



# Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats

Dedicated to responsible use and enjoyment of  
Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

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## Annual Report – April 2008

This past year has been a most exciting and rewarding year of accomplishments for APH, indeed. Our dedicated Board of Directors, working side by side with established and newly realized partners, aided by willing grantors, have continued important enhancements for the Refuge. Even more importantly, we have begun our organizational transition into the long term education and community stewardship goals underlying our mission and purpose.

### Cottonwood Creek/Scout Ridge Improvements

APH, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District (S&WCD), Teeland Middle School students, Mat-Su Borough Community Development and our local business community through Bed Tax Grant funds have partnered to greatly enhance this important and most used Refuge access point. Trailhead road and parking lot improvements, Scout Ridge trail brushing, marking and defining, and completion of an enclosed native plant interpretive garden at Scout Ridge Overlook are some of the enhancement projects completed.

### Reflections Lake

Visitor enhancements continue, as we work with ADF&G to begin removal of the old cyclone fence and posting trail maps provided by their staff. Upcoming lakeside trail work, funded by a State Recreation Trails Grant and installation of a trail bridge, funded through National Scenic Byways, across the slough will greatly improve the visitor experience at this increasingly popular Refuge lake on the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway.

### Outreach - Slide Shows

Our slide shows continue to be requested from clubs & organizations to businesses and local schools. Unbounded thanks and appreciation are due professional photographers Fred and Randi Hirschman and Tim Remick as well as those received from our members and supporters, for photography donated for our slide shows and visuals. These stunning photos speak volumes about this most special part of the people's public lands, and enable our message of community stewardship toward this priceless and accessible treasure so close at hand.

### Continuing our increasingly popular Sponsored Public Events

Partnering once again, with National Winter Trails Day, Mat-Su Borough Parks & Recreation, R.E.I. and Alaska Trails, Winter Family Fun Day at Reflections Lake this year brought record breaking attendance. Over 140 adult and children attended to ski, snowshoe and ice skate in the quintessential Alaska winter wilderness setting. It has become a highly anticipated southcentral mid-winter event for folks from Anchorage to Talkeetna.

The Reflections Lake Springtime Walkabout in May continues to bring young and old for a lovely day on the lake to enjoy the spring greening and observe many of our migratory waterfowl on the lake and songbirds along the woodland path surrounding the lake.

(Ideas for other public events in all seasons on the Refuge are always under consideration by the Board. Volunteers to help with coordinating them are needed, so if you have ideas and enthusiasm to work with others in coordinating them, please let the Board know.)

## Spring Cleanups at Cottonwood Creek and Reflections Lake becoming a Thing of the Past

Three years of dedicated effort by APH and ADF&G can be seen as you look around and see \*no\* trash, \*no\* abandoned, shot-up vehicles, \*no\* dead domestic or poached animals. Neighbors have called to say they enjoyed a winter of peace and quiet without shooting. Signage, trailhead road, parking and trail improvements are finally bringing this Refuge the respect and care it has so long deserved.

## Working together with New and Established Partners for common goals

This past year, we have been fortunate to join with new partners in working toward our long term goals: Pacific Coast Joint Venture, an outreach division of Ducks Unlimited, recognized the tremendous dedication and vision of APH to the Refuge. They have generously granted our cause to aid in our own local outreach efforts toward community stewardship of the Refuge habitat. We are humbly thankful and strive to be worthy of their assistance.

APH is now a “partner member” of Leave No Trace, a national organization whose mission statement and goals are in line with APH. To quote from their list of core values:

### Leave no Trace:

Is committed to the enjoyment, health and protection of recreational resources on natural lands for all people;  
Believes that education is the best means to protect natural lands from recreational impacts while helping maintain access for recreation and enjoyment;  
Is founded on outdoor ethics whereby a sense of stewardship is gained through understanding and connecting with the natural world

We are looking forward to enhancing our youth and adult conservation education with the teaching and learning tools available from this stellar organization.

By becoming a non-profit member partner with the Foraker Group, we anticipate gleaning valuable insight into honing necessary organizational skills as we grow and mature into the contributing community member we envision.

Of course, our ongoing partnership with Wasilla S&WCD continues to be the foundation of our local, on-the-ground, grass roots connection with our community of youth. We could never have accomplished all that we have without them. Their contributions cannot be rightly measured.

## 2007 was the “Year of the Kids”

Once again, APH recruited an Eagle Scout candidate to help with trailhead enhancements at Scout Ridge. Tyler Beckham worked tirelessly and diligently with his dad and scout leader to build and erect our very first trailhead kiosk. Sadly, Tyler lost his life this past winter not long after completing our kiosk. APH and ADF&G are all so very proud of his achievement. To honor his contribution, a memorial acknowledgment has been placed at the trailhead.

Our Snowshoe School Kids Education Day has become an annual event, providing not only a field day for the kids, but a tremendous opportunity for them to learn about the elements of their environment, Native cultural and colony settlement history. This year, APH in partnership with Wasilla S&WCD, will widen the scope of youth education opportunity to include Knik Elementary School. Certainly, the future of the Refuge and overall conservation awareness is well served by events such as these.

Last year was a banner year of youth contributions by Teeland Middle School students. In the spring, working with APH, Wasilla S&WCD, dedicated teachers and parents they converged on Cottonwood Creek to replant and restore damaged habitat. In autumn, they once again came not only to continue this work, but enclosed and prepared the new dedication garden at Scout Ridge Overlook. This year, we will partner with Alaska Native Plant Society to plant this lovely garden area with native plants providing not only a beautiful enhancement for visitors to the Overlook, but interpretive information about our local flora.

### Into the Future – RIM/Corvus – Natural Science Education/Community Center

As to addressing our long term goals, APH received a tremendous assist this past year. After soliciting interest from architects and landscape architects to help articulate our vision for a future natural science education/community center, we were truly fortunate, indeed. The prestigious LEED team of RIM Architects and Corvus Design landscape architects responded to our vision providing initial guidance and impressive visual documentation for presentation to the community and potential grantors. We are truly fortunate to be working with this impressive team whose corporate missions so closely align with ours.

Carrying forward this partnership, we received enthusiastic support from our local Assemblywoman Cindy Bettine, and through her tremendous effort, the entire Assembly and the Mat-Su Borough. Together with these supporters, ADF&G and our sustaining partners, we are working together to see this long term community enhancement to completion.

### Underlying our future vision – planting seeds of possibilities – Harriet Richards Endowment

APH continues to be graced with good fortune. ADF&G staff continues to work closely with us to enhance habitat and the visitor experience. Our partners provide needed assistance for carrying out our defined project needs. And, once again, we have received a tremendous expression of support for our future Natural Science Education/Community Center through another generous endowment from the Harriet Richards estate.

This has been another year of conservation accomplishments by APH and our partners, for the Refuge and our community. Ongoing projects are on the horizon in the coming year for which we will need help from our membership, so please consider offering assistance when needed. Together, we can accomplish great things.

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