

Refuge ski trails get summer makeover

by Bill Kent

All of you cross-country skiers are probably getting a little frustrated with the current lack of meaningful snow. If you are anything like some of my skiing friends the skis, boots, and poles have been inspected and cleaned at least twice, and you hang on every syllable of the weather forecasts. Perhaps you even bought some of those skis with rollers—so you can get that stride perfected in the school parking lot before the snow arrived.

Well, friends, do not despair! Remember where we live; in Alaska the snow WILL arrive in more than sufficient quantity for you to travel the ski trails on the peninsula to your hearts' content.

This summer, we worked on the six miles of ski trails at our Visitor Center to (we hope) eliminate some traffic flow problems. Some 90-plus-degree turns which had been causing difficulties were also modified. Except the beginning and end of the Nordic Lake Loops and the spur to Headquarters Lake, all ski trails have a one-way traffic pattern. The new traffic patterns are displayed on posters located in our parking lot and small bulletin boards along the trails.

Please take a few minutes to look at this map before heading out on the trails; if you have any questions, check with someone in the Visitor Center.

In addition to the Nordic Lake Loops, two other routes at the Visitor Center will better serve snowshoers. The Keen Eye and Overlook Trails receive less frequent grooming than the Nordic Lake routes, and consequently snowshoe users will find these more suitable than skiers.

Refuge trails are varied in length; the shortest route for groomed ski trails is 1.5 miles, and the longest is six miles. All of these trails or routes are for skis and snowshoes only. Dogs are not allowed, for visitor and wildlife safety.

Okay, that is the latest news on the trails—we hope you find the summer's work to be an improvement. Now you can do your snow dances!

Bill Kent has been the Supervisory Park Ranger at Kenai Refuge since 1991. For more information about the Refuge, visit the headquarters in Soldotna, call (907) 262-7021. Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://kenai.fws.gov>.