

**Wildlife Restoration MULTI-YEAR GRANT
INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

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

GRANT NUMBER: AKW-19

PROJECT NUMBER: 7.0

PROJECT TITLE: Refuge/Special Areas Access Improvements

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2020

PERFORMANCE YEAR: July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018

REPORT DUE DATE: September 28, 2018

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joe Meehan, Lands & Refuges Program Coordinator

COOPERATORS: N/A

Authorities: 2 CFR 200.328
2 CFR 200.301
50 CFR 80.90

I. PROGRESS ON PROJECT OBJECTIVES DURING LAST SEGMENT

OBJECTIVE 1: Improve and upgrade public access facilities while reducing impacts from existing modes of access.

Job/Activity 1-a: Upgrade the undeveloped boat launch site at Wasilla Creek-Rabbit Slough in the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge.

Accomplishments: An engineer's concept plan and cost estimate for a boat launch was previously obtained from Alaska State Parks (Office of Design and Construction). During this report period, a Reimbursable Services Agreement (RSA) was finalized with Alaska State Parks for their engineering and construction services to install the boat ramp. Several site visits were made to assess ramp options and to initiate environmental

compliance requirements. Design and permitting is scheduled to be completed by summer 2019, with construction completed by spring 2020.

Job/Activity 1-b: Implement trail repair, rerouting and hardening techniques to repair damaged trail sections in the Fox River Flats Critical Habitat Area and to encourage off-road vehicle users to avoid impacting sensitive sedge flat meadows. Similar trail improvement projects will be undertaken in other Special Areas as funds allow (e.g. Anchor River-Fritz Creek CHA, Goose Bay SGR, Susitna Flats SGR, Matanuska Valley Moose Range).

Accomplishments: See summary in 1-c below.

Job/Activity 1-c: Contract professional trail consultant to provide an assessment of the Willow Mountain CHA off-road vehicle trail identifying areas in need of repair or rerouting; and to implement repair/rerouting of highest priority sections.

Accomplishments: Upon assessments of the Willow Mountain Trail (Willow Mountain CHA), Fox River Trail (Fox River Flats CHA), and Watermelon Trail (Anchor River-Fritz Creek CHA), we selected the latter two trails to concentrate our efforts for restoration, improvements and/or rerouting. A previously prepared trail assessment report for the Willow Mountain Trail will provide a baseline for additional work should project funding allow.

During this reporting period, we made several ground-based trips to the Fox River and Watermelon trails to better map and assess trail repair needs. Working with our community partner (Homer Soil and Water Conservation District) and with funding from their sources, trail repairs were made at the Beaver Creek crossing on the Watermelon Trail, and bridge approaches were installed or repaired on the Fox River Trail. Additional trail repair /rerouting needs were identified and utilizing funds from this project these tasks will be completed in the upcoming reporting period, perhaps as early as fall 2018.

OBJECTIVE 2: Improve public access facilities to promote public use, awareness and appreciation of these areas.

Job/Activity 2-a: Upgrade the roadside parking area for Reflections Lake in the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge; construct an access stairway or other structure to facilitate access to Sunny Point in the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge; upgrade or expand trails, boardwalks and/or interpretive panels at Creamer's Field State Game Refuge; and improve or construct other access facilities in Special Areas as need and project funding dictates.

Accomplishments:

Palmer Hay Flats Refuge - Reflections Lake Parking Lot: right-of-way permits from the Alaska Department of Transportation were renewed. Section 106 (National Historic Preservation Act) concurrence was requested and eventually received. Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Matanuska-Susitna Borough construction authorization was requested and is pending.

Creamer's Field Refuge: 85 yards of damaged boardwalk trail was reconstructed and/or replaced and five interpretive panels were designed, fabricated, and installed.

Mendenhall Wetlands Refuge – Sunny Point Access Stairway: this project was completed during June 2018. The work included building a Geoblock landing area at the base, treated lumber stair framing and railings with galvanized metal treads, and tying the stairs into the ground at the upper end adjacent to the road. The stairway was designed to local building codes and has reflectors on the upper end adjacent to Sunny Point Road to ensure snowplow drivers see it. The public began using these stairs immediately after they were built, and we anticipate they will be very popular with waterfowl hunters. Because the public no longer needs to negotiate a steep and slippery slope to access refuge lands, this project made the refuge more safely accessible to more users.

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

N/A

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

The trail repairs identified in Job/Activity 1b and 1c proved too extensive to accomplish all tasks. After assessing the needs of all these trails, we selected the two trail indicated to concentrate efforts due to habitat impacts, public uses, and logistics of repairs and upgrades.

Permitting and review delays for the Reflections Lake parking lot improvements delayed implementation of this project. We are hopeful that it will be completed within calendar year 2018 but may be delayed until 2019.

IV. PUBLICATIONS: none

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT: none

Prepared by:

Joe Meehan, Lands & Refuges Program Coordinator
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99518

Date: September 5, 2018