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Chugach Children's Forest Launches Summer Youth Expedition Series

Alaskan youth from rural and urban communities tackle volunteer projects in Prince William Sound

Anchorage (May 21, 2014) – The Chugach National Forest is about to receive some extra help this summer. Starting next week, the first of four 10-day youth stewardship expeditions will embark into the heart of the Forest – Prince William Sound – to assist Forest Service staff with a range of work from surveying and removing invasive weeds to cleaning up marine debris and trash from beaches, campsites and cabins.

Along the way, the participants, who range in age from 12 to 18, will learn about the natural and cultural resources of the national forest, develop new outdoor skills, and document their experiences for the public through field logs, photography and video.

“The emphasis is on hands on experiences, and developing personal relationships with places such as the Prince William Sound,” said Betsi Oliver, Youth Program Coordinator with Alaska Geographic. “The social benefits of meeting kids from a variety of backgrounds from around Alaska is huge, and working on stewardship projects alongside a variety of professionals can lead to internships, jobs, and careers in the outdoors. These experiences open the eyes of Alaskan youth to a broader window of personal opportunity.”

***Watch!** Video production from one last season's participants <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doyVt0yDomA>*

The expeditions are made possible by a partnership between Alaska Geographic and the Chugach National Forest with the help of a growing network of community partners. In 2008, the two organizations came together to develop the Chugach Children's Forest, a designation for the entire Chugach National Forest that creates meaningful opportunities for Alaska's diverse youth and communities to connect with the national forest and neighboring public lands.

“People come from all over the world to experience the Chugach National Forest and Alaska's public lands, yet young people from many Anchorage neighborhoods have never set foot in the Forest. Urban and rural youth alike often lack the resources to participate in life changing experiences in the outdoors,” Terri Marceron, Forest Supervisor on the Chugach National Forest said. “This is their backyard and we want to get them outdoors learning about natural resource work and having fun.”

Participants are nominated by teachers and other mentors for their interest in the sciences and the outdoors, and for initiative they have already shown in other areas of their lives.

“Though my students live in Prince William Sound, many rarely get the opportunity to explore their beautiful backyard,” said Stephanie Burgoon, Head Teacher with the Chugach School District. “The Expeditions give kids confidence to go into the back country, and they get great satisfaction from completing service projects that help protect these places. Best of all, they come back and teach their peers that it’s fun to be outdoors. Physically, emotionally, spiritually – these trips help to create a whole, well-rounded person. It’s the perfect outdoor classroom.”

2014 Chugach Children’s Forest Summer Youth Expeditions Itineraries

- *Trip 1 (high school; kayak-based) May 29-June 7 itinerary:* lighthouse at the mouth of Port Nellie Juan; Foul Bay; Main Bay; Applegate area and Culross Passage.
- *Trip 2 (middle school; boat-based) June 16-23 itinerary:* Eleanor Island; Megabyte Beach; Bay of Isles and Wally Norenberg Hatchery.
- *Trip 3 (high school; kayak-based) June 21-30 itinerary:* Hobo Bay; Bettles Bay State Marine Park; Harrison Lagoon; Pakenham Point and Barry Arm.
- *Trip 4 (high school; kayak-based) July 11-20 itinerary:* Eshamy Bay; Crafton Island; Point Nowell and Pigot Bay.

Watch for other Chugach Children’s Forest events and programs this summer!

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