



The Tripod

Winter 2026

The Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance (Alliance) promotes awareness of the Iditarod National Historic 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, commitments, and support.

Local Volunteers Save Topkok Cabin



We love work crew selfies! Alliance board member Aaron Burmeister traveled with a team of six volunteers to repair Topkok Shelter Cabin in December.

Volunteers have once again created safer travel conditions for Iditarod Trail users of all kinds. Topkok Shelter Cabin is shored up and ready to go for the 2026 winter season, although an additional permanent fix will be needed.

Topkok Shelter Cabin stands at Mile 891 on the Iditarod National Historic Trail, at the infamous Topkok Blowhole, where deadly weather and strong winds are known to threaten travelers. "There's an eight-mile stretch of the coast there that the wind funnels through," describes Aaron Burmeister, Alliance board member and local musher who teaches winter travel safety. "It might be dead calm at Safety, a 10 mile an hour wind in Nome, but going through that blowhole, it can blow an ungodly wind through there."

In 2020, the Alliance sponsored Nome Kennel Club to upgrade Topkok Cabin as part of our ongoing commitment to build and maintain life-saving shelters along the Iditarod Trail. Safety cabins such as Topkok are not designed for recreational stays. Rather, they offer emergency refuge in a landscape where unpredictable weather can swiftly turn deadly. (cont.)

IDITAROD 2026

The Alliance invites you to join us for the **Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race Ceremonial Start** at the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Campbell Tract in Anchorage on March 7. Watch the teams finish their first leg of the race as we celebrate America's 250th birthday with BLM and friends. Enjoy activities for the whole family at the Campbell Creek Science Center.

We further invite you to come visit the Alliance's info and merch booth at the **race restart in Willow on March 8**. We even have a special gift for you there!

RENEW NOW

Secure your membership for 2026 today! Your membership dues and donations directly support the Iditarod Trail.



Memberships and Donations:

<https://www.iditarod100.org/support-us.html>

NEW SCHEDULE

The Tripod is released quarterly. Look for Alliance news updates, upcoming events and meetings, and more on our Facebook page and via email.

To be added to our email contact list, please send a request to iditarodHTA@gmail.com

Typhoon recovery, continued

Typhoon Halong, the 2025 storm that destroyed villages and displaced thousands in Western Alaska, damaged Topkok Cabin. Flood waters rerouted the adjacent creek, eroding the foundation out from under the cabin. Within weeks of the storm, Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance sponsored a crew of volunteers to repair the remote cabin to working order, just in time for the coming winter.

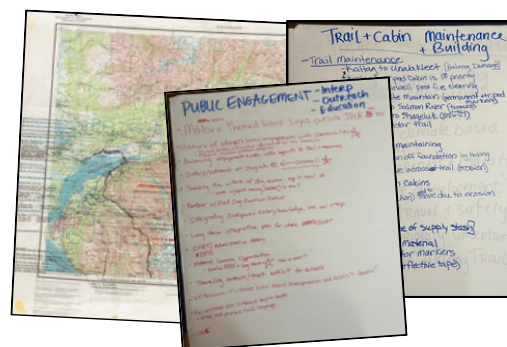
Burmeister organized the crew of local volunteers from Nome. They identified a strategic weather window to do repairs – after the ground had frozen, but before too much snowfall could cover the work area. Travel to the cabin required significant ice testing before crossing with vehicles and supplies. The crew hauled materials to the cabin, assessed the damage, and repaired it well enough to serve its critical safety function this winter. They also scouted the possibility for a long-term fix, which will require moving the cabin uphill away from the creek. The Alliance purchased supplies and covered volunteer costs for the project.

Work at Topkok Cabin is more than maintenance—it is stewardship, the act of local volunteers supporting their community, enabling both adventure and rural travel on Alaska's remote Iditarod Trail.

Trail Work Planning

In November, the Alliance hosted thirty Iditarod Trail advocates for two days of trail planning. Participants included local trail groups, rural residents, recreation groups, trail race organizations, and State and Federal agencies.

The group heard updates on several projects impacting the Iditarod National Historic Trail, including a presentation by Alaska Department of Transportation on the West Susitna Access Road. Significant effort was put forth to identify upcoming needs and wishes to support the use, safety, maintenance, preservation, and promotion of the historic trail and its associated sites.



Participants mapped out needs and visions for the Iditarod National Historic Trail at a two-day event hosted by the Alliance.

Jon Van Zyle: Artist for the Iditarod

Jon Van Zyle has created a custom art print commemorating the Iditarod National Historic Trail, available exclusively through the Alliance.

Van Zyle, renowned Alaskan and Iditarod artist, has previously donated art for Alliance fundraising efforts. You have seen his iconic images on our mugs, t-shirts, and other merchandise. Do not miss out on adding this historic piece to your collection! Your purchase directly supports the trail.

Purchase your limited edition art print, signed by the artist, on our website today: <https://www.iditarod100.org/store>



Detail of art print by Jon Van Zyle.

UPDATE

The Bureau of Land Management has **extended the timeline for revising the Iditarod National Historic Trail's Comprehensive Plan**. The Comprehensive Plan guides how the trail will be preserved, interpreted, developed, and administered. It forms the foundation for coordinated protection efforts among the many land managers and user groups. The Alliance will continue to provide input to the process and inform the public about engagement opportunities.