

**FEDERAL AID
FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802-5526

STATE WILDLIFE GRANT (SWG)

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: T-1-3

PROJECT NR.: 1

WORK LOCATION: Fairbanks

PROJECT DURATION: 1 July 2003 – 30 June 2004

PROJECT REPORTING PERIOD: 1 July 2003 – 30 June 2004

PROJECT TITLE: Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge: Conservation, Research,
Management and Plan Revision

Project Objectives:

- 1:** Review and refine management strategies for the Refuge. Job Activity
Job Activity a: Review the 10-year "Interim Management Plan" for the Refuge, which was developed in 1993 and is due for revision.
Job Activity b: Involve stakeholders (including public) in the Plan revision and provide a variety of opportunities and avenues to inform them about the Refuge and conservation and management issues, and to receive input.
Job Activity c. Revise the plan as necessary based on stakeholder input and the status of refuge resources.
Job Activity d. Address current issues and problems on Creamer's Refuge.
 - d.1.)** Investigate issues concerning of dogs on the Refuge and develop guidelines and regulations.
 - d.2.)** Design new boardwalks, viewing platforms and other facilities to replace Boreal Forest Trail.

- 2.** Protect and enhance habitat for migratory birds with special emphasis on waterfowl (AS16.20.039(c)(1)). Monitor results and use information to modify existing plan as required.
Job Activity a.: Farm fields to provide mature grain, sprouts and open habitat for cranes, waterfowl, and other wildlife.
Job Activity b.: Maintain ponds and wetlands for waterfowl, cranes, shorebirds, and other wildlife. Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of different habitats and improvements in meeting management goals relating to wildlife conservation. Monitor water quality in ponds and nutrient levels in farm fields.
Job Activity c.: Conduct regular counts of waterfowl and cranes during spring and fall migration periods.

- 3.** Provide opportunities to study various species of wildlife and wildlife habitat typical to Interior Alaska (AS16.20.039(c)(2)).

Job Activity a.: Continue to support and conduct scientific studies, such as the migration banding station, and swallow and crane projects. Develop as possible additional studies to assist in management of Refuge, address biological knowledge gaps, and improve management of wildlife and their habitats in Interior Alaska. Where appropriate, encourage and develop citizen science components that allow for increased public involvement in wildlife conservation activities and greater understanding of the role of scientific research in conservation and management.

4. Participate in cooperative agreements with local airports and others to attract birds to the Refuge to lessen likelihood of bird hazards at airports.

Job Activity a.: Coordinate meetings of cooperators.

Job Activity b.: Provide advice and information to cooperators on bird behavior and biology, and deterrence of birds from airports.

Job Activity c.: Develop and maintain attractive farm crops, open space, water bodies and wetlands.

5. Develop informational materials to help ensure long-term conservation of refuge resources.

Job Activity a.: Develop educational materials, including brochures and signs, essential to conserving refuge resources.

Summary of Project Accomplishments:

1. a-b. Finally completed formal agreement with Friends of Creamer's Field, entering into concession agreement. Initiated updating and renewal of agreement with Camp Habitat (summer day camp program), a cooperative agreement with 2 local organizations.
 - c. Worked with USFWS Law Enforcement in regards to their concerns about potential migratory bird baiting as a result of Refuge farming practices.
 - d. Completed planning for reconstruction of Boreal Forest Trail in conjunction with Division of Administration, Friends of Creamer's Field and public.
2. a. In spring 2004, 44 acres in mature barley were planted and another 93 were prepared for planting to sprouting barley in late July. Planting was modified to provide mature grain in narrow strips and small squares, both providing more accessible edges than previous large blocks of rectangular field. This was an effort to avoid having to cut and leave lay mature grain which has been construed as baiting.
 - b. Nutrient levels of fields and ponds was monitored. No chemical fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides are used on the Refuge. In fall 2003, Worked with our Sport Fisheries Division to improve the "Kids Fishing" pond in farm fields.
 - c. Record numbers of geese (4420) and ducks (3090) were attracted to the farm fields in fall 2003. The number of cranes (2450) was close to the record set in fall 2002 (2770).
3. a. Continued studies of Sandhill crane survival and movement. In August 2003, captured and banded 14 additional cranes (a total of 106 banded since 2001). Observed and recorded banded cranes in Refuge fields daily during August and early September. Mist-netting and banding of songbirds continued for the 12th consecutive year at the Creamer's migration station operated by the Alaska Bird Observatory. A local high school student

continued to monitor the tree swallow boxes in the farm fields and won awards at the state-wide Science Symposium.

4. a. Hosted annual bird/aircraft safety coordination meeting with representatives from Fairbanks International Airport, Eielson Air Force Base, Fort Wainwright, University of Alaska Experimental Agriculture Station, US FWS, and Corps of Engineers.
- b. Provided advice and assistance to Fairbanks International Airport and other local airports on bird hazing, bird behavior, and other aspects of bird/aircraft safety program.
5. a. Hosted 8703 guests to the Creamer's Refuge Visitor Center, 4,889 to educational/interpretation programs, and 26,362 to our Refuge trail system. In addition, the Alaska Bird Observatory provided bird banding and conservation programs at the migration station to 88 groups, including more than 2,755 individuals (mostly school groups). Newly developed teaching units focusing on natural history, ecology and conservation were used in Refuge programs for the first time in 2003. Educational articles conveying conservation and natural history information about refuge wildlife and habitat were published monthly in the Fairbanks Daily Newsminer. Artwork and other assistance was provided in the production of wildlife viewing brochures and wildlife ecology interpretive signs (owls, fire and other subjects).

Project Costs (includes indirect costs):

Federal share \$ 126,630.25 + state share \$ 75,978.15 = total cost \$ 202,608.40

Prepared By: John Wright

Date: August 23, 2004