



Hunter Information & Training Program News

Summer 2018

Coordinator's Corner-Ginamaria Smith

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DID YOU KNOW?

The right to hunt and fish is written into Alaska's constitution.

*3. Common Use —
Wherever occurring in their natural state, fish, wildlife, and waters are reserved to the people for common use.*

*§ 4. Sustained Yield —
Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belong to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.*

Hosting the IHEA-USA Conference in June was definitely the highlight of the summer. The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA-USA) is the professional hunter education association affiliated with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the 50 state fish and hunter education programs. The programs employ 55,000 instructors, many of whom are volunteers, who teach hunting and shooting safety and responsibilities throughout the United States. Since 1949, almost 40 million students have completed hunter education courses which cover firearm safety, bowhunting, wildlife management, field care of game, responsible hunting, landowner relations, wildlife identification, and much more.



Western region state administrators

The annual conference is a chance for these professionals to network, learn about updates and opportunities on evolving topics related to hunter education, and attend the annual IHEA-USA business meeting. It is also a chance for the host state to showcase their hunter education and shooting sports programs, as well as what the state has to offer visitors. HIT Program staff and volunteers planned all aspects of this conference for the last year and a half to ensure an informative and enjoyable experience was had by all. Conference attendees included representatives from 33 state fish and game agencies and four international agencies (Australia, Mexico, Guam, and Ontario).

The conference started out in true Alaskan fashion with the presentation of colors by the Dimond High School JROTC, accompanied by the Pipe Major of the Crow Creek Pipes & Drums. One of Alaska's volunteer instructors led the Pledge of Allegiance and invocation, and the ADF&G Director of Wildlife Conservation Bruce Dale welcomed all attendees to Alaska. The keynote address was given by 4-time Iditarod Sled Dog Race Champion Dallas Seavey. Seavey and lead dog Hero kept the audience entranced with tales of his mushing experiences, along with the importance of strong leadership and teamwork. Many conference attendees from across the US remarked on how Seavey's presentation was one of the best they had ever heard and wished all of their staff and volunteers could have attended as well. Another highlight on the first day was the "Welcome to Alaska" reception held on the 15th floor of the Hilton Anchorage Hotel. Continued on page 2...



Volunteer Instructors & Hunter ed staff from around the US

Coordinator's Corner continued



Utah HE Administrator trying out higher-caliber rifles used in Alaska to hunt big game

Attendees marveled at the mountainous backgrounds that Sleeping Lady and the surrounding Chugach provided while watching locals fish for King salmon in Ship Creek. Volunteer presenters from the Bird Treatment & Learning Center shared a few of Alaska's bird species with the attendees (Great grey owl, Snowy owl, and Northwestern crow) and the Alaska Native Heritage Center dancers wowed the audience with their performance and display of Alaska's native cultures.

The second day, dubbed "Conservation Day" was all about hands-on experiences and exploring Alaska. The morning was spent at the Rabbit Creek Shooting Park and the afternoon included a drive down the Seward Highway to visit the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC). In the morning attendees were given free-roam of the range and a couple hours to visit various activities/booths highlighting Alaskan hunting, trapping, and shooting activities. Attendees got the chance to throw atlatls, shoot crossbows, walk through the Alaska hunter education field course, and visit with Alaskan trappers about the methods, species, and trapping regulations. They also got to shoot shotguns to see how ADF&G staff complete bear firearm safety training prior to going out on field work, shoot rifles used



Alabama HE Administrator learning about the history and how to throw an atlatl

for big game hunting, and meet with ADF&G sport fish staff and wildlife education staff to discover more about the public information and education provided by the department.



Australia HE Administrator testing out crossbows

AWCC staff gave a presentation to conference attendees about the history of the center, what to expect during the visit, and an overview of the Wood bison restoration project which was a partnership between AWCC, NPS, and ADF&G. Attendees were then given a couple hours to explore AWCC, view the animals, and watch a couple presentations conducted by AWCC staff. It was the best opportunity for the visitors to view Alaskan "flagship" species like musk ox, brown bear, moose, Roosevelt elk, and wolves, without having to travel long distances.

The remainder of the conference was spent indoors attending presentations about volunteer recruitment, motivating conservation organizations to get involved, and R3 opportunities (recruitment, retention, and reactivation of hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts). Alaskan volunteer instructors Christine Cunningham and Steve Meyer gave a presentation on hunter ethics and Steve Bethune and Scott Luber gave a presentation on Dall's sheep hunting. ADF&G staff shared their research on Alaskan small game, Dall's sheep, and the unique Alaskan subsistence culture.

During the conference, IHEA-USA and other sponsors also recognized people and companies who have provided outstanding and dedicated service to the IHEA-USA, hunter education, and the sport of hunting.

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The Awards Ceremony was particularly exciting for the Alaskan attendees as longtime Alaskan volunteer hunter and instructor Carl Edmiston was inducted into the National Instructor Hall of Fame. Edmiston's list of accomplishments and volunteer commitments is long, but his commitment and strong desire to instill proper behaviors for firearm safety, and create ethical hunters for the future, were among his greatest attributes. We were able to keep this award completely a surprise from Carl, and were even able to have his wife and daughter be present while he received the recognition.



I presented Carl with his award as he was inducted into the National Instructor Hall of Fame

The preparation and manpower it took to host a conference for over 175 attendees was startling, however the chance to showcase the HIT Program and Alaska was well worth it. Alaska set the bar high for future IHEA-USA conferences, and ADF&G staff, volunteers, and speakers did a great job representing Alaska.



Thank you to the Alaska Volunteer Hunter Education Instructor Association (AVHEIA) for donating the bags given out to all conference attendees.

Steering Group Members Needed

On November 1, 2018 there will be two open seats on the HIT Program's Volunteer Steering Group.

The openings will be from our Interior and Rural regions and each seat is a two-year term. Lyle Shelnut (Interior) and Andy Finke (Rural) have been a tremendous asset to the Steering Group over the past two years.

The duties of the Steering Group are as follows:

- advise HIT Program Coordinator and staff on a wide range of issues pertaining to hunting and firearms safety
- establish/maintain open communication between volunteer instructors and staff
- periodically monitor and review program goals, objectives, and policies
- provide ongoing recommendations on program curriculum (study manual, workbook, test, and lesson plans)
- provide input to improve the Volunteer Instructor Incentive Program
- represent instructors and program participants
- attend teleconferences and one in-person meeting in Anchorage

To apply, submit a one-page letter of interest describing your background and addressing how your membership on the Steering Group would benefit the HIT Program.

Letters can be emailed, faxed, or mailed to Gina by September 17, 2018.

If you have any questions about being on the Steering Group, feel free to contact a current member.

The HIT Steering Group has proven to be a great advisory resource in advancing HIT Program goals and objectives. The members have consistently served both the volunteer instructors from around the state and ADF&G, and we look forward to continuing with this tradition.

If you have any questions about the application process or the Steering Group, feel free to call Gina.

HIT Steering Group

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Instructor Notes

Aleknagik Waterfowl Class by Ward Jones



Eleven Aleknagik Lakers, 5 girls and 6 boys, were treated to a waterfowl hunting class during Southwest Region Schools (SWRS) E-Week (Exploration Week-April 30 to May 4). Hunter education was a pre-requisite for admission to the class. Class was held for 3 hours each afternoon with students separated into 2 groups and rotated through sessions.

Aleknagik teachers Randy Finkenbinder and Ryan Hickel were joined by community members Ward Jones, John Tugatuk Jr., Scott King, ADF&G Biologist Neil Barten and his dog Oliver as instructors. They taught waterfowl identification, calling, dog use, boating, federal and state regulations, biological need for steel shot, and shotgun shooting. Students especially enjoyed the shotgun shooting as they expended 1,000 shot shells at clay pigeons.

The class culminated with a Friday hunt over decoys. The weather tested gear and constitutions with rain, snow, wind, and lake ice. Students set decoys and called. The girls' and boys' groups switched out for approximately 3 hours each. Ward Jones supervised, rotated callers and shooters, and furnished and handed out ammunition. Mr. Hickel provided transport. There were no complainers and each group got birds!

The annual instructor meetings are scheduled for later this fall. These meetings are a great way to meet other instructors, share your hunting stories, provide feedback to HIT Program staff, and help plan the 2019 schedule. It's also a chance for us to thank you for your outstanding efforts and volunteer hours in 2018. Please take the time to attend these meetings if you're available.

- **Sunday, November 4th at the Fairbanks Indoor Range**
- **Wednesday, November 7th at the Snowshoe Gun Club (Soldotna)**
- **Thursday, November 8th at the Juneau Indoor Range**
- **Tuesday, December 4th at the Rabbit Creek Shooting Park (Anchorage)**
- **Thursday, December 6th at the Mat-Valley Range (Palmer)**
- **Tuesday, February 19th in Petersburg**
- **Wednesday, February 20th in Wrangell**
- **Wednesday, March 13th in Ketchikan**
- **Thursday, March 14th in Craig**
- **Wednesday, March 20th in Sitka**

HIT Staff Contact Information

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Students in New Stuyahok completing the field course. This school class was taught by Benjamin Griese and Robin Jones.

Alaska Volunteer Hunter
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