

ALASKANS for PALMER HAY FLATS

Of Special Interest:

- December 3 APH Winter Banquet and Auction at Settlers Bay Lodge - 6PM
- "Travel Alaska First Raffle" Win tickets for AK RR, Airboat, Dog sled and more. Tickets go on sale in November; drawing on Dec

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Summer Family Fun

Message from the

Day, 2016

President

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Volume 16, Issue 2

Spring/Summer/Fall 2016

Annual meeting and Board resignations -

by Herman Griese

Our May 2016 Annual membership meeting was held under the Reflections Lake pavilion, constructed by APH, on a beautiful day. Attendance was low but each attendee was greatly appreciated. Joe Meehan, Special Lands Coordinator for Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(DF&G) also attended.

The treasurers report revealed the expectation of a decline in funding from 2015 levels. Funds on hand as of May 1, 2016, was \$35,205.83 which includes \$713. 52 in a Building Fund account. The Board had decided current financial resources allowed the hiring of a part-time administrative assistant to manage the office. Krista Weydahl was hired May 9th.



New board president Michelle Davis summarized a busy 2015 and our accomplishments. Completing the Reflections Lake Wildlife Viewing Tower and its dedication ceremony highlighted the year, which also included the annual spring clean-up, Summer Family Fun Day, and Governor Walker's signing legislation adding 3,589 acres within the refuge boundary. Weather once again torpedoed our Winter Family Fun Day plans. Michelle also summarized upcoming events to include a winter banquet/fund raiser celebrating all APH accomplishments and its members.



An important order of business was honoring Bill Wood upon his resignation as President of the Board of Directors. He was honored by DF&G's Joe Meehan with a Letter of Appreciation and with a plaque from APH recognized for his substantial effort and commitment in serving as president and project manager for completion of the Wildlife Viewing Tower.

At the annual meeting Bill Wood (left) was recognized by DF&G Joe Meehan for his work as APH Board of Directors President and all his accomplishments

Continued page 6

Reflections Lake Berm Trail repaired:

Page 2

On April 23rd, the day of this year's spring clean-up at Cottonwood Creek, Rabbit Slough and Reflections Lake access sites, Board president Michelle Davis reported a large hole in the trail berm surrounding Reflections Lake on the southwest corner. Less than a week later high spring tides put substantial pressure on what may have first been a perforation of the dike by muskrats and blew out a four foot wide 5 feet deep gap in the dike. And all that soil appeared to have been blown into the lake. Over the next few days each subsequent high tide grew the chasm. DF&G refuge staff were forced to restrict the trail use. Eventually an alternative, yet muddy, route was created, to allow passage of those not requiring wheeled chair/carriage access.

Joe Meehan and his staff went to work and secured bids to repair the breach. Tom Moore with Moose Landscaping on the Kenai ultimately won the bid. At a cost of \$23,700 the gap was plugged with bulk bags (Super Sacks) filled with gravel imported to the site. Root wads and brush layers were added to both side to help revegetate banks. The work was completed on July 11, and the new trail surface, though a little rough, was once again usable by wheeled access individuals.

Mr. Meehan reminds us that the lake berm was created when the pit was created to extract gravel, and the berm were created by pushing up the surface soils and woody debris into what is now the berm trail. The berms were not designed as a reservoir dam. A breach could easily occur again. His concern is that this could happen along the river bank where it forms a cut bank.

If any indication of the beginning of a breach is observed again, we need to address it immediately. Joe recommends calling in those observations to the Refuge manager's office in Palmer at (907) 631-8512.

Cottonwood Creek trail erosion issue:

The ongoing issue of erosion by the growing tide gut of the large wetland area on the west end of the refuge received some good news. Joe Meehan has recently indicated that DF&G has funds to contract with an engineering firm to come up with options and cost estimates with two goals: I) protect the existing wetlands from further drainage (and perhaps re-

store what was already lost), and 2) maintain (if possible) motorized access for waterfowl hunting.

This project is early in the administrative process. We all await the outcome of the engineering effort. We expect the solution to be expensive and perhaps susceptible to future complications due to the soils and the huge tidal influence.



Contact information: Joe Meehan, Special Lands Coordinator, Division of Wildlife Conservation Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game 333 Raspberry Rd. Anchorage, AK 99515 (907) 746-6322 ph.



chored rope. The trail was then complete.

A project begun in 2015, funded by the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation, (\$10,000) was completed this summer. On April 14 2016 volunteers from the APH Board of Directors, Alaska Waterfowl Association president Hugh Clark and DF&G Doug Hill and his crew of technicians gathered on 14 April and assembled 35 sections of trail by joining eight geoblock panels into 12.7ft x39 inch sections. The sections were stacked on an ATV utility trailer for transport.



Volunteers gathered on 16 April, early enough that activities would not disturb birds' nesting season since birds were just arriving at the refuge. Volunteers included Boy Scout Troop 300 leader Charlie Forbush, 4 additional adults, and 11 Boy Scouts, DF&G technicians, four members of the APH Board of Directors, and two members of the general public. The Scouts worked in 4scout teams carrying two sections at a time from the trailer to the trail site. They moved the entire set of trail sections in short order. The trail was laid out and secured end to end by 1130.

Members went to the site and anchored the trail at 10 locations and laid rope on both sides wiring the sections to the an-

Fisherman, photographers, bird watchers, and hunters alike can now enjoy another 540 ft of mud free travel up the east side of Cottonwood Creek while protecting important stream bank vegetation.



2016 Annual Refuge Clean-up Day, a Success!

by Herman Griese



The annual refuge clean-up day took place on Saturday, April 23rd. The event was well attended by Board members and their families, Alaska Waterfowler Association and refuge staff of DF&G. Over 2 dozen participants of all ages loaded over a ton of debris left behind or deposited by visitors to the refuge at Reflections Lake, Rabbit Slough access road and boat launch and the Cottonwood Creek access road and Scout Ridge Trail parking lots.

Notable this year was the decreasing amount of annual collections. Although DF&G refuge staff remove the occasional living room suit donated by someone not interested in paying the fees at the landfill, overall, the amount of trash seems to have been reduced over the years of picking up trash. That's a trend we

all like to see and encourage you, the refuge users, to help remind other visitors that trash receptacles are available at most of these locations.

The location of the both Reflections Lake and Rabbit Slough access sites will always be subject to debris blowing from highway vehicles on the Glenn Highway. The dominant wind direction will pick anything loose from truck beds and deposit it on the roadside and then make it to the shrubs and tree line of the refuge lands.

Overall, the day was sunny and warm and provided a beautiful start to the summer season. DF&G refuge staff was so appreciative of the volunteer effort that they provided end-of-day refreshments.

Next spring think about coming out with us and enjoy good company, exercise and knowing your efforts beautify the refuge for all to enjoy.





Don't forget to sign up 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.

APH Calendar of events:

Although the dates and event into 2017 are tentative, at best, we thought we should give the membership an opportunity to plan their early 2017 activities:

November I - <u>Tickets go on sale for the first Annual APH Winter banquet</u>. Tickets will need to be purchased in advance since only 70 seats are available. Tickets will be \$60/individual or \$110/couple. Tickets can be purchased in person at our Palmer-Wasilla office during business hours or by calling the office or one of our officers. See page 9.

December 3 - Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats First Annual Winter Banquet! This event will be taking place at 6pm at the Settlers Bay Lodge and will include door prizes, an auction, prime rib dinner, and guest speaker Tom Rothe. Tom, a waterfowl biologist retired from Alaska Department of Fish and Game, will summarize study results showing where sandhill cranes that use the refuge spend the rest of the year. All the proceeds will go directly to Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats mission of protecting and enhancing the Palmer Hay Flats!! See page 9.

January-February 2017 (date to be determined) – Winter Family Fun Day has been a victim of odd winter weather conditions over the past two years. There has either been not enough snow, too much rain or unsafe icy conditions. We are counting on that trend not continuing. The winter 2017 event will either promote snow based activities or ice skating, or in an ideal situation both. We plan to have skiing, sledding, skating, warm beverages, and a warming fire. Look for updates to the schedule as we approach the new year. We'd love to turn up the fun for kids and families and to meet new people and get a chance to appreciate our volunteers.

April 22? (Tentative) – 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, Rabbit Slough and Reflections Lake 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 6th? (Tentative) Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats will hold their <u>Annual Business and Membership Meeting</u>. 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.

OLE Visits Reflections Lake -

by Herman Griese

On the beautiful spring morning of May 16th, I arrived early to scope out the potential bird and mammal presence for the upcoming fieldtrip by the Opportunities for Lifelong Education (OLE) group from Anchorage. The sighting of trumpeter swans and several species of waterfowl, shorebirds and a muskrat seemed to set the stage for an exciting morning. But, as I walked to meet the arriving group of 25 enthusiastic "graying adults" (takes one to know one), I sighted two different individuals with retrievers carrying throwing dummies walking toward the Reflections slough bridge.

The OLE group leader, Elaine Estey, and I made our introductions, allowed latrine visits and then headed to the lake shore. Well, I'd be lying if I did not say I was disappointed. The swans and most of the waterfowl had departed, and the ripples in the water from dogs retrieving the dummies, explained their absence. Fortunately, the departure of most of the waterbirds was compensated by the willingness of a pair of Pacific loons to stick to the lake in spite of the dog activity.

Overall the field trip was a success with some 20 bird species being seen or heard. Past APH Board Director Panthea



Redwood regaled the group with full scientific names of the several plant species as we made the trip around the lake. A visit to the Wildlife Viewing Tower only produced a couple species of birds, though the bald eagle nest on the south shore of the Knik River was visible and the view of the surrounding landscape produced photos galore.

The field trip ended with a light lunch being offered at the lake Pavilion provided by APH and its Board Members. The response from the group was very positive in spite of my disappointment in the timing of the retriever training.

Elaine indicated there was likely going to be interest in scheduling a similar event or two in 2017.



Hello everyone;

I hope this finds you and yours well and happy and enjoying fall and early winter. There's a special quality of light this time of year that can make you stop, put down the business of the day and enjoy a peaceful moment. Many of us find those moments on the refuge. What a gift it is to have this wild place, a moment of peace sandwiched between increasingly urban communities. I'd appreciate it if you took a moment to reflect on what the refuge means in your life. For many, it's a place to skate, ski or hunt, to take children out, take beautiful pictures, have adventures with friends and enjoy seeing wildlife. For so many species, it's a safe place, where sandhill cranes court, muskrats rear families, bears pass through, moose browse and we all have an opportunity to visit, hoping to catch a glimpse of their lives.

For years, APH Board, members and volunteers have worked hard to increase safe and healthy recreational access to the refuge. We've offered family fun days, hosted educational events, helped improve the infrastructure with walkways, bathrooms, a beautiful pavilion and finally, the wildlife viewing tower (We will always remain appreciative of Bill Wood's incredible work to see that project to completion). It's been fun, and rewarding, but now APH needs your assistance.

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 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. If you are interested, please send an email to director@palmerhayflats.org and we will send you and 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

Annual meeting and Board Resignations - (continued from Page 1)

In addition to Bill's resignation, board members Brad Nottingham and Loree Rayback submitted their resignations this summer. Brad served as secretary for the past year in addition to offering his artistic creativity to develop new APH event sandwich signs. His artistic and literary creativity and dedication will be missed. Among her accomplishments, Loree had served two years and organized the 2015 Summer Family Fun Day. Her service was greatly appreciated.

Along with snacks and drinks, door prizes were distributed to those that attended the annual meeting.

We hope to see you next year.



Reminder:

After months of discussion with APH, and by their own authority, DF&G addressed frequent complaints of dog-dog, dog-human, and dog-wildlife conflicts by posting new <u>leashed-dog signage</u> based on the Mat-Su Borough (MSB) Leash Law Code 24.05.070. The code requires that dogs be restrained. MSB codes are enforceable on state lands within the Borough unless they conflict with state law.

Fines range from \$100 to \$200 (depending on number of offenses by that individual). Notification signs are posted at Reflections Lake. Enforcement will randomly patrol Reflections Lake, and complaints will also be addressed.

Bottom line: loose dogs at Reflections Lake are unwelcome, potentially dangerous and illegal, and it will be enforced. Enjoy your dog, but only on a lead, or retractable leash. Result: wildlife for all to enjoy, no blood, no court dates, ... no hassles. Alaska has infinite areas for your dog to run leash-free. But at the Reflections Lake trail system you could end up earning a significant fine.



APH Winter Banquet Planned -

by Krista Weydahl

Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats is excited to announce its First Annual Winter Banquet! This event will be taking place on December 3rd at 6pm at the Settlers Bay Lodge and will include door prizes, an auction, prime rib dinner, and guest speaker Tom Rothe. Tom, a waterfowl biologist retired from Alaska Department of Fish and Game, will summarize study results showing where sandhill cranes that use the refuge spend the rest of the year. All the proceeds will go directly to Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats mission of protecting and enhancing the Palmer

Hay Flats!! Tickets go on sale November SAVE
The
DATE

Saturday
Dec. 3. 2016
6 p.m. @
Settlers Bay Lodge

Dinner
Auction

Alaskans For Palmer
Hay Flats

Presents

Purchase Tickets by
Purchase Tickets by
Phone: (907) 357-8711

In Person: (900 E. Palmer-Wasilla Hay, Ste. 106. Wasilla, AK 99654)

1st and cost \$60/individual or \$110 for a couple. If you would like further details please call us at: (907) 357-8711

<u>Tickets can be purchased by in person at:</u> Suite 106, at 4900 E Palmer-Wasilla Hwy, Wasilla, AK 99654 Or by phone during office hours: (907) 357-8711; or Michelle Davis (APH President): (907) 355-0345; or Herman Griese (APH Treasure): (907) 841-1979; or Bud Bass (APH Vice President): (907) 240-4090

Or by email: director@palmerhayflats.org

We would love to have you, friends and family there to join us!

Why Join APH? To place your finger on the pulse of local conservation efforts with active, like-minded souls who reflect your outdoor values.

Joining Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats is a great way to get focused, share ideas, and then get outside to see things get accomplished. APH is often involved with a convergence of ideas in an atmosphere where you would also be welcomed to offer your own strengths and perspectives. You, your family, a friend, partner or spouse, can offer a little or a lot, matched to your schedule. Your APH dues will go to help keep our/your organization thriving so that we can create and improve the peaceful Mat-Su Valley parcels of open land that you can value and count upon to relieve stress, whether that be hunting, fishing, hiking, boating, or wildlife watching. It matters less whether your preferred lens is a rifle scope or the lens that projects pixels upon the screen of your camera... we need your participation!

The goals we have attained since our establishment have already deeply rewarded our community. Just look at how far Reflections Lake has evolved from a former target free-for-all / appliance dumping ground into the treasure that it is today. And, one just needs to ascend the heights of the sturdy metal wildlife viewing tower there, or follow the newly hardened fisherman's trail over at Cottonwood Creek refuge off Hayfield Road, in order to absorb just what this energized group can help accomplish.

Come get to know us, attend a meeting, offer your unique insights, and then "meet up" with us to help make a seasonal outdoor family oriented gathering, or an enjoyable fundraising social event, run just a bit more smoothly.

You'll feel so much better about not just "using" a beautiful trail or hunting area, but rather putting a little personal energy into protecting and improving these treasured places among us. Then, toss in a few new acquaintances for good measure.

Explore us on Facebook, and consider supporting and bonding with APH! Bring an 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.

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. There are a number of options for donating.

Corporate programs like the Fred Meyer Community Rewards, outlined on the next page, and Amazon Smiles provide donations at little 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.

--- The 2016 APH Board of Directors





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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.

- <u>Customers continue to receive all Rewards Points, Rebates and Fuel Points, a completely separate pool.</u>!!
- 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 2015 a total of \$582.68 was donated by the Community Rewards Program to "Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats". We just received this message: "Your supporters (24 households) who shopped at **Fred Meyer** between **7-1-2016** and **9-30-2016** have contributed to your \$133.09 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) Student	FREE \$15	Name:
Individual Adult	\$20	Address:
Family Sustaining Member	\$30 \$100	City:
Sponsor Patron (Life)	\$250 \$500	State: Zip:
Steward (Life) Benefactor (Life)	\$1,000 \$2,000	Email:
Other Science Ed Building fund		Telephone: ()
Cherish the Land No		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

Another successful Summer Family Fun Day (SFFD) took place Saturday, August 6th this year. It was a great time in which we were able to bring about environmental awareness in a positive experience while using public land. The event at Reflections Lake attracted approximately 150 hardy individuals throughout the day where they participated in a range of family friendly booths and activities.

This year the booths included: the Mat-Su Birders, a children's learning station with the Imagination Station, the Alaskan Waterfowl Association, author Suzette Lord, Mat-Su Recycling Center, and of course our booth, the Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats. The real attraction was informational demonstrations by the Alaskan Falconers Association which



Alaska Falconers Association represented by Tim Sell and his white gyrfalcon, "Timmy", and Dutch Overly's northern goshawk, "Guinevere", were very popular.

provided information on the use and care of wild raptors for hunting, with a gyrfalcon and northern goshawk. Water activities included the use of canoes provided by the Mat-Su Boy Scouts, and Jason Perrego, a local sport fishing guide, who offered fishing in Reflections Lake from his motor powered fishing boat,

Though the weather had bouts of uncertainty through the event, overall it was a

great day that allowed the community to learn about Reflections Lake and nature in Alaska!



Michelle Davis



Hello

So, it's winter again. The beauty of the refuge brings me comfort against the encroaching cold and dark and walking around Reflections Lake might help me fight off the holiday onslaught of cupcakes, candy and delicious meals. Speaking of delicious meals, mark your calendar for December 3. APH will be having a winter banquet at Settlers Bay Lodge. There will be entertainment, door prizes, and a dinner auction. The theme is "travel first to Alaska" and the prizes are to encourage people to enjoy our beautiful State. Thank you to

Alaska Railroad for the generous donation of two round trip tickets!

Enjoy good food, even better company and support Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats. Banquet tickets might be a thoughtful gift for anyone who loves the refuge. It will be a fun evening and a great way to support APH. To purchase tickets, email director@palmerhayflats.org or call (907) 357-8711. We hope to see you there.

We had a productive annual meeting in May. It was a busy year and the APH accomplishments are impressive. Our finances for the next year are sound.

I'd like to use the President's message to say thank you to our Treasurer, Herman Griese. Thanks to his hard work, APH remains a fiscally sound organization. His oversight ensures that our funds; grants, donations and membership fees are well managed. The organization and Board appreciate the time and integrity that Herman brings.

Thank you as well to the Pick.Click.Give donors who selected APH. PCG support matters to the organization and we are careful to use it thoughtfully, expressing our appreciation through sound stewardship. This year as last we are applying your PCG donation to membership renewals.

Finally, we've learned that the Fred Meyer's reward program needs to be renewed, annually. I'd like to encourage each of you to click on the link and take a few minutes to update your donation to APH. The great thing about this program is that it's free to the donors, just a few minutes to sign up and Fred Meyers and Krogers will use their community rewards program to support our organization. Sign up by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. You can search by our name or by our non-profit number 82240.

As always, thank you for the time you are taking to read this message, and for your support of APH and its mission.

Gunalcheesh (Tlingit, 'Thank you').

Michelle Davis

Michelle Davis, APH Board President

Welcome Onboard!!



On 9 May we welcomed Krista Weydahl as our new Administrative Assistant. Since she is continuing her education toward becoming a dental hygienist, her work at the APH office is part-time. She keeps the office open during the hours 9-noon on Mondays, and 9AM to 2PM on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Krista has a B.S. Degree in Biology from the University of California Santa Barbara. After graduating from college she accepted an internship at the Musk Ox Farm, which eventually led to a permanent job for the next several years. At that point she realized how much she loved all of Alaska's beauty and decided to call it home where she has lived for the past 7 years.

Stop by and say hello to Krista.

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

Administrative Assistant Krista Weydahl

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

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