

ALASKANS for PALMER HAY FLATS

Of Special Interest:

Upcoming Event:

**Winter Family Fun Day ~ February 11th
10am-2pm at Reflections Lake, Mile 30.6
Glenn Highway**

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Volume 17, Issue 1

First Annual Winter Banquet a Success - *by APH President Michelle Davis*

Hello everyone. I hope this issue of the Alaskan's for Palmer Hay Flats newsletter finds each of you well and happy. So, we've finally had some bits of real winter, some cold, some snow and then back to warmer weather. You can bet that someone is finding a way to enjoy each extreme on the Palmer Hay Flats.



Let me tell you about the APH banquet. It was a great success; every ticket was sold and every dessert eaten. Tom Rothe's presentation of the migratory routes of the Palmer Hay Flats population of Sandhill cranes was absolutely interesting, educational and funny. For me, the best was when he described them as dinosaurs, even pterodactyls. I'll never look at our resident Sandhills the same.



APH President Michelle Davis welcoming Winter Banquet attendees

This first banquet was a success and generated a net profit of \$5,900 due to the work of APH volunteers and our generous donors. There was such a range of auction items and door prizes. Everyone left with something special, from duck calls to round trip airline tickets to anywhere Alaska Airlines flies. The donors were so supportive of APH and our work. It was rewarding to describe the organization, then sheepishly ask for a donation and hear something like "you guys did the tower, you guys did Reflections Lake, you put down the walkway? I love that place, we go there all the time."

Continued page 7

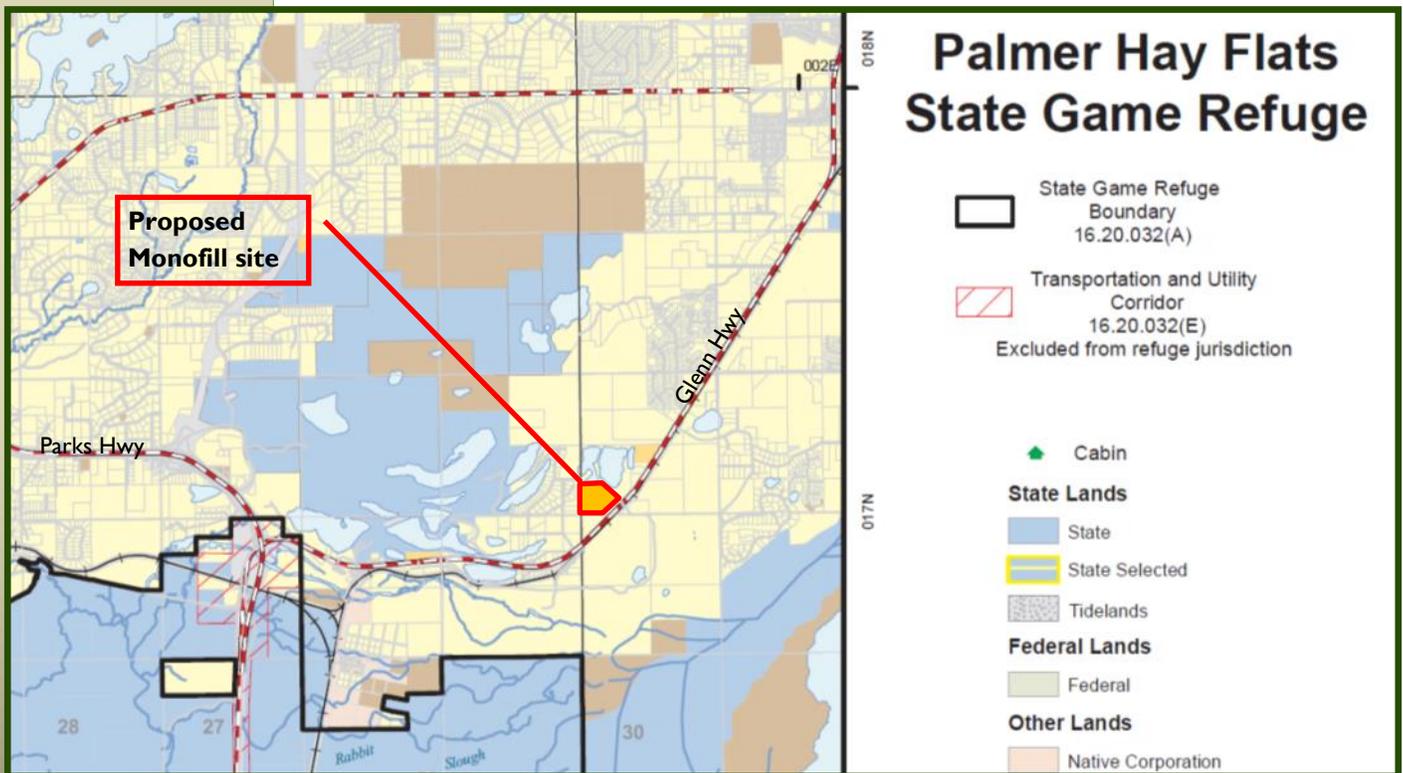
APH Responds to Proposed Palmer Monofill *by John Harris*

APH fulfilled the “public awareness” promise in its mission statement at the Mat-Su Borough Planning Commission meeting of December 5th by speaking against a possible threat to water quality at the Hay Flats: A construction waste dump.

In a letter submitted to the Commission and read into the record, APH added its voice to some 70 citizens speaking against a conditional use permit application by Central Monofill Services to use a 120 acre former gravel pit near Palmer to dump “inert construction waste”, including asbestos. The site, near mile 38 of the Glenn Highway, abuts residential areas and lies immediately upstream of the dozen lakes comprising the Kepler-Bradley-Matanuska Lakes system within the Palmer Hay Flats Refuge watershed. Upon CMS’ initial application in 2013, the Borough hired Geologist J.A. Munter to evaluate the effects the monofill (dump) might have on the aquifer. Mr. Munter concluded that, “CMS did not appear to provide any substantive assurance that the aquifer is protected or that groundwater contamination could be detected or remediated should it occur”.

APH Board of Directors’ does not enter the political realm lightly and has carefully considered this action in support of clean water for the Refuge. CMS has since withdrawn the most recent application for the permit, but its multiple submissions over the past three years suggest more ahead. APH will continue to monitor the Planning Commission’s agenda and raise its voice once more if the application is renewed.

John Harris
APH Board Member



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The 'supermoon' on Nov 13 and 14 created an interesting effect on the Palmer Hay Flats Refuge. The super high tides it created combined with sub-freezing temperatures became frozen in ice.

A supermoon is always a full moon and occurs when the moon is at its perigee (closest path to the earth) in spring or fall. Since ocean tides are driven by the gravitational pull of the sun and the moon, the close approach by the moon creates super high tides.



View from Cottonwood Creek Access overlook

“Although the gravitational attraction between the Earth and the Sun is more than 177 times that between the Earth and the Moon, the moon dominates the tides. Our sun is 27 million times more massive than our moon. If tidal forces were based solely on comparative masses alone, the sun should have a tide-generating force that is 27 million times greater than that of the moon. However, the sun is 390 times further from the Earth than is the moon. Thus, its tide-generating force is ... about half that of the moon” (Thurman, H.V. 1994. Introductory Oceanography, seventh edition. New York, NY: Macmillan. pp. 252-276.)

The evening high tides during 13 -16 November were predicted by NOAA to exceed 34.0 feet, and on the 14th to reach 34.4 feet at 7:26 PM at Anchorage’s Ship Creek docks, the highest of the year. Combined with extreme freezing temperatures during slack high tides an ice layer thick enough to walk on developed over most of the refuge.



Reflections Lake Boardwalk

Doug Hill, ADFG refuge manager, provided these photos of the effect created by this phenomenon.

I personally witnessed families on hockey skates exploring the refuge with this unique accessibility. Alas, the December and January snows eliminated that skating opportunity.

The next time a full moon comes this close to Earth will be in 2034. (ADN)

Herman Griese
APH Board Member



Cottonwood Creek Access ATV Trail

Staying Ahead of Trash and Vandalism *by Herman Griese (Photos provided by ADFG)*

In a recent report to the APH Board of Directors, Doug Hill, ADFG Refuge Manager, summarized his 2016 battle to stay ahead of vandals and those that use the refuge lands as their personal trash receptacle. Doug reported that the corrective actions become time consuming especially since he infrequently has adequate staffing to remove large or large amounts of debris. He noted the apparent increase in use of the refuge by users of narcotics. Used needles are becoming a common trash items at public access sites.

Doug noted in addition to those individuals needing serious help with drug and alcohol addictions, there are the inconsiderate visitors that are apparently too inconvenienced to carry trash to provided bear-proof receptacles, waterfowl hunters that ignore or are not aware of restrictions to leaving blinds in the marsh after the season ends, and



Duck hunter blind left behind after season



Drug paraphernalia at Cottonwood Creek Access parking lot

those sluggards that see the refuge as a place to dump whatever they want to remove from their vehicle. Granted, many a loose item in the back of uncovered trucks get blown out by the strong winds along the Glenn Highway as one crosses the hay flats. Though these items are not intentionally released this too can be prevented.

ADFG has also been making efforts to educate those that are unaware of off-road ATV restrictions on most of the refuge by placing signs at illegal trails entering the refuge boundary. Though some users



Reflections Lake Access

may be unable to read, clearly most abusers choose to ignore the restrictions, some blatantly. The damage they create and the repair of outright vandalism by others take up time and resources our state budget can little afford. Doug estimates a third of his budget gets consumed by repairing vandalism and cleaning up liter.

APH and ADFG ask users to do their part as stewards of this valuable recreational resource and its valuable habitat values by removing trash (yours and others) and report vandalism or illegal vehicle incursions. If possible retrieve the dumpers license plate number and call the Alaska State Troopers at Mat-Com Dispatch at 352-5401 as well as call Doug Hill of ADF&G at 631-8512.



East Side ATV use over "No ATV" sign

Herman Griese, APH Board Member



Don't forget to **sign up annually** for Fred Meyer's Community Rewards program. Link your Rewards card to Community Rewards program and each quarter, Kroger will send us a check. See p 9 for details.

Upcoming 2017 Winter Family Fun Day Planned *by Krista Weydahl*

We are excited to announce that Winter Family Fun Day is right around the corner and we have some great family fun activities planned for that day! The event takes place Saturday, February 11, 2017 from 10am-2pm at Reflections Lake.

WFFD will offer a wide range of activities throughout the day thanks to many organizations that were willing to donate their time and allow for the day use of their winter equipment. Thanks to the Mat-Su Borough Parks & Recreation we will have groomed cross-country skiing trails and an icy surface on Reflections Lake available for individuals to participate in ice skating. The Anchorage Parks & Recreation graciously donated the use of cross-country skis; the Anchorage Skate Club donated ice skate; and REI are providing snowshoes. APH will also have sleds for the kids, big and small. All of this different winter equipment will be available free of charge to individuals who lack gear!



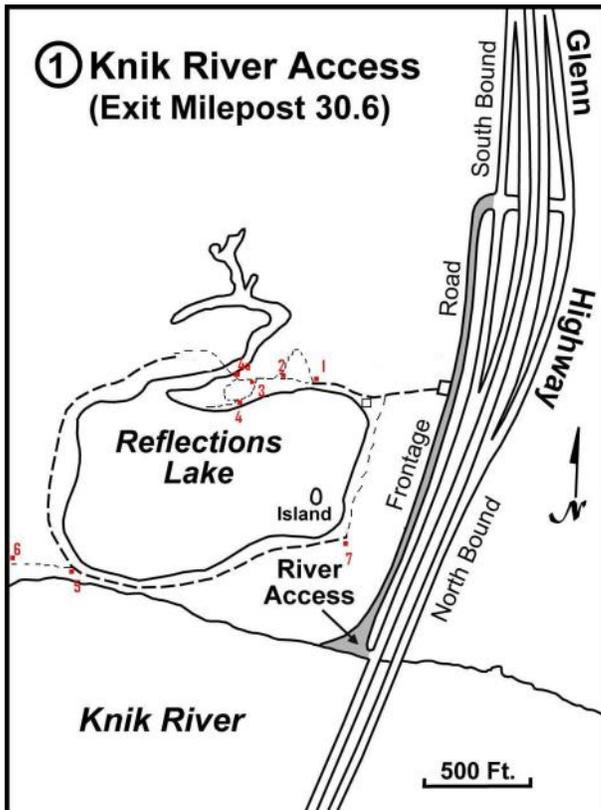
Winter Family Fun Day 2014

In addition to trudging around in the snow and lake there will other entertaining activities occurring throughout the day. The Alaska Mushing School will be out there with their dogs (we please advise being cautious about bring your family pets that day since other dogs will be out there), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game will be giving ice fishing lesson and the Mat-Su Ski Club will be giving cross-country skiing demonstrations. Alaska Safe Trails will provide training on removing dogs from traps.

If physical activity does not sound appealing then come and enjoy the yummy food vendors available to quench your grumbling tummies. Palmer



Winter Family Fun Day 2013



High Shooting Team will be selling baked goodies as well. Concerned about being cold? Don't be, in addition to all the fun activities there will be multiple burn barrels producing warmth provided by APH to soothe your cold bodies and frozen toes.

So put on your winter gear, pack up your snow equipment and camp chairs, buy your fishing license and come ready to have some fun! This year's Winter Family Fun Day will be an event you will not want to miss.

Krista Weydahl,
APH Administrative Assistant

Winter can be a great time to visit the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. Scenery and lighting is always impressive, and though the number of bird species are greatly reduced, the winter resident species are unique. Likewise, many small mammal species that may be present are often under the ice and snow, but moose are often in the treed and shrub habitat along creeks. What makes this time of year great is improved access from temperatures that turn wetlands into avenues to remote areas of the refuge .

Whether your method of access is by foot, skate, ski, snowshoe, bike or, when authorized, snowmachine there are important safety precautions you should take in order to return home to family and that warm stove.

1. Prepare for the trip:

- ◆ Study a map and satellite view of the area
- ◆ Make a plan, and before you embark tell a responsible person that can make a decision when you miss deadlines
- ◆ Gather survival gear for the weather and terrain
 - In a waterproof container: fire starting materials, communication (recently charged cell phone)
 - Emergency food and water
 - Knife, 50' nylon chord, LED Headlamp/flashlight (in addition to your cell phone), whistle
 - Two self retrieving ice picks or 6-8" nails for each hand (to pull yourself back onto the ice)
- ◆ Bring appropriate repair tools/materials for your transportation mode.
- ◆ Wear appropriate clothing, layers that can be shed as you heat up or added as you cool down. Be sure to have a wind resistant shell to respond to the ever prevalent winds on the flats. Select materials that do not retain water (avoid cotton). Numerous products today shed water quickly and can be wrung out and replaced to provide much needed insulation. Heavy wools used to be the standard, but wool also retains water more than poly or micro fleece type products.

2. Match your skills and endurance with your plans, and buddy up.

3. Avoid areas of thin ice (use the Minnesota DNR ice thickness safety tips to right). The uniqueness of the Palmer Hay Flats includes tidal events that create thin ice shelves on creeks, sloughs and ponds. Walking sticks or ski poles can help identify those thin patches of ice when a sharp jab sounds hollow. Ice flows frequently clog the major creeks within tidal influence. Though ice flow dams can create passable bridges a safety line attached to your buddy can help retrieve a suspended partner.

5. Watch out for moose.

Take a camera so you can relive you're the experience and without draining your cell phone battery.

Herman Griese, Board Member

Ice is Never 100% Safe!
Minimum Ice Thickness Guidelines for New Clear Ice Only

4" 5" 8-12" 12-15"

Ice Safety Tips

- Double the thickness guidelines for white or snow-covered ice.
- Carry two large nails to use as ice picks if you fall through.
- Avoid pressure ridges and areas with current.
- Warn children about the dangers of thin ice.
- Don't drive on the ice at night.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages.

mndnr.gov/icesafety **m1** DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

YOU SHOP. AMAZON GIVES.

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats.

Support your charitable organization by starting your shopping at smile.amazon.com. Then select Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats as your charitable organization after signing in and begin purchasing your items as usual!



We are seeking interested community members to join the APH Board of Directors. Without new membership, ideas and energy, it is uncertain how much longer the current Board will be able to keep offering the events and refuge improvements so many have enjoyed. And, who knows, perhaps it's time to do things differently, to develop a new vision and embrace new ideas. You may be the person the organization needs. If you have enjoyed the refuge, if you have ideas and are looking for ways to give back, the APH Board might be a good opportunity.

Some people are intimidated by being a board member, they think the qualifications might be too much, or that they must have extensive education and training. Really, the requirements are a willingness to give back, to provide some time and energy to the mission of the organization “conserving the natural and cultural resources of the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge through public awareness, education, recreation and enhancement projects.”

On a practical level, it's a great way to increase your professional contacts, to gain experience with policy development, financial oversight and nonprofit management. We welcome applications from people at every stage of their careers, including youth. If you are interested, please send an email to director@palmerhayflats.org and we will send you an application form. You can also call the office (357-8711) and arrange to attend a board meeting, or just drop by for coffee. The refuge welcomes everyone, and so does APH.

Michelle Davis
APH President

First Annual Winter Banquet a Success - *(continued from Page 1)*

And, though our charming and very persuasive Board members did work hard on outreach, APH's strong history of service to the refuge really helped.

Also, I'd like to thank the APH volunteers who worked so hard on this event. Linda Griese helped with her contacts at Alaska Airline and beautifully decorated the room and tables, Bud and Jan Bass gave generously, found great donations and reached out to their friends at the Alaska Waterfowl Association. John Harris organized youth participation from the local high schools, Herman Griese did double duty as planner, emcee and auctioneer, Krista Weydahl helped provide everything we needed to be successful, from flyers, to doing radio shows and Nate Emery encouraged several lively bidding wars. It was such a pleasure to work with each one, they are funny, smart and just know how to get things done.

I hope that the APH members and friends who attended had a wonderful time. It was lots of work, and next year we would welcome volunteers. But it was the kind of work that makes you feel good, that is satisfying and rewarding, because it was for the Palmer Hay Flats.

APH thanks these generous donors that made this banquet a success!! And I encourage the membership to thank them the next time you visit their business.

Best wishes to each of you.

Michelle Davis,
APH President

ABC Motor Home Rentals	Fireside Books	Pia's Custom Framing
Alaska Airlines	FishTale River Guides	Settlers Bay Lodge
Alaska Railroad	Fred Meyers	Shane Lamb Gallery
Alaska Salmon Alliance	Griese Wildlife Consulting	Silvertip Design
Alaska Waterfowl Association	Jason Perrego	Spenard Builders Supply
Bass Pro Shop	Jessica Hays	Sportsman's Warehouse
Bill Wood	Kendall Ford	Target
Bud Bass	Linda Griese	The Alaska Life
Chimo Guns	Lowes	The Garden Gate
Christine Hutten	Mat-Su Birders	Three Bears
	Meekin's Air Service	Wasilla Lube Xpress

Join or Renew Your APH Membership



Like any working organization, Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats depends on support from its membership to keep its doors open and functioning. Our effectiveness is directly proportional to our income and member involvement. Come get to know us, stop by our office in the Hatcher View Business Building, offer your unique insights, and then “meet up” with us at one of our seasonal outdoor family oriented gathering, or an enjoyable fundraising social event. We welcome you to help these events run just a bit more smoothly.

Explore us on the web or on Facebook, and consider supporting and bonding with APH! Bring a friend, make a new friend, and deepen your roots by reaching for a conservation oriented community connection. At APH, we value and appreciate your support and personal input in any form that matches your style. We invite you to come help us make a difference in the quality of this inspiring space we share in our Mat-Su Valley.

Support Us Through Donations

If you like what we do and have accomplished and you just cannot devote the time nor do you like to join, you can still support us through donations. APH is a federally approved 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and your donations are tax deductible. There are a number of options for donating.

You can donate by sending us a check or making a donation through our website using PayPal. Corporate programs like the Fred Meyer Community Rewards, outlined on the next page, and Amazon Smiles provide donations at no cost to you. Alaskans can designate APH as a recipient of a portion of your permanent dividend through **Pick.Click.Give**. And of course, you can donate or join by visiting our website and paying through PayPal. Any method you choose helps our organization continue its efforts.

THANK YOU!





What is Fred Meyer Community Rewards?

It is the latest addition to the Fred Meyer Rewards Program where Customers can earn donations for their favorite nonprofits by shopping with their Rewards Card. Fred Meyer will donate \$2.5 million to nonprofits in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington in 2016 through this program. Here's how it works:

Customers can now enroll online at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards and link their Rewards Card to the organization of their choice.

- Customers continue to receive all Rewards Points, Rebates and Fuel Points, a completely separate pool. !!
- At the end of each quarter, Fred Meyer will make a donation to participating nonprofits based on the accumulated spending of the Rewards customers linked to each nonprofit. Sign up for APH: our ID is **NPO #82240**

In 2016 a total of \$570.76 was donated by the Community Rewards Program to "Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats". We just received this message: "Your supporters (14 households) who shopped at Fred Meyer between 10-1-2016 and 12-31-2016 have contributed to your \$139.82 total donation."

*We want to thank Fred Meyer, and most of all, you for participating .
~ Michelle Davis, President, Board of Directors*

SIGN ME UP FOR MEMBERSHIP TO SUPPORT PALMER HAY FLATS

Fledgling (12 & under)	FREE	_____
Student	\$15	_____
Individual Adult	\$20	_____
Family	\$30	_____
Sustaining Member	\$100	_____
Sponsor	\$250	_____
Patron (Life)	\$500	_____
Steward (Life)	\$1,000	_____
Benefactor (Life)	\$2,000	_____
Other		_____
Science Ed Building fund		_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

_____ Please contact me about becoming a Board member

*"Cherish the Land No
One Owns"
~ Li Po, 650 B.C.*

Mail and make checks payable to: **Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats**
4900 E Palmer-Wasilla Hwy, Ste. 106
Wasilla, AK 99654-7752

Join on-line at: www.palmerhayflats.org

APH Calendar of events:

Although the dates and events for 2017 are tentative, we thought we should give the membership an opportunity to plan their early 2017 activities:

February 11 – Winter Family Fun Day has been a victim of odd winter weather conditions over the past two years but this is a real winter. This event will promote both snow based activities, skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, mushing and ice skating and ice fishing. We plan to have vendors providing warm beverages and hot food. We will provide warming fires. Buy your fishing license if you are 16 and older and want to ice fish with Fish and Game. Join us from 10AM to 2PM at Reflections Lake, mile 30.6 Glenn Highway.

April 22 – Annual Refuge Clean-Up Day. Please join us in helping to clean off winter's deposits and help make the Refuge the beauty that it is. Teams will work at Cottonwood Creek access off Hayfield Road, and Rabbit Slough and Reflections Lake off the Glenn Hwy. to help DF&G present the Refuge to summer visitors and local community. Trash bags and a central dumpster (Reflections Lake) will be available to volunteers. We need our memberships participation in this important effort.

May 6 - APH Annual Business and Membership Meeting. Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats will hold their annual meeting and the membership is encouraged to attend. Please come and join us for our annual report to the membership, nomination of new Board directors, and free food. The meeting site is still to be decided but will likely again be held at the Reflections Lake pavilion.

July 1 - Palmer Hay Flats Invasive Weed Pull. Please join us in helping rid the Palmer Hay Flats of unwanted invasive weeds at public access sites and along established trails. Meeting place is TBD.

Late July or Early August (Date to be determined) - Summer Family Fun Day. Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats is once again planning their annual Summer Family Fun Day out at Reflections Lake. Activities include: wild bird demonstrations, canoe and kayak rentals, wildlife walk with a guide, fishing demonstrations as well as local vendors and resource organizations. If interested in volunteering at the event or wanting to be participate as a vendor please contact APH for more details!

December 2 – 2nd Annual Winter Banquet. Due to the great success of the first winter banquet we are excited to announce that we plan on having a second one! The location is still undetermined however, please mark this in your calendars as a winter event you want to attend. Last winter the event was at the Settlers Bay Lodge where the price was right and the food was excellent. The event will include a guest speaker, door prizes, auction items and raffle tables. Join us for an evening of fun.

Board of Directors
Bud Bass
Michelle Davis
Nathaniel Emery
Herman Griesse
John Harris

Administrative Assistant
Krista Weydahl

*You can make a
difference - renew
your membership and
come join us on the
refuge!*



Its that time a year again to apply for the PFD!
When applying this year, please think of Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats when you are deciding on what Alaska Nonprofit to Pick.Click.Give! Donating helps continue APH and its goals towards preserving and bettering the Palmer Hay Flats for you and your family!

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