



W W Wood

Of Special Interest:

- Refuge Clean Up May (TBA) at Cottonwood Creek and Reflections Lake.
- ANNUAL MEETING -May (TBA) Come join us for business and BBQ!
- Wildlife Wednesday March 25 - Fur and Weddell Seals Open Ocean to Icy Shores - Matsu College 7-8 PM

Lovalaska
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Volume 11, Issue 1

Winter 2014 - 2015

Adding Dedicated Refuge Lands - by Bill Wood



Northern Shrike

This article quotes largely from efforts by Tom Rothe. Tom has crafted proposals and presented information to several Mat-Valley and Anchorage Fish and Game Advisory Committee's to bring these efforts into view for these decision makers.

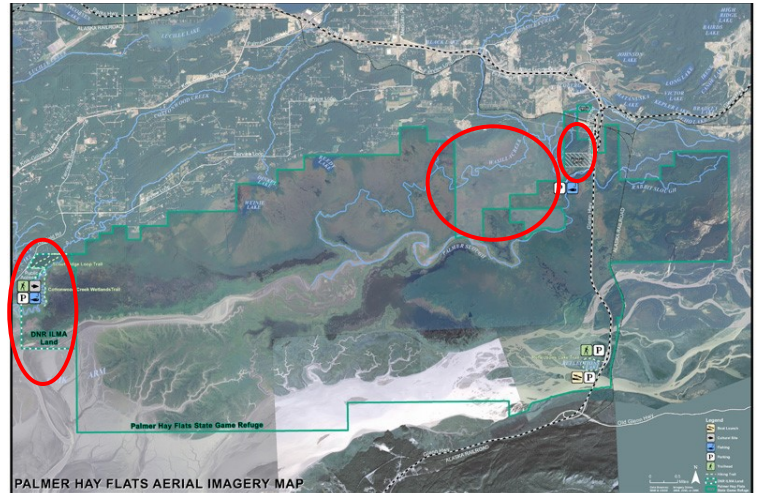
PROPOSAL 105 -5 AAC 95.505. Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. Expand the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge as follows:

AS 16.05.255(a)(1) states that the Board of Game may "set apart" game reserves and refuges subject to legislative approval. The Board of Fisheries has a similar authority under AS 16.05.251(a)(1). I propose the following action:

The Board(s) of Game (and Fisheries) hereby sets aside lands described below, acquired and transferred to the State for addition to Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, for enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and related public uses of the refuge.

Additions to include the formerly named M'Karzel, Williams, Fritzier, Cassity, and Cope parcels, and any other similarly situated acquisitions in state ownership. In addition, the board(s) requests the Alaska Legislature to approve this action by amending AS 16.20.032 to include the additions. **PROPOSED BY:** Thomas Rothe (EG-C14-301)*****

Since 1990, ADF&G has collaborated with public and private partners to acquire inholdings and parcels adjacent to Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge from willing sellers to consolidate and add land to the refuge for fish and wildlife habitat, hunting and fishing, secure public access and facilitate outdoor education and other compatible uses. Five primary parcels, comprising over 1,360 acres have been purchased for over \$310,000 of public and private funds and transferred to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources with conservation easements for incorporation into Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. Over the past 20 years, no legislative action has affirmatively added these parcels to the refuge, either because ADF&G and past administrations have not been successful in moving a bill or because no sponsors have acted.



DNR ILMA lands in the Cottonwood Creek and Scout Ridge area., Great Lands Trust purchase of the Turner property and private lands along Rabbit Slough frontage road next to the Glenn Highway are all possible additions.

Over the past 20 years, no legislative action has affirmatively added these parcels to the refuge, either because ADF&G and past administrations have not been successful in moving a bill or because no sponsors have acted.

(Continued page 3)



On a bright sunny winter day, with a mild temperature just above freezing, a turquoise sky and scattered opalescent clouds I decided to take a walk to Reflections Lake, though I knew the lake would be in the shadow of the adjacent Chugach Mountains for another few weeks. I went because I knew the area was perfect for winter walking, especially for my small Lhasa Apso, bred in the mountains of Tibet and used to cold weather, but having short stubby legs.

We parked at the lake and walked along the main entrance trail. On our left were the restrooms. On the right, a place to get a bag for doggy pooh, if you didn't remember to bring a bag of your own. I find that the plastic bags in which newspapers are delivered to be perfect. Unfortunately, many people do not pick up after their dogs, not realizing perhaps, what a pollutant it is to the lake and how un-

pleasant it is to have your child or yourself walk in it. Sure enough at the right of several "piles" my dog relieved himself. I picked up all the piles and threw them in the garbage can. On the entry walk also were many places of "yellow" snow.

I took the trail to the left, just before reaching the lake, to go clock-wise around the lake. At the juncture of this trail with the entrance trail was a large alder (*Alnus sinuata*) with its multitude of cones dropping seeds. It was easy to determine which trees were alders, as all of the alders, at least at the top, had many, many cones.

Shortly I came to a boardwalk. Looking off to the left of the boardwalk along its entirety were many animal tracks including, moose, vole, and rabbit. Moose (*Alces alces*) tracks are easy to identify as they are so large and characteristic. The divided hoof shows as a long (4-7 inch) print. Other than human feet there are no other animals at the lake with such big tracks. The vole, (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) were tiny, only about 1/2 inch long, with 4 toes on each front foot, five toes on the back foot and no tail drag, which mice show. I was lucky to see the toe prints as usually they are hidden. Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*) tracks are relatively large. The four feet show a characteristic pattern of two large prints in front, widely spaced, and two smaller prints to the rear, closer together. Once you know this track you have no trouble identifying them from there on.

A track I normally see at the lake, but which I didn't see on this walk, were the tracks of ravens. These show as a Y with another line in the middle of the upper part of the Y and are very obvious when present.

Continuing along the trail I came to a squirrel midden, a heap of dissected spruce cones that have been taken apart for the seeds by squirrels. The remains of the cones accumulate at the base of the tree in which the squirrel has eaten.

I noticed a rose (*Rosa acicularis*) hip on the side of the trail and decided to taste it. It was quite dried out, but the tangy taste of the acetic acid and Vitamin C was still quite noticeable. When a little more fresh, rose hips are delicious as snacks along the trail or collected to make rose hip jam or juice. Rose hips are excellent sources of Vitamin C.

Due to the recent thaw, along every twig of the numerous white spruce (*Picea glauca*) were tiny droplets of water. It made these evergreens look like something out of a fairy tale. I could tell these were white spruce because they had hairless twigs and cylindrical cones.

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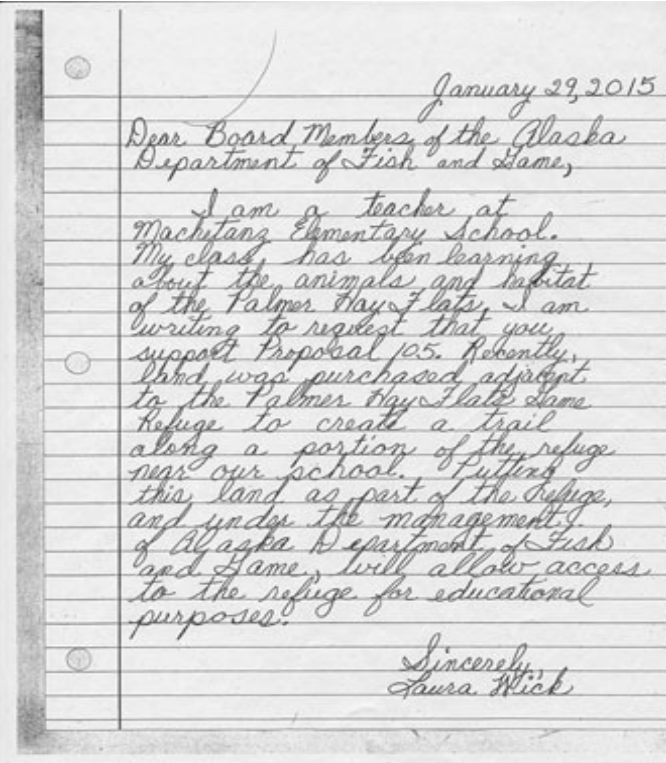


Panthea Redwood is on the Board of Directors for APH and is a retired Environmental Planner, Biology Teacher and remains a practicing Naturalist. She joined the APH Board in the fall of 2014.

Over the years additional privately donated parcels containing covenants which can only be honored by their incorporation into the Refuge, have also been deeded. We must ask our legislators to honor these private citizen commitments generously made in the past. They deserve to be added to bring these special and important wetland habitat areas into the Refuge. It is important, if only for completing landowners valuable good faith conservation actions, and require that ADF&G manage these lands consistent with refuge goals, management plans and address current issues.

We are making progress according to Tom Rothe the Proposal 105 citizen sponsor. On January 9 the Anchorage Fish & Game Advisory Committee voted 14-0 to support Proposal 105, asking the Board of Game to urge the legislature to add several "legacy parcels" to the Palmer Hay Flats SGR. Their Legislative Affairs committee also will send supportive letters to the Board and area legislators.

On January 22nd, the Mat-Su Advisory Committee voted 10-4 to support Proposal 105. Both committees discussed two concerns: (1) that motorized access would be prohibited—which is probably true because of conservation covenants on the titles that require management for wildlife—and the parcels would be managed like the rest of the refuge; (2) official inclusion in the refuge is somewhat moot because of the binding language that demands management as refuge lands—but there are reasons, including enforcement clarity, to consolidate management clearly under ADFG rather than the current ADNR limbo status.



Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats supports Proposal 105 to the Fish and

Game Board Advisory committee's, and asks them to add these donated lands to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. So do educators and students at Machetanz Elementary School.

Machetanz Elementary School kids of all ages have been taking field trips and learning about the Refuge, wildlife and habitats for many years. APH recently partnered again with teachers and students at Machetanz Elementary. Most recently teachers Barbara Johnson and Laura Wicks discussed the Proposal 105 idea with their classes, and offered to assist them in expressing their feelings and interest in the Refuge lands addition effort. The students drafted and have sent their letters to the Fish and Game Board Advisory Committee's, Senator Bill Stoltz and Rep. Shelley Hughes of the Alaska Legislature. We applaud their initiative and will continue to work with them on this important issue.



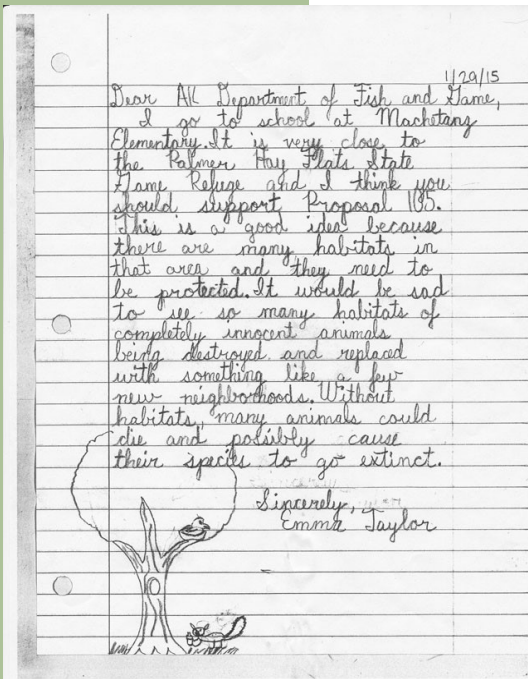
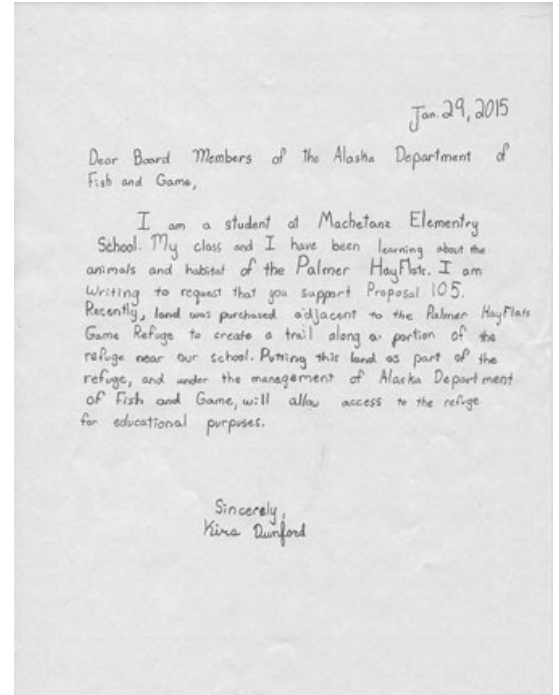
Barbara Johnson reports Machetanz classes have long supported the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. In 2011, Machetanz Elementary students made field trip visits to Reflections Lake. Classes, including mine, worked with Doug Hill, Palmer Hay Flats Refuge Manager pulling invasive plants. We also did some revegetation work in areas.

Dedicated Refuge Lands - by Bill Wood (Continued from page 3)

Some of my students and Gavin Lee, along with help from Anna Lee (Gavin's mom), made a [video](#) about protecting the Palmer Hay Flats. The [video](#) was posted soon after.

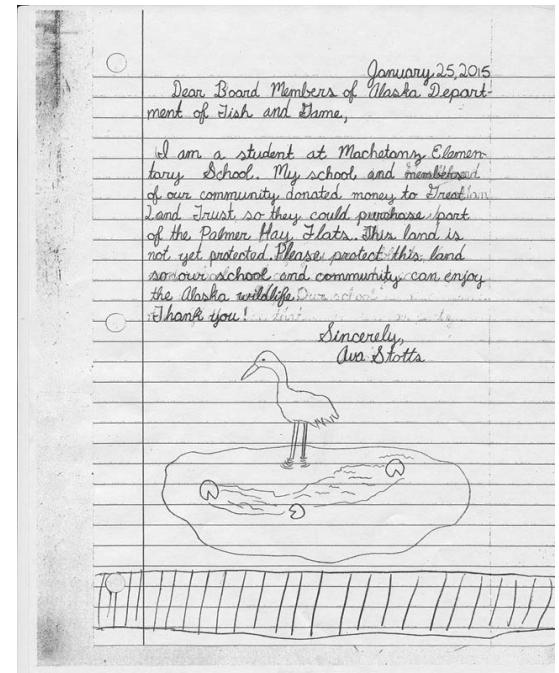
Last spring, our whole school celebrated the new lands purchased across the street from the school by Great Land Trust (Turner property). I helped organize a day-long celebration we called Stewardship Day. We had partner scientists in all of the classes giving presentations in the morning. We had a huge ribbon cutting event with guest speakers including the Borough Mayor, the director of Knik Tribal Council, the Fish and Wildlife Service, our Principal and others. After the talks, my class (3rd graders) and Laura Wick's class (5th graders) put on a play called, "Over in the Hay Flats." It was based on a book that Jillian Holland wrote in Laura Wick's class and combined with some other students' work too (North Brubaker). Costumes were made, the set was made, we practiced beforehand and then presented the play a few times. We first performed at the Volunteer Tea for Machtetanz as kind of a practice run. Then we did our big performance before the whole school at the official ribbon cutting event. After the play, the whole school in the gym sang, "This Land is Your Land," with four of our teachers leading the singing and playing guitar. It was WONDERFUL!! Then everyone got to have specially decorated cakes (with salmon, swans, moose, wetlands) outside and the whole school had a big outdoor picnic. In the afternoon, we had a variety of service projects going on at the school getting the gardens ready for planting, making a fence around the alpine garden, getting rid of invasive plants in the boreal forest, etc. It was a wonderful day all around.

The kids, teachers and administrators at Machtetanz are always so enthusiastic and so much fun to work with. APH counts us all lucky to have such great partners and support expressed by the dedicated group at Machtetanz.



Thank you to **Everyone at Machtetanz Elementary** for your enduring and sincere support for the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge !!

APH wants to encourage **YOU TO GET INVOLVED**. Contact APH to discover how you can help, get information and where you can forward your own letters of interest and encouragement to Senator Stoltz, Representative Hughes, Governor Walker and others. We'll help you, however we can. **THANKS !!**



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 11 for details.

Construction of an approximately 2000' long elevated walkway with a 36" wide deck has begun near Wasilla Creek on a 975 acre parcel of land that was recently acquired from Turner Construction via the Great Land Trust. The parcel of land is adjacent to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge and will be managed consistent with the Refuge. The virtually level trail will provide easy access and a learning window into a wetland habitat that does not seem to draw the attention of a lot of people.

Trail design, layout, and concept has been collaborative effort between the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Great Land Trust, and Mark Gronewald (Trailwerx - Wasilla).

The trailhead for the elevated walkway will be located approximately 75 yards west of where Wasilla Creek intersects with Nelson Road. In time a small trailhead parking lot will be developed. From the trailhead the walkway will run east approximately 600 feet through birch (*Betula papyrifera*) mixed with a few spruce (*Picea glauca* and *Picea mariana*) and low basins containing sedge (*Carex* species) before arriving at a point near the bank of Wasilla Creek. Upon reaching Wasilla Creek the walkway runs south near Wasilla Creek through birch and tall grass (*Calamagrostis* species) for approximately 1400 feet where it will terminate at an open area with views of the wetlands and the Chugach Range. There will be a low 16'X16' platform at the termination point.

There are some dry spots in the project area, but most of the area is considered wetland. Hence, in order to protect the vegetation and not create a muddy moat an elevated walkway is being constructed and the foundation piers for the walkway are being installed now (February) while the ground is frozen. Working when the ground is frozen minimizes ground disturbance and protects the root layer. The site can be much wetter and soggy in the summer than one might guess when traversing the area in winter.

The walkway's foundation will be helical piers Helical piers 7' long steel posts that have a helix (screw) welded



to the base. The helix is what bites the ground and pulls it into the soil during installation. A wheeled walk-behind machine with a boom is used to screw the piers into the ground.

The piers have plastic 'frost protection sleeves' that company claims "allows us to guarantee that our posts will never move or 'heave'" because of freezing soils. The sleeve acts as a slip sheet over the post, so when winter comes and the ground freezes; the sleeve moves with the expanding pressure so that no pressure is on the post itself.

(Continued page 10)



Wasilla Creek Foot Trail on the Turner property acquisition by Great lands Trust and gifted to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

Looking down off the boardwalk to the right were several iris (*Iris setosa*) pods. These pods are large and divided into three parts. They make good additions to dried flower arrangements.

At the end of the boardwalk and along the entire west side of the lake the birch seeds were in abundance on top of the snow on the path. These seeds are tripartite, like a tiny clover leaf, very small, and a light beige color. There were so many of them that the snow looked beige rather than white on the trail. The birch at Reflections Lake are usually either Alaska paper birch (*Betula neoalaskana*) or Kenai birch (*Betula kenaica*). When mature the Alaska paper birch usually have brilliant white or pinkish-white bark that is papery and often peels. Kenai birch, on the other hand have dark brown, often blackish or reddish-brown, bark which is also papery and peels. All of the birches have raised glandular resin dots around the trunks of the trees, appearing as small lines.



Microtus pennsylvanicus

The largest deciduous tree, at maturity, at the lake is the Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*). The only way to know that these are Balsam Poplars, and not Cottonwoods (*Populus trichocarpa*), was to exam the female capsules in the spring, which are two parted in the balsam poplars and three parted in cottonwoods. Otherwise they look exactly the same, the same trunk, bark, and leaf. I had done this in the past by examining many female capsules and had determined that, generally, from Eklutna on to the north the poplars are balsam poplars and from Eklutna to the south towards Anchorage they are cottonwoods. The poplars have a light grey bark when young, but acquire a thick, vertically grooved dark brown bark as they grow more mature. At the base of the more mature poplars facing north were patches of bright green moss

Continuing walking along the trail, I enjoyed the view of the Knik River through the trees and went past the bench facing the lake to the bench facing the Knik River. The river was a jumble of ice blocks covered with snow, resembling a snow-covered white moonscape. I walked on to the dividing point of the trail,

one trail to the right towards the Talkeetna Mountains and the other to the wetlands trail. Rather than take the wetlands trail I continued on the trail around the lake.

I could see the sun brilliantly lighting up Pioneer Peak, Byers Peak (Matanuska Peak) and Lazy Mountain with their associated clouds. The sky above was radiant, while below on the trail, all was in shadow. I continued on the trail as it turned right, headed towards the south.

Looking across the wetlands near me I could see across the valley to the Talkeetna Mountains, including Government Peak, Hatcher Pass and Marmot Mountain with their snow covered peaks lit by the sun, and the foot hills, a darker brownish red, fading into the greenish brown of the valley. I admired the view intensely. Along the trail were many bright green thread-like lichens dripping from the trees. Quite a contrast to the dark colors of the bark of the trees.

I spotted one remaining High-bush Cranberry (*Viburnum edule*) fruit and couldn't resist plucking it and popping it in my mouth for its succulent flavor. Even though it had been through a frost, it was refreshing and not musty. I picked a lot of them this fall and made both high-bush cranberry jelly and juice to keep for the winter. The fruits are quite good if picked before a frost.



C.D. Grondahl

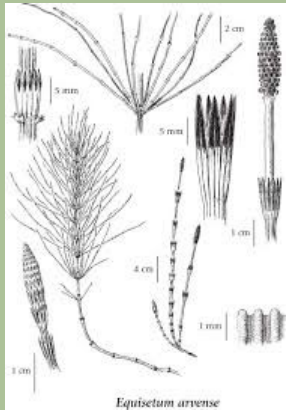
Microtus pennsylvanicus

On this side of the lake there seemed to be several black spruce (*Picea mariana*) with hairy twigs and nearly round cones. The black spruce are generally smaller and more compact than the white spruce and are often seen in interior Alaska as "drunken" forests. They are usually found in wetter habitats than the white spruce.

(Continued page 8)



Central Yukon Species Inventory Project

Diamond willow - *Salix pulchra**Equisetum arvense*

trail, looking ahead, was a magnificent view of Pioneer Peak in all of its massiveness. I had taken several photographs of this view of the mountain and each time a new and different essence had been my reward.

A good walk back to the car and a dirty, messy ride home.

Along the base of the trees and shrubs were the skeletons of many horsetails (*Equisetum* spp.) Horsetails were used by early settlers as scouring brushes for washing dishes, as the plants contain a great deal of silica. When they die what are left are the silica skeletons of the shoots and twigs.

As I continued on, I crossed a metal bridge across a small slough. In several places the water had not frozen solid in the sloughs, leaving open water. Coming back towards the parking lot I passed many bushes of what I believed were Diamond-Leaf Willow (*Salix pulchra*). The female catkins remained on the bushes, catching the ice and snow in such a way as to make the bushes look as though they were completely covered with icy, cotton balls.

When I first spotted them I couldn't imagine what they could be, as cotton does not grow any closer to here than at least two-thousand miles away.

Coming up the

*W W Wood*Black-billed Magpie - *Pica pica*

Governor Walker Removes Threats To State Game Refuges - by *Herman Griese*

In the [January 24th issue of the Alaska Dispatch News](#) the public learned that long-awaited changes were occurring in the Department of Fish and Game that would come as a great relief to the APH Board and the public who support preserving existing conditions in our state refuges and sanctuaries. The Dispatch News reported that Governor Walker had asked for the resignation of Randy Bates, director of the Habitat Division. He had previously asked for resignations of Division of Wildlife Conservation director Doug Vincent-Lang and Department Commissioner Cora Campbell. Most importantly this action by the Governor would once again ensure that the public will be involved in future proposed changes to state refuge and sanctuary policies.

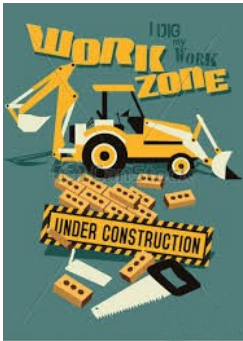
This group of past Governor Parnell Department of Fish and Game appointees seemed to be on track to "stream-line" the permitting process for developmental activities in our most important state managed wild lands in Alaska's Special management areas. State Game Refuges, Sanctuaries and Critical Habitat areas are essential for some of our most unique wildlife populations and habitats. First and foremost was the evidenced intent to remove public involvement in the decision making process. Though continually denied in print through the media by that administration, every action that was leaked by concerned employees clearly indicated their intent was to keep the public removed from the planning and decision making process, until no effective opportunity to have a local voice remained.

(Continued page 9)

Governor Walker Removes Threats To State Game Refuges - by Herman Griese (Continued from page 8)

This group of administrators had embarked on an effort to complete or rewrite management plans for all 32 special areas in the state, including our own Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. While only one plan was leaked to the public, Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area ([see the back page for linked references](#)), all other plans were kept from public eyes. Perhaps there was good intent in some cases, and perhaps there could have been benefits to the wild resources. But blocking the public from the planning and decision-making process could only be interpreted as evidence of deceit and mal-intent.

APH and its Board applaud the move by the Walker administration and applaud the hard work of all the different "Friends" groups around the state, and especially for Bob Shavelson of Cook Inlet Keepers for keeping on top of this issue and making it known that the Alaska public deserves the option to participate in planning and decision-making for our most important state owned lands. We encourage our APH membership to remain **vigilant** in ensuring these resources are managed for their natural wild values.



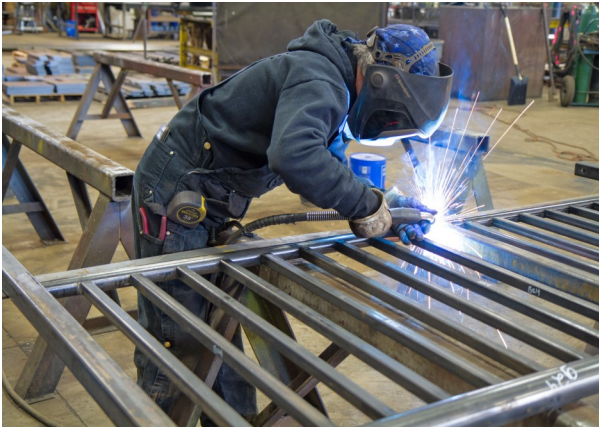
Reflections Lake Wildlife Viewing and Interpretive Tower Update - Bill Wood

A steady stream of activity over the last 12 months has been aimed at the month of March 2015 to complete the long-awaited final phase structural feature construction of the Reflections Lake Wildlife and Interpretive Viewing Tower.

As I write this entry into this edition of the APH Newsletter, [Sampson Steel Co.](#), of Anchorage is fabricating the weathered-steel Tower and developing its erection schedule for the end of the month. This winter's calendar year bridge period (2014-2015) has been exceptionally warm and snow-

less causing us all to hold our breath in hopes temperatures would stay cold enough to transport the materials and equipment needed for the Towers construction across the lake. A minimum of 24"-28" of good ice is necessary. Fingers crossed, I think we're going to have it.

We want to bring to yours and the public attention that for safety purposes, the Reflection Lake area will be partially closed to the public during the construction period. We anticipate this closure will last about one week and occur around the last week of March. When APH receives the final erection schedule we will send out a note to the Membership reminding them of the closure. APH and ADF&G will assist Sampson's in setting up signage in the parking lot and approach to the Reflections Lake access point. We appreciate your attention to the safety of all concerned and thank you for your patience.



Larry Konkler using flux-core welding secures the verticals between the 2" round foot and hand rails for the viewing platforms

APH is in the planning stages now for the half-day long Tower dedication/ gifting and celebration ceremony. Our current plans are for light food and refreshments in the Pavilion area. There will be activities to compliment the special significance of the Tower's installation, highlighting its expected use and benefits to the Refuge and the public. Local and State dignitaries, APH Board Members and many of the sponsors and supporters will be there to discuss their participation and hopes for the use of the Tower. Over the course of the next few weeks the exact time and date of the celebration date will be determined and APH will keep you apprised of the information and expected activities. We hope everyone of you will join us and share in the happiness and richness of the day and our expectations for the long use of the Tower by our community, visitors to our State and the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge.



Sampson's Johnathan Bass creates guard rail verticals from bar stock prior to welding the Tower's safety grab rail features.



The decking and decking supports will be installed this summer by a Student Conservation Association work crew. The walkway decking will consist of 1600 feet of light penetrating fiberglass panels in the vicinity of the creek and 400 feet of wood decking between the trailhead and the creek section of the trail.

Materials and labor costs for this trail are being provided from donations received by the Great Land Trust.

SCA is still looking to recruit high school students age 15-19 who live in the Mat-Su Valley to work on the Wasilla Creek trail. Students will camp out, build trails, cook meals, and gain work and life skills. Teams of eight crew members are supervised by two adult crew leaders. Students are given a **\$500 stipend** at the successful completion of their **four weeks** of service to public land. **Outdoor gear and food is provided. Need-based transportation stipends are available to Anchorage, where crews will launch.** Summer start dates begin in early June, mid-June, and early July.

To apply, students must visit www.thesca.org/akcrew and thoroughly complete a **Youth: Crew application**. Applications submitted prior to **February 15th** will be given priority for the April orientation. After that, crew member openings are open until filled.

For help with the application and an application fee waiver, contact SCA Alaska recruiting coordinator Jeff Chen at jchen@thesca.org or call/text 907-717-8414.



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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 2015 through this new 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 !!
- 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**

Fred Meyer will donate \$625,000 each quarter via Community Rewards!

In 2014 a total of \$631.32 was donated by the Community Rewards Program to "Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats". Currently 18 families are enrolled in the program. APH has goaled to increase enrolled families to 100 for 2015. Please join this great effort and challenge !

~ Bill Wood, 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	\$500
Steward	\$1,000
Benefactor	\$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.

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

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Bud Bass
Michelle Davis
Nathaniel Emery
Herman Griese
Peggy Hunt
Panthea Redwood
Bill Wood

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

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A Message from our President ~ Michelle Davis



Hello everyone;

I hope this note finds you and yours well and happy. Here are a few updates from Alaskan's For Palmer Hay Flats (APH). First, it's no secret that this has been a remarkable winter. Our cold and snow have headed south, so we reluctantly canceled Winter Family Fun Day. That's the bad news. The good news is that it will be combined with the Wildlife Viewing Tower dedication. If all goes well, and the ice holds, in late-April to mid-May. It's an amazing project (thank you, Bill Wood) and will be fun to introduce to the community. Hopefully the tower dedication will coincide with the spring migration for amazing birding opportunities.

APH is a small non-profit making a big difference and I know many of you enjoy the improved access to the Palmer Hay Flats Refuge, through the Reflections Lake walk about, paved parking lots, restored trails and even restrooms. Have you wondered how all those happened? Mostly through dedicated volunteers, people who show up weekends, or one Tuesday a month and are devoted to seeing things happen. Now, I know, you are thinking, "I love the Reflections Lake trail (or the Scout ridge trail, or...) and I sure want to thank the APH. How can I do that?" Thank you for asking, there are several ways. First, we welcome new Board members and there is an application form on the website. And, volunteers are vital to the organization. APH always has projects, from spring cleanup to weed pulls. Send an email with your interest and we will look forward to meeting you.

Your membership and donations are fundamental to this organization. Please remember APH for Pick, Click, Give. This last year was remarkable, we saw such an increase in donations. Another option is signing up with the Fred Meyer's Community Rewards program which donates to community organizations at no cost to you. There is a link on the APH website. These are all great way to give back. We are happy to answer your calls and emails if you'd like to learn more about APH. Thank you for your continued support, it is appreciated and essential.

Finally, a note about office changes. Due to several grants winding down, APH moved from a staffed to a volunteer office. I'd like to thank Terri Reynolds-Rogers and Breanna Baldwin for their service to APH. The board is using this time to plan and set new goals and welcomes your thoughts and suggestions. Watch the website for Family Fun Day updates and if your contact information has changed, please send us an email.

With best wishes, Michelle Davis, APH BOD President

For more background Information on Refuge Lands check out:

<http://www.alaskapublic.org/2013/10/25/the-battle-of-dude-creek>

<http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/20140422/fish-and-game-weakening-land-use-regulations-alaskas-wildlife-refuges-sanctuaries>

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