

Remodeled shooting range opening in Butte

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BUTTE – A new sign went up on Thursday at the beginning of a dirt road in the small community of Butte.

For Kenny Barber, who lives nearby, it marks more than simply the way to get to the Maud Road Shooting Range. To him, it represents a community's reached goal.

"People just came out and shot everything they wanted to," Barber said.

The Knik River Public Use area has a bad reputation for being full of illegal dumping and shooting.

"We were having round impacts into people's homes, we were having numerous police calls of close calls, people walking down the trail and someone chose that to be their target area," explained Department of Natural Resources Land Manager Travis Jensen.

The former Maud Road Shooting Range closed down over the summer for renovations. The construction is now complete and the range is set to reopen Saturday, Aug. 22.

"Responsible shooting is what I hope it creates," Barber said as he unloaded new trashcans and rifle benches made by hand.

The new range has a paved parking lot, two brand new shooting pavilions and wheelchair accessible lanes. The state spent nearly \$1 million on the improvements, which Jensen says will make the area a safer place for people to shoot.

"This is the only state-run range, essentially, in the area," Jensen said.

The nearest home is three miles down the Maud Road. Some neighbors argue the range doesn't belong on their street and are worried about increased traffic and noise pollution.

"That's one of the reasons we put a covered pavilion on the site," Jensen said. "We spent about \$25,000 on sound abatement."

The hope now is that people will respect the Knik River Public Use Area, shoot responsibly and keep it clean for everyone to enjoy.

The range will be open every day from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. except Wednesdays, when the range will be closed.