

Trail Group Looks to Near Island Channel for New Route

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Near Island is slated for some growth in the coming years. The new Fish and Game building has been under construction for some time and ground was recently broken on the new Afognak Native Corporation building near Saint Herman Harbor. But it's not just construction of new buildings taking place on the island. Hidden within the wooded areas surrounding the offices and developed land is a network of trails that will also see some changes in the months and years to come.

Andy Schroeder is the director and founder of Island Trails Network. He joined KMXT for Talk of the Rock on Tuesday and discussed trail expansion on Near Island.

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(Near Island Trails 1 :28 "Ever since we began, Near Island is where we started building trails. In, that must be 2009. Near Island is where we started learning and cutting our teeth in trail construction. Mostly hiking, it's an urban area; it's a passive recreation place. And these are primarily hiking trails with a two to three foot tread width and a narrow corridor for a natural experience and a lot of people are walking this and running this and walking their dogs on their lunch breaks or before or after work.")

Schroeder said the plan is to fill out Near Island with a network of trails, linking them with different buildings and already established trails.

-- (Near Island Trails 2 :32 "And the objective at Near Island is to, we're trying to keep pace with development and extraction there. And our sort of belief is that we can expand the trail system as the same time as the island fills out. It's a strategically important island to the city of Kodiak. Parts of it are going to need to be sold off and developed, we're building a new fish and game building over there. Our goal is to get in place and institutionalize a little bit the trail system of Near Island so that

development when it comes in can sort of coexist with it.”)

Schroeder said the ITN crew has plans in place to construct a new trail that will provide a unique view to those that use it.

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(Near Island Trails 3 :37 “So our next stage of trail development on Near Island is what we’re calling Phase Three, which might also be called the Channelside Trail. Starts at Near Island North End Park, across the channel from say the old powerhouse. It weaves along the hillside under the bridge and goes that direction toward the channel, I guess that would be, I’m going to get this wrong, Southwest, and ends at the city trailer parking lot there, which may someday be some other new public facility. So we’re proud of that plan, we’re excited about moving forward, it’s been funded and we’re just sort of working through some of the details with the city before breaking ground.”)

As Schroeder said, Near Island already has a well-established system of trails, many of which see a lot of community use. Nick Kesling is a crew leader for ITN and said a huge part of ITN’s work is to maintain and improve those trails that are already in place.

-- (Near Island Trails 4 :39 “I guess part of our mission as Island Trails is to build sustainable trails and this year with the front country crew we were able to over on Near Island to if you’re pretty familiar with the south end over there near Trident Basin there’s a well used trail there that kind of goes straight up a hill at the beginning and goes out to the point looking at the harbor. And this year was a really good opportunity and me Leslie and the front country crew was able to go out there and to build a new trail head, about 500 feet long, that was a more sustainable route to reconnect with the trail and to get rid of that steep hillside and to make it last longer and to be easier for everyone to use, all age types.”)

Schroeder said trail work is wrapping up as the temperature drops and fall swiftly transitions into winter. The months ahead will be set aside for logistical planning and fundraising for projects he hopes to tackle in the coming year.

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