

Mat Su Trails and Parks Foundation

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For Immediate Release

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Helmsley Charitable Trust Grants \$1.3 Million for Preservation of Independence Mine State Historical Park

Palmer, AK – On August 8, 2022, Walter Panzirer, a Trustee of The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, will announce the beginning of a new rejuvenation and preservation project at Independence Mine State Historical Park.

Stuart Leidner, Superintendent for the Mat Su | Copper River Basin Region of Alaska State Parks likens this funding to an earlier time of rejuvenation: “In a director’s report to the shareholders of the Alaska-Pacific Consolidated Mining Co. in 1941, its President C.L. Harrison wrote, ‘Time marches on, and, in marching, casts its footprints of the past.’ His letter outlined the efforts they had undertaken to rejuvenate the mine buildings to enable them to continue with their work, and now this grant paves the way for us to preserve these buildings for future generations to enjoy.”

Last month, principal architect Jason Swift and his staff met with representatives from Alaska State Parks, the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation, Office of History and Archeology and the National Park Service to begin their condition assessment of four buildings at Independence Mine State Historical Park. Their recommendations, due this fall, are the first phase of the project and are the keystone for the preservation and restoration work that will commence next summer.

“This work will help preserve an iconic state treasure,” said Walter Panzirer, a Trustee of the Helmsley Charitable Trust. “I was captivated by the history and beauty of Independence Mine State Park when I first saw it, and we are committed to the shared vision for protecting the Park’s buildings, which capture such a significant part of Alaska’s history,” Panzirer stated.

The historic restoration and preservation work over the next three years is only possible through the generous support of a \$1.3 million grant from the Helmsley Charitable Trust. Work is slated for four of the buildings: the Managers House, Bunk Houses #1 and #2, and the Mess Hall. The work will predominantly focus on exterior restoration and preservation. In addition, the project will address damage to entryways caused by vandalism.