

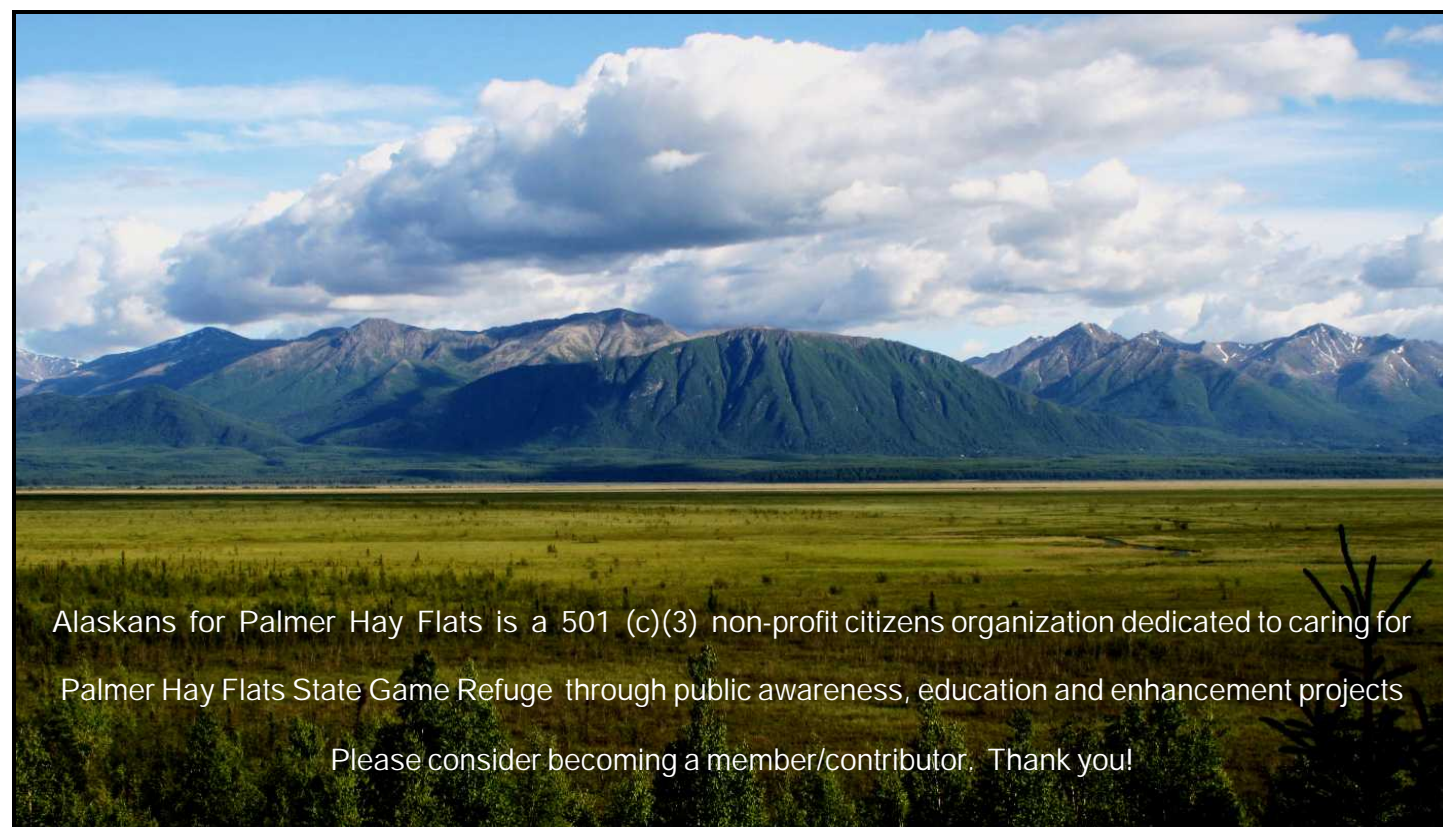


Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats

P. O. Box 877701

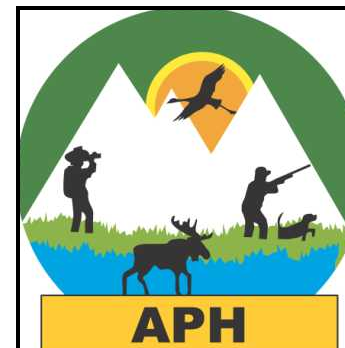
Wasilla, AK 99687

www.PalmerHayFlats.org



Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit citizens organization dedicated to caring for Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge through public awareness, education and enhancement projects

Please consider becoming a member/contributor. Thank you!



Hay Flats Highlights

News from Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats * Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter 2007-08

In This Issue

- * Second Annual Membership/Supporters Meeting
- * Cottonwood Creek Access trailhead road & parking lot improvements, new signs and security gate
- * Scout Ridge trail improvements, habitat restoration, Overlook commemorative garden and trailhead kiosk
- * Snowshoe School Kids Day annual education event
- * Reflections Lake enhanced access and upcoming trail enhancement projects
- * Seal Rescue on the Flats
- * Cottonwood Creek parking lot improvements
- * Wetlands trail in trouble
- * Natural Science Education Cntr
- * Calendar of Upcoming Events



Alaska Department of Fish & Game,
Palmer Hay Flats Office

(907) 746-6330

Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats

(907) 373-7484

Annual Meeting of the Members

A breezy spring day brought a large, enthusiastic crowd of members and supporters out to enjoy the end of winter. The Hay Flats were snow free, the sandhill cranes were arriving and calling and sunshine helped warm the spirits. Burgers on the grill and potluck dishes made for the usual camaraderie of friends gathering not only for a pre-summer get together, but for the good cause, as well.



Business conducted included honoring two departing members of APH's founding Board of Directors. Keith Connor and Dawn Bragg were recognized and thanked for their tremendous contributions, awarded a parting certificate of appreciation and photo montage of on-the-ground project work. We miss their presence at Board meetings, but they remain true to the goals and mission of APH and always volunteer when able. Keith continues to maintain our beautiful website (which he designed), for which we are eternally grateful!

Other business included minor changes to the Bylaws and Articles, as well as the election of three new Board members. Lisa Jaeger, accomplished outdoors woman and a dependable presence at all our cleanups, decided to dedicate herself to help the Refuge; Michelle Davis brings her impressive grant administrator experience and Native issues sensitivity to our mission; Catherine Inman, field conservationist extraordinaire(!) of Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District, already a passionate advocate of the Refuge, decided to take the extra step, offering her unique perspective and ready assistance to the cause! Welcome all new Board members, and THANK YOU for serving!



Special thanks were extended to Alaska Railroad Corporation who once again granted the major door prize of Tickets for Two! Highlight of the day was the release of a short-eared owl which had been rehabilitated at the Bird Treatment & Learning Center (TLC). Rescued in Kotzebue, seeing him fly free from the bluff was a thrill, as we all wondered where he would eventually go.....

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Winter Family Fun Day on Reflections Lake	Saturday, January 19, 2008	11a.m.—3p.m.
Spring Cleanup at Reflections Lake	tba	
Spring Cleanup at Cottonwood Creek	tba	
Spring Walkabout Around Reflections Lake	tba	
Annual Meeting of APH Members	Saturday, April 26, 2008	Noon
Reflections Lake Summer Regatta	(in planning stages - call to volunteer ideas....)	

Cottonwood Creek Trailhead Improvements Continue

APH Board members, volunteers and ADF&G staff put sweat to brow for long planned and needed improvements at Cottonwood Creek Access. Part of our MSB Bed Tax Grant funds provided road and parking lot grading and smoothing, making the approach to this popular access point a much more pleasant experience(!). Also, the increasingly dangerous washout section of the downhill road received major, permanent repairs. It was time, then to continue with the spruce up job, by installing new signs provided by ADF&G. In addition, and following our mission of supporting responsible use and enjoyment of the Refuge, a new security gate was installed with posted access hours. After the many years of neglect and abuse, together with ADF&G, we really are making a visible difference.



Outdoor Education Day For Snowshoe School

Once again, it was a great day! As in years past, rotating busloads of kids had a super time learning about fascinating things along the Scout Ridge Trail and on the wetlands at Cottonwood Creek - ancient Native settlements, animals of the Refuge, upland and wetland habitats, and even tsunami waves! A particular delight to all, was the live Great Horned Owl brought by Randi Perlman of Bird TLC. Many thanks go to Mat-Su Borough Cultural Resources, Wasilla Soil & Water, ADF&G, teachers, parents and all the volunteers who make this fun and exciting annual educational event possible. A field day away from school is always great, but when you can actually *learn* something, well now THAT's special!



Scout Ridge & Kids Still a Great Mix!

Our Refuge truly receives first class TLC from Valley kids! Once again, Teeland Middle School students brought boundless energy and hard labor to task at Scout Ridge Trail and Overlook. With the help of teachers, parents and APH volunteers, they spent two full days restoring and rehabilitating damaged habitat, brushing and digging new trail areas. In addition, a major accomplishment of the day was installing split rail fencing around the soon-to-be commemorative garden at Scout Ridge Overlook. A native plants garden will be completed by Alaska Native Plant Society and a local Girl Scout Troop next spring. As always, unbounded thanks go to Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District for organizing these productive work days, and providing top soil and materials to get the job done. This is great team work! Tremendous thanks also go to Boy Scout Troop 395's Tyler Beckham and his folks. Tyler built our brand new Scout Ridge Trailhead kiosk for his Eagle Scout project. It's a beauty! Now, when you're venturing onto this beautiful woodland trail, you'll have an opportunity to familiarize yourself with the route and read other interesting and important information.



"Diamond" the Arctic Ribbon Seal Rescued on the Flats

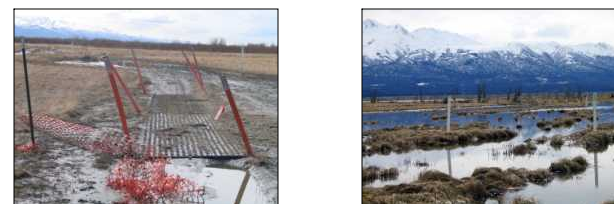
Strange things happen in the land of the midnight sun.....or, in this case in the dark! Passionate animal lover and faithful member Rebecca Knight called APH to report a seal stranded on the Hay Flats(!). Sure enough, there "it" was, quietly resting in the reeds, flesh wound and all. A "stranded animal" call to Seward Sea Life Center brought a skilled, crackerjack crew to the rescue. Local board members sprang into action, sequestered Dave Hopper and his trusty ATV and off they went far, far out onto the tide flats. Hours of arduous labor later, "Diamond" as she was later named, was on her way to Seward for recovery from her wound, healthful monitoring and eventual release closer to her normal habitat in arctic waters. Log onto www.alaskasealife.org and follow the links to "Tracking" to see her journey home via satellite readings.



Looking Ahead

Wetlands habitat access trail in trouble

Increasingly, the wetlands trail beyond Cottonwood Creek is becoming far more than an inconvenience for motorized access during hunting season. Tides and rains make maneuvering the trail nearly impossible at times, resulting in continually diverting to a wider and wider path, encroaching into and contributing to draining the Refuge's valuable waterfowl habitat. APH has received a Recreational Trails & Conservation Association (RTCA) administrative grant to assess the problem with ADF&G and find a solution. We're calling upon hunters, fishers, birders, hikers and all who enjoy this great public resource to help find a solution to this problem.



Reflections Lake Upgrades on the Move

Through a grant from State Parks & Rec Trails, work will begin next summer on the trail around Reflections Lake. This will be a major project, bringing tremendous improvement to access around this beautiful lake with its stunning vistas at every turn. A grant application for a trail bridge across the slough is in the works, which will make the trail circuitous. In the meantime, APH and ADF&G have begun our long awaited access enhancements. The gate is now open, eventually being eliminated, with upgraded and enlarged parking area on the horizon. No reason not to go to lake's edge now, even at extreme high tides!



Thank You!

APH could not possibly accomplish all it has without vital support and assistance along the way: Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District office for unending project support; ADF&G Land Mgt, Refuge and Permitting staff for on-the-ground projects and continual guidance; Mat-Su Borough Community Development & Parks for continued support of our programs and events; Pacific Coast Joint Venture for crucial outreach granting; Nature Conservancy, Mat-Su Birders and the many conservation organizations who believe in our mission. Of course, since the beginning our dedicated, "working" Board of Directors, aided by members and volunteers along the way, has been the impetus to all our good efforts. More remains, but with all this help and support, the Refuge and its wildlife will receive the continuing care it deserves.

Cottonwood Creek Parking Area Upgrade

Accessing Cottonwood Creek and the wetland trail beyond will soon be a lot more pleasant. APH and ADF&G recently did a field analysis of the parking lot - currently a silt laden roller coaster of slippery pits and pot holes. Next spring and summer we will upgrade this busy recreational staging area for vehicle parking, and also begin some much needed rehab to damaged habitat.

Smooth gravel bed, perimeter boulders and summer season restrooms(!) will define the enlarged parking area. The "mud hole" section to the bridge will be reserved for limited traffic and the rest will be revegetated. Additionally, the deteriorating washout areas where vehicle access and the Creek bank are too close will be repaired.



Natural Science Education Center

Over the past several months, APH has been working with LEED (Leaders in Energy & Environmental Design) firms RIM Architects and Corvus Designs to formulate a master plan for the Natural Science Interpretive Center at Scout Ridge. We are most grateful for the many hours of time and expertise contributed by these prestigious firms in helping to articulate our goal of education in the natural sciences. When completed, this facility will serve to foster our mission of community stewardship not only for the Hay Flats Refuge, but for all the natural world around us. Call APH for a group presentation of our slide program



APH Needs and Opportunities

- * We are in need of a used 4-drawer file cabinet, so call 373-7484 if you have one to donate!
- APH is in need of memberships and contributions. Please review your status with APH and renew your membership, join for the first time and/or make a contribution to the future Natural Science Education Center. This is a membership based organization, so your participation is important and truly appreciated. An IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization means APH contributions above memberships are tax deductible.
- * If you belong to a particular Refuge user group, please let them know about our good work, and encourage them to join together with APH to care for this incredible public resource.