

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Wildlife Restoration Grant**

**Grant Number:** W-53-D-1

**Project Number:** 1.0

**Project Title:** Refuge access and public use facility development

**Project Duration:** August 1, 2011 to June 30, 2016

**Report Due Date:** September 28, 2015

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Joe Meehan, Lands & Refuges Program Coordinator

**WORK LOCATION:** Statewide

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**I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING LAST SEGMENT**

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Provide the public with the facilities, knowledge and encouragement to access and use special areas.

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Protect wildlife habitats and populations, and maintain existing public uses by restoring impacted areas.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Improve the public's understanding and appreciation of these areas through educational outlets which will result in more awareness and protection of the area's wildlife habitats and populations.

**II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON JOBS IDENTIFIED IN ANNUAL PLAN THIS PERIOD**

**Job/Activity 1-a:** Evaluate all 34 Special Areas to assess and prioritize needs to physically access these areas including the need for development of improvement of access roads and trails, directional signage, and information outlets (brochures, posters, web pages, etc). Implement high priority items as funding and management decisions allow. Previously identified priority items include access road and parking improvements, directional signage at Goose Bay, Susitna Flats (Horseshoe Lake, Middle Lake) and Palmer Hay Flats refuges. Previously identified trail improvement priorities include Scout Ridge, Reflections Lake and Cottonwood Creek trails in the Palmer Hay Flats refuge; winter trails in the Susitna Flats refuge; and access trails in the Goose Bay refuge.

**Accomplishments:** A previously completed evaluation of all 32 state refuge areas identified the need for 104 different projects which would enhance refuge use and

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protection. Many of these projects encompass several grant objectives and job/activities.

Approximately 2 miles of refuge access roads and parking lots at Goose Bay were upgraded to improve access, delineate parking areas and protect adjoining wetlands and wildlife habitat. Additional signs were installed to assist refuge users in identifying access sites.

To assist users accessing refuge lands, a new parking lot was constructed on the north side of Creamer's Field refuge, and the access road and parking lot at the Dude Creek CHA were improved and expanded.

To educate users of refuge land designations, several sections of boundary for the Palmer Hay Flats and Goose Bay refuges were located and marked with signs.

Through the use of a contractor, improvements to the statewide refuge program website including use and access information continued.

**Job/Activity 1-b:** Evaluate all 34 areas to assess and prioritize needs for infrastructure or other management actions within or near these areas to accommodate public uses and to protect area resources. Implement high priority items as funding and management decisions allow. Previously identified priority items include assessment and repair or replacement of the Cottonwood Creek ATV bridge in the Palmer Hay Flats refuge.

**Accomplishments:** In addition to the above mentioned project evaluation and project list (in 1-a); soils were tested at several sites in the Goose Bay refuge to determine levels of contamination from lead shot and several areas of concern were mitigated to protect public health and wildlife.

A contractor specializing in trail construction was engaged to provide an assessment for repairs and rerouting of the ATV trail in the Fox River Flats CHA. Planning continued with local organizations for rerouting and repairs to the Watermelon Trail in the Anchor River/Fritz Creek CHA.

**Job/Activity 2-a.:** Evaluate all 34 areas to assess sites impacted by human activities including vehicle and debris dumping, off-road vehicle use, and other impacts from users. Implement restoration and mitigation programs at high priority sites as funding and management decisions allow. Previously identified priority areas include vehicle barriers at access sites in the Goose Bay, Susitna Flats and Palmer Hay Flats refuges which will prevent habitat impacts from off-road vehicle use.

**Accomplishments:** In addition to the above mentioned projects (in 1-a); barriers were placed at several sites along the Goose Bay refuge access road and in the parking areas to prevent damage to adjacent wetlands by the use of off-road vehicles.

**Job/Activity 3-a:** Evaluate all 34 areas to assess and prioritize needs for educational materials including brochures, signs, interpretive panels, kiosks, pavilions, and other

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outlets. Previously identified priority projects include interpretive panels addressing management actions at Creamer's Field refuge, and an educational pavilion at Potter Marsh in the Anchorage Coastal refuge.

**Accomplishments:** In addition to the above mentioned project evaluation and project list (in 1-a); several informational and access related signs were installed in several Mat-Su Valley area refuges. New interpretive panels were produced and installed at the Mendenhall Wetlands refuge.

**III. SIGNIFICANT DEVIATIONS AND/OR ADDITIONAL FEDERAL AID-FUNDED WORK NOT DESCRIBED ABOVE THAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED ON THIS PROJECT DURING THIS SEGMENT PERIOD**

None.

**IV. PUBLICATIONS**

None.

**V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT**

None.

**Prepared by:** Joe Meehan, Lands & Refuges Program Coordinator

**Date:** August 26, 2015