



News Release

TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST SAGA



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Marti Marshall, Tongass National Forest, (907) 789-6202 or mmarshallo1@fs.fed.us
Sara DeLeo, SAGA, (907) 790-3091 or volunteer@servealaska.org

Tongass National Forest and SAGA Celebrate 25 Years of Partnership, National Public Lands Day Events to highlight community service, youth involvement

JUNEAU, Alaska—The US Forest Service and SAGA invite all of Juneau to celebrate their 25 years of partnership on community projects this year by hosting a series of events to recognize National Public Lands Day.

Four consecutive days of events kick off on Thursday, September 22, with a graduation ceremony for the Alaska Service Corps, a SAGA program for members aged 18 and older. The public is invited to attend the event at Centennial Hall from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and enjoy light refreshments.

Then, on Friday the 23rd from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center will host a free screening of films from the Jackson Hole Film Festival. Because 2011 is International Year of Forests, all of the films have a forest theme. The screening will be repeated, again free of charge, on Sunday, September 25 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The capstone event will take place on National Public Lands Day itself, Saturday, September 24, at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center and Nugget Falls Trail, where volunteer crews will take on a variety of projects, from spreading gravel to thinning plants along the trail's edge. At times scheduled throughout the day, volunteers also will enjoy free breakfast and lunch, view a 25th-anniversary SAGA DVD in the Visitor Center, and attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Nugget Falls trailhead.

Here, Juneau Mayor Bruce Botelho, Steve Neal from the Alaska State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and US Forest Service Regional Forester Beth Pendleton will speak briefly at 10:00 a.m. before officially reopening the popular trail, which has undergone vast improvements over the past five years, including the addition of an elevated footbridge.

SAGA crews played a role in seeing work on the Nugget Falls Trail—and others in the network of trails around the Visitor Center—to completion.

Marti Marshall, Juneau District Ranger for the Tongass, points to the strong connection that SAGA has had with similar Forest Service projects in Southeast Alaska: “For the past quarter-century, the work of SAGA crews has been critical to the success of countless trail and building projects” on the Tongass.

Stressing the importance of their long collaboration for SAGA's members, interim director Scott Young adds that "the benefits reach even beyond trails and cabins. The youth and young adults who graduate from SAGA take away invaluable skills, increased opportunities, and lifelong friendships."

Wrapping up the series of National Public Lands Day events, on Tuesday, September 27 award-winning nature photographer Amy Gulick will host a reception to kick off her month-long exhibition, *Salmon in the Trees: Life in Alaska's Tongass Rain Forest* at the Juneau Arts & Culture Center. Starting at 5:30 p.m., visitors can have their books signed and enjoy complimentary beer and appetizers. At 7:00 p.m. Gulick will give a slide presentation that recounts her two years hiking and paddling throughout Southeast Alaska to document the wonders of the Tongass National Forest.

Anyone interested in volunteering to be a part of the National Public Lands Day community event on Saturday the 24th should contact Sara DeLeo, SAGA Volunteer Coordinator, at 790-3091 or volunteer@servealaska.org. Volunteers are asked to sign up for assignments that day at the event headquarters in the bus parking area at Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center. Visit <http://www.servealaska.org/> for more information on SAGA's programs and history.

Visit <http://www.myalaskaforests.com/> for more on the *Salmon in the Trees* exhibition.