

FEDERAL AID ANNUAL RESEARCH PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

Annual PROGRESS REPORT SHELL AND INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this report is to summarize significant findings and their management implications for the entire project. This template is based on Federal Aid reporting requirements as found in the Federal Aid Handbook, Chapter 11
<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/toolkitfiles/fah52211.pdf>

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Restoration Grant

Grant Number: W-53-C

Segment Number: 1

Project Number: 1.0

Project Title: Refuge access and public use facility development

Project Duration: August 1, 2011 to June 30, 2015

Report Due Date: July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013

Partner:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joe Meehan, Lands & Refuges Program Coordinator

COOPERATORS:

WORK LOCATION: Statewide

Briefly describe how Federal Aid funds were spent on each active job, listing the results achieved during this segment period. If a job was not accomplished as planned, explain briefly why.

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

A new access trail was created at Goose Bay refuge to provide hunters and other refuge users an additional access area for upland habitat opportunities. Limited road and parking area improvements were coordinated with (and conducted by) a community partner, while options and plans were developed for more extensive repairs and upgrades. The more extensive upgrades are pending.

The access road into Cottonwood Creek and two parking areas were resurfaced and upgraded to provide a more all-weather surface and to reduce erosion. The primary parking area used by waterfowl hunters and other refuge users was enlarged, and a refuge host site was constructed to accommodate a refuge volunteer with an RV or camper trailer. The host site allows for a base of operation for providing information and assisting hunters and other refuge users.

The need for upgrades to the Horseshoe Lake and Middle Lake access roads and parking areas were evaluated and surveys were conducted to identify easement boundaries. Easement and private land issues were investigated and determined to not be a hindrance to this project.

A contractor was engaged to evaluate the statewide refuge program website and make recommendations for improvements and upgrades. A draft improvement plan for the website was created.

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); a condemned pedestrian and ATV bridge at Cottonwood Creek was removed and replaced with a new bridge. This new bridge reestablished access to one of the most popular waterfowl hunting areas in southcentral Alaska.

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 project evaluation and project list (in 1-a); barriers were placed at a recently enlarged parking area at Cottonwood Creek 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 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 signs were produced and installed at Goose Bay refuge to assist hunters and other refuge users locating access points, trails, parking areas, and refuge boundaries. Additional signs were installed to inform refuge users of allowed and prohibited activities.

In the Palmer Hay Flats refuge, a refuge entrance sign was developed and installed at Reflections Lake/Knik River Access site; final installation of an informational kiosk at Reflections Lake was conducted; and an educational pavilion at Reflections Lake was completed with financial and volunteer contributions from many community partners.

Planning for interpretive panels at Creamer's Field refuge and Mendenhall Wetlands refuge continued.

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 (*List project-related publications prepared or published during this reporting period.*)

None.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT (optional)

None.

Prepared by: Joe Meehan, Lands & Refuges Program Coordinator

Date: January 10, 2014