

The Tripod

MAY 2023



Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance, PO Box 2323, Seward AK 99664
<http://www.Iditarod100.org> IditarodHTA@gmail.com
The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.

The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance promotes awareness of the Iditarod Trail, and its gold rush and Alaska Native heritage by encouraging education programs and historical research, assisting in the protection, improvement, maintenance and marking of the Trail and developing partnerships that foster stewardship, commitment and support.

TRAILS CONFERENCE

Alaska Trails was excited to bring participants back together for the 2023 Alaska Statewide Trails Conference, April 12-14, at the BP Energy Center in Anchorage, with most sessions shared via Zoom. The session presentations and videos are available at: www.alaska-trails.org/conference-archive-links.

RACE ACROSS ALASKA WINTER CHALLENGE

Alaska Trails is, once again, very grateful for the overwhelming support from the Race Across Alaska Winter Challengers, including Race Director Heather Helzer and all the participants in the 2022-23 race. 2,688 racers logged their miles from the Winter Solstice in December through the Spring Equinox in March.

In addition to the RAAWC donating a portion of the entry fees for each participant, racers were invited to make an additional donation. Those extra donations from the racers totaled over \$25,000. The entire donation to Alaska Trails for the Alaska Long Trail project = \$56,001.

ALASKA LONG TRAIL IN THE STATE BUDGET

Alaska Trails and partners have recently submitted 14 Alaska Long Trail projects into FY24 state capital budget, totaling \$9.5 million. These projects will fill key shovel-ready and planning ready gaps in the section between Anchorage and Fairbanks.

The 14 projects include: • Building new non-motorized trails • Existing multi-use trail improvements • Planning studies to identify links between segments • Improving trail access and parking • Wayfinding and cultural heritage • Separated highway paths for safe non-motorized travel. You can find more information, including the specific projects at: <https://tinyurl.com/97e6zmfc>

FROM THE PAST...

Iditarod Pioneer May 16, 1914

BREAK UP OF IDITAROD RIVER BRINGS DISASTROUS INUNDATION

Shortly after noon on Saturday last the ice in the river commenced to disintegrate and this continued intermittently until evening when the steady run set in. The water had been rising steadily for some days and with the breakup and added volume increased the flow until it was rising at the rate of several inches an hour. On one occasion a rise of over a foot was recorded in 60 minutes. Last Saturday night it seemed as though the flood had reached its limit, and tired water watchers retired to their homes. The water kept steadily rising, however, and by daylight warehouses, places of business and cabins on the river front were inundated. By noon the water was several inches deep on the floor of Mrs. Peterson's bakery and



the place had been deserted. The Cascade Laundry was flooded, and the water had reached the restaurant kept by Mrs. Simms, near the corner of Willow and First streets. The creek which runs into the river at the foot of Willow Street had backed up until there was two feet of water at the intersection of First and Willow streets, and the west side thoroughfare was impassable.

Further down the river several cabins were under water, and the warehouse of Karl Thiele contained several feet of water, but the merchandise had been removed without damage.

At the foot of Richmond Street, the Northern Commercial warehouse, containing quantities of goods, was submerged, and much damage was done. Further up the river at the Cleveland mill, the building used by Crowley and Porter as a warehouse was completely flooded. The building was well filled with merchandise. The men had been put to work moving goods here early Saturday morning, but too fast did the water rise that comparatively little can be moved, and the loss will be very heavy.

Residents on the riverbank bank directly opposite the city were driven from their homes on Saturday night and were able to take but few of their belongings with them. The houses across the river were all several feet under water, and their contents were ruined by the water. The heaviest loser here was Jay J. Smith, who had but recently moved his family and large flock of chickens there. A large number of the chickens were drowned.

On Saturday much cord wood was seen to be floating down the river mingled with the ice. Dozens of residents along the riverbank in the lower part of town, armed with long poles engaged in the work of recovering the wood, and several fine fuel piles were the result. But the industrious ones met with misfortune, as with the continued rise of the river, most of it was carried away again.

The several docks along the riverfront stood the strain of the rush of ice and water in good shape. In some instances piling was carried away, but it will take comparatively little work to repair the damage.

BALTO

On February 2nd, 1925, musher Gunner Kaasen drove a dog team led by Balto into Nome carrying packages of diphtheria serum in his sled bag. Kaasen was the last of 20 mushers who relayed the anecdote 674 miles from Nenana to Nome.

When Balto died in 1933 a taxidermist in the Cleveland Natural History Museum preserved and displayed him. Using a tiny patch of skin cut from that taxidermy mount, Heather Hanson who has lived and mushed dogs in interior Alaska saw in Balto an opportunity to find out more about dogs operating at their peak capacity. She is an author of a recent paper "Comparative genomics of Balto, a famous historic dog, captures lost diversity of 1920s sled dogs" in the journal Science.

Balto's genetic makeup shows a greater ability to process starches, examples of which are rice beans and other plants when compared to wolves and Greenland sled dogs. Balto was also more genetically diverse and therefore a bit healthier than many dogs today. It's a trait Hanson called hybrid vigor which she has seen at work many times on cold dark trails like the one over which Balto ran. "Sled dogs don't have many breed associated diseases" she said "they aren't bred for physical traits they're bred for performance,"

