

National Public Lands Day

By Jeffrey Miller, Program Manager, Partnerships, Volunteers and Business, Alaska Region

At the end of September 2009, communities across America discovered the benefits of service and volunteerism. The altruistic spirit within those communities came to local public lands in the form of hands-on volunteer efforts to improve and enhance their environment by building trails and bridges, removing trash and invasive species and planting millions of trees.

National Public Lands Day began in 1994 with three federal agencies and 700 volunteers to continue the spirit of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the “tree army” that worked from 1933 to 1942. Last year, 120,000 volunteers worked in over 1,800 locations and in every state. Now, eight federal agencies and many state and local lands participate in this annual day of caring for shared lands by:

- Educating American citizens about critical environmental and natural resources issues and the need for shared stewardship of these valued, irreplaceable lands;
- Building partnerships between the public sector and the local community based upon mutual interests in the enhancement and restoration of America’s public lands; and
- Improving public lands for outdoor recreation, with volunteers assisting land managers in hands-on work.

This year, Juneau residents were invited to volunteer at the Dredge Lake Trail. The effort was coordinated jointly between the Southeast Alaska Guidance Association and the U.S. Forest Service’s Juneau Ranger District. The effort brought together over 40 volunteers to provide needed maintenance on the trail to make it more usable for hiking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing, to mention a few activities. In addition, SAGA Director Joe Parrish highlighted the Dredge Lake area is full of history and is very important to Juneauites. Joe Parrish explained the lakes were built by miners many years in the past and have today become one of the most enjoyable and pet-friendly recreation areas in Juneau.

In 2008, NPLD volunteers removed trash and planted over 1.6 million trees in com-



SAGA Director Joe Parrish follows the directions from young volunteer Gabe Miller to “Put it there!” Photo by Jeffrey Miller.



NPLD volunteer Gabe Miller and Juneau Ranger District Trail Program Leader Peter Cross work on Dredge Lake Trail. Photo by Jeffrey Miller.

memoration of the CCC. This year’s general theme was clean waterways. As noted by NPLD Director Rob Hampton, “Beaches, lakes, wetlands, and rivers make up some of America’s most beloved spaces.”

National Public Lands Day gives Americans of all ages the chance to help improve these areas while spending a day outdoors with their friends and family. To those that showed up—thanks! And to those that thought about it...well, there is always next year.