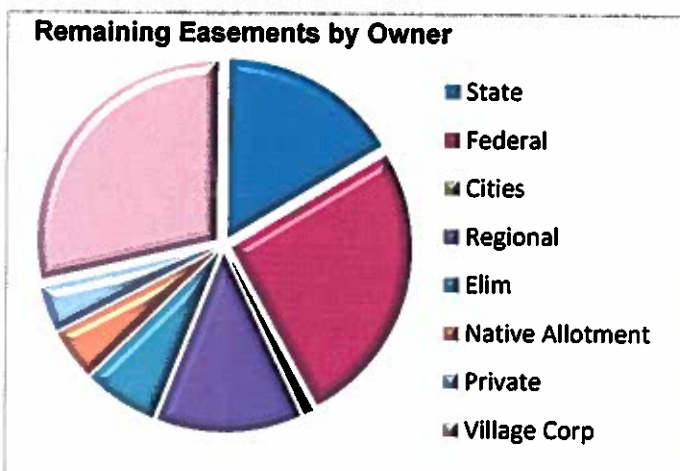
The Iditarod Easements Group was established within the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in January 2007. The goal of this group is to identify, protect and preserve historic, current and future Iditarod Trail corridors and safety cabins to the extent necessary and practicable on State of Alaska managed lands for the use of all Alaskans. Funding for this project, to date, has come from two primary sources. The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, the non-profit that speaks on behalf of the historic trail, provided \$339,000 in assistance agreements, and the Iditarod Trail Committee, the non-profit that manages the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, provided \$808,000 in grant money. The grant source for this program has been discontinued.

The State of Alaska is the largest land owner along this transportation system and manages 2,107 miles of trail (a combination of historic, commemorative and race routes), 522 of which are on State navigable water. The Iditarod Trail consists of State roads, navigable water, inter-village travel corridors, Revised Statute 2477 routes and numerous local trails and roads. Many of these routes are still in use today.



## Major Accomplishments

- A set of criteria was established to prioritize segments of the Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) and Iditarod Race Route that do not have easements, and to set standards to which segments will be adjudicated.
- 1, 889 Miles of State Easements, Rights-of-Way and Navigable Waters now exist for the 2,107 miles of trail.
- Consultations have resulted in easements being granted for the Iditarod Trail, including one from a village corporation and multiple private property owners.
- Recording of older easements or certifications that were either not recorded at the time of authorization or the location data and maps were not complete.
- Two actively used State owned and managed safety cabins built by the Alaska Road Commission were restored (Don's Cabin and the Skwentna Crossing Safety Cabin).
- Management agreements have been completed for an additional six safety cabins.
- Permits and concurrences have been issued for multiple projects along the trail system.
- Conducted multiple trespass investigations and access defense of existing easements.
- Recipient of the 2012 Partners in Conservation Award by the Secretary of the Interior, and a Certificate of Appreciation and Centennial Partnership award from the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance.



## Key Components Remaining

The next phase of this project is to complete the remaining State easements (all of which abut private land without easements), continue negotiations with land owners for segments that cross unencumbered private lands, determine if easements are needed on newly acquired State land, begin the review of misaligned older easements created prior to GPS, complete State review of projects along this trail

system, continue to establish management agreements for existing safety cabins and infrastructure along this inter-village travel corridor, continue trespass investigations and access assertion and defense of the existing easements.

### **Request**

The continuation of this project is essential to secure this vital inter-village travel corridor that is a symbol of Alaska. Funding is needed for two (2) existing DNR positions within the Division of Mining, Land and Water (10-1874 and 10-1881). The existing grant funding has diminished to a level where only State funding will keep this program running. State funding is a less expensive alternative to ending the project and trying to restart it at a later date. The equipment has been purchased and staff members have already completed the development phase and are familiar with the programs, forms, templates and processes being used for this project (including the evaluation criteria and schedules, background research and mapping standards). Ongoing stewardship responsibilities are essential to reconciling past and future uses of this corridor.

**IDITAROD HISTORIC TRAIL ALLIANCE  
RESOLUTION 2012-01**

Resolution passed by the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance (Alliance) requesting the funding of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Iditarod Easements Project.

WHEREAS, the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance is a statewide nonprofit organization chartered to advance the knowledge, appreciation, preservation and enjoyment of the historic Iditarod Trail; and

WHEREAS, the State is a signatory to the Comprehensive Management Plan for the Iditarod National Historic Trail Seward to Nome Route (BLM 1986); and

WHEREAS, the State is the primary owner of this trail system and manages over 2000 miles of the Iditarod Trail system; and

WHEREAS, the Iditarod Trail is a large system of trails and roads consisting of the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the Iditarod Sled Dog Race Route, inter-village travel corridors, Revised Statute 2477 trails, State Roads, and numerous local trails and roads, with the State managing over 2,100 miles; and

WHEREAS, DNR has established the Iditarod Easements Project, which is funded by assistance agreements from the Alliance and an Alaska Trails Initiative grant from the Iditarod Trail Committee; and

WHEREAS, the investment in a DNR Iditarod Easement Project has resulted in proven accomplishments, as evidenced by these facts:

- 1,889 Miles of State Easements, Rights-of-Way and Navigable Waters exist for the Iditarod Race Route and Iditarod National Historic Trail.
- Management agreements completed for six safety cabins.
- Restoration of an additional two State owned safety cabins.
- Conduct trespass investigations and access defense of existing easements.
- Recipient of the 2012 Partners in Conservation Award by the Secretary of the Interior.

WHEREAS, the Alliance recognizes that the project is transitioning from an Easement acquisition emphasis to a stewardship role (which includes, but is not limited to, general management, access defense and assertion, trespass investigations, review of competing land use requests, resolving issues with state's rights and statehood entitlements); and

WHEREAS, this service is currently provided by the existing Easement Management Unit Iditarod Project staff, and grant funding will expire within the year and the grant source has been discontinued, with much important work yet to be completed; and

WHEREAS, it is critical for the State of Alaska to provide funding to continue this established project.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alliance requests the legislature provide base General Fund funding, for the two established positions (PCN 101874 and PCN 101881) to continue this project oversight without interruption or loss of efficiency, which will assist land managers and trail groups in protecting and preserving the Iditarod Trail for future generations of trail users.

Dated this 20<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2012.

By:   
Jonathan Sewall, Vice President

**Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance Board of Directors:**

Judith Bittner, President

Jonathan Sewall, Vice President

Jules Mead, Treasurer

Leo Rasmussen, Secretary

Greg Bill

Richard Burnham

Dale Myers

Lee Poleske

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Tom Jensen

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