

ALASKA

Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry

In 2016, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry (DOF) received a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant from the USDA Forest Service for a project in Anchorage titled “Fish Need A Forest: Restoring Campbell Creek and Creating Low Impact and Sustainable Access.” The grant's project goals and objectives were to reduce runoff, improve water quality, create low-impact access, restore streambanks, and install green infrastructure. Over five summers, project partners installed elevated light penetrating walkways, conducted streambank restoration, planted trees, installed interpretative signs, and removed invasive species.

Running through the heart of Anchorage, Campbell Creek flows from the Chugach Mountains to Cook Inlet. The 70-square mile watershed is home to five species of salmon, rainbow trout, moose, bear, and beaver. Criss-crossing back and forth along 7.5 miles of the creek is the popular Campbell Creek Greenbelt multi-use trail.

In the winter, cross-country skiers, snow-bikers, and walkers enjoy the trail. During the long Alaska summer days, families walk and bike the trail while canoeists, kayakers, and packrafters fish and float the Class I waterway.

Schools, picnic areas, and restaurants adjoin the creek along with residential, commercial, and industrial areas. There are negative impacts to this high use. The loss of vegetation, increased impervious surfaces, and polluted runoff degrades aquatic and wildlife habitat and increases flooding risks. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) classified the creek as impaired due to the pollutants, sediment, and high temperatures that can harm fish and other aquatic life.

The Alaska Community Forestry Program was awarded a USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Grant and partnered with DEC, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, the Anchorage Park Foundation, and the Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) program to implement the project goals and objectives.

Key goals and objectives included reducing runoff and flood risks, improving water quality, creating low impact and sustainable access, restoring forest buffers, restoring streambanks to prevent erosion and sedimentation, and installing green infrastructure.

Over the course of five summers, project partners went into action and installed elevated light penetrating walkways, restored over 600 feet of streambank, held community events to plant trees, led student field trips, designed and installed three interpretive signs, and removed invasive trees. Much of the work was conducted by teenagers in the YEP program.



(Left) "Fish Need A Forest" interpretive panel installed at Campbell Park along Campbell Creek in Anchorage. Photo: Jim Renkert

(Right) An Anchorage Youth Employment in Parks crew planting white spruce trees as part of the Campbell Creek "Fish Need A Forest" restoration project. Photo: Brad Muir