

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Great Land Trust Secures Stewart Trail Connection to Chugach State Park in Potter Valley

Anchorage, AK-

The missing link in a long-envisioned public access point into Chugach State Park is now secured, thanks to a major land acquisition led by Great Land Trust in partnership with the Alaska Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation (AK DPOR). On August 14, Great Land Trust finalized the purchase of two privately held parcels in Anchorage's Potter Valley - 50 acres from the Alaska Botanical Garden and 97 acres from the Alaska Zoo - and completed the transfer of the properties to the State of Alaska to be managed as part of Chugach State Park.

The newly protected land borders the existing Park and connects directly to the Stewart Trail, building on the success of the nonprofit group Friends of the Stewart Public Trail, Inc. In 2022 the group secured a public trail easement along a portion of the trail that provides access into upper Potter Valley. The acquisition and transfer of this newly-acquired land to AK DPOR secures permanent public access from the Stewart Trail into the Park – an access point that has been a community priority for decades.

History and Habitat

In the 1950s, the 147 acres was homesteaded by Oro and Ivan Stewart of Stewart's Photo, who lived in a 10x30-foot houseboat they placed on the property that locals dubbed "Noah's Ark." In 2002, the Stewarts donated the land to the Alaska Zoo and Alaska Botanical Garden; both organizations now benefit from the proceeds of the sale, as the Stewarts intended.

"We're proud to protect this important landscape and see it added to Chugach State Park for future generations, while also supporting two incredible nonprofits in our community," said Ellen Kazary, Executive Director of Great Land Trust. "It's a win for conservation, for improved access to Chugach State Park, and the local organizations that help make Anchorage such an incredible place to live."

The 147-acre addition safeguards one of the last large, undeveloped private tracts of land in the Anchorage Bowl which contains robust, intact wetlands, critical headwaters, and boreal and subalpine habitats. The land includes key tributaries to Potter Creek and Little Rabbit Creek and

provides essential habitat for birds and other wildlife, all of which were highly vulnerable to impacts from potential development.

Need for Expanded Access

As visitation to Chugach State Park continues to rise, many of its legal access points are operating at or near capacity. This project ensures that a permanent trail connection from the Stewart Trail will offer future generations a valuable entry point into the park.

Funding for the acquisition came from a generous anonymous donor dedicated to land conservation and improving access to public lands.

Now under State management, the land and the trail that runs through it will be managed as part of Chugach State Park. “We’re excited to incorporate this land and trail into the park system,” said Justin Dipaola-Allen, Superintendent of Chugach State Park. “It opens up new terrain for people to explore and strengthens our trail network.”

While access is now protected, parking remains limited. Visitors are asked to respect neighborhood signage and park only in designated areas to avoid impacting local residents and emergency routes. Long-term plans for expanded parking and infrastructure will depend on future development in the surrounding area.

“This acquisition doesn’t solve every challenge,” added Dipaola-Allen, “but it’s a major step forward in enhancing legal access to one of Alaska’s most valued public lands.”

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Great Land Trust is a nonprofit founded by Alaskans for Alaskans with a mission to conserve the lands and waters essential to the quality of life and economic health of Alaskan communities. Since 1995, GLT has conserved over 56,000 acres of priority wildlife habitat, permanently protected more than 100 miles of salmon streams, secured increased access to public lands, and created parks and public natural areas throughout its Southcentral Alaska service area, including ten parks in Anchorage.

For more information visit our website at www.greatlandtrust.org.



Photo: Great Land Trust

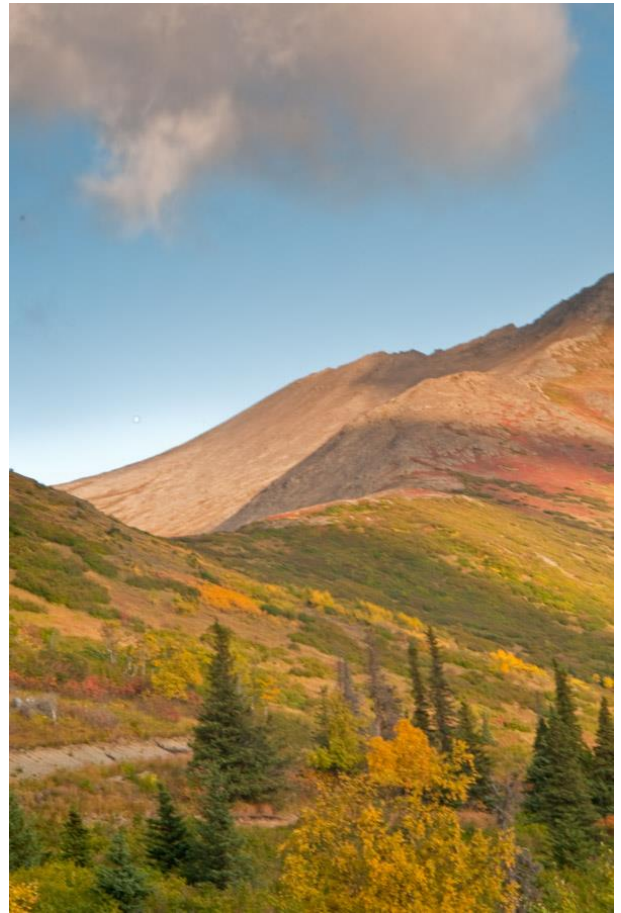


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