

**June 2006**  
**Final Community Action Plan**  
**Ninilchik and Deep Creek ATV Impacts Workgroup**

**Background:**

With support from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's Alaska Clean Water Action Program, the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District has organized and met with stakeholders in the Ninilchik and Deep Creek watersheds, including the Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers; Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Mining, Land and Water; Ninilchik Native Association, the Tustemena 200 Club, and local landowners to discuss options to mitigate the impacts of ATV's on stream crossings.

During the group meetings, the stakeholders recognized several larger issues surrounding ATV and Snowmachine trails in the two watersheds, including a need for restoring the relationships between landowners and user groups, a need for acquiring legal access on the trails utilized by the user groups, and a local management authority to work on trail issues and concerns (e.g. the Kenai Peninsula Borough).

Most trails in the area follow the steep seismic lines. However, the high gravel components in the area's soil lead to stability typically not observed on such steep trails. The soil substrate becomes dominated by silty soils as the trails approach stream crossings and the landscape levels out. When surface vegetation is removed on this substrate, it was observed the trail becomes eroded and sedimentation is more likely to occur.



The Water Hole Trail along the seismic line route. As seen in the bottom of the photo above, the gravel substrate on the steep slopes provides stability to the trail tread.



Located on state land northeast of Deep Creek, the 126 trail has significant wetland impacts less than 1000' of the creek.

*"To provide education and leadership in the conservation and sustainable use of soil- and water- related resources through cooperative programs that protect, restore and improve our environment."*

**Results:**

**Priority 1:**

Group discussions have identified the Four Corners area (see attached map) as the highest priority for water quality concerns. ATV crossings at the headwaters of Deep Creek are of major concern to area land managers and trail users.

**Action Steps:**

- Conduct an inventory and prescription assessment on all trails connected with the Four Corners area; Upgrade current inventory system to include National Park Service methodology
- Conduct hardening demonstrations within the Four Corners area to identify best practices for addressing sedimentation and erosion concerns.

**Progress to date:** Funding has been acquired through the Alaska Clean Water Action program to conduct the inventory and prescription assessment. This work will begin in August 2006. Funding has been acquired through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program to conduct a hardening demonstration for Geoblock installation within the Four Corners area. Work will begin on the hardening demonstration in 2007.



The Water Hole Trail has a bridge across Deep Creek, yet significant wetland impacts approaching the creek from either direction are sending sediment towards the creek. This area of the trail is targeted for hardening in 2007.



The bridge across the Water Hole Trail reduces direct impacts from ATV crossings the stream, yet high water flows in the spring are eroding the gravel around the bridge, threatening the long-term stability of the bridge.

*"To provide education and leadership in the conservation and sustainable use of soil- and water- related resources through cooperative programs that protect, restore and improve our environment."*

**Priority 2:**

Improve relationships between landowners and user groups.

**Action Steps:**

- Increase the recognition of private property boundaries on legal trails
- Increase user education by working with businesses, user groups and schools to advance the awareness of ethical recreation.

**Progress to date:** To increase the recognition of private property boundaries, the Homer District has acquired a Recreational Trails Grant to place signage at the private/public property boundaries along seven trails within the Ninilchik and Deep Creek Watersheds. Work will begin in August 2006 on this project.

**Additional group priorities:**

Larger discussions on trail related issues have highlighted the need for a master trails plan for the area and increased easement acquisition.

*“To provide education and leadership in the conservation and sustainable use of soil- and water- related resources through cooperative programs that protect, restore and improve our environment.”*