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Department of
Fish and Game

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Palmer Hay Flats Access Improvements Include Boat Dock and Fishing Platform

July 8, 2021 – Just in time for summer salmon fishing and fall waterfowl hunting, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) completed several improvements at the Rabbit Slough access site in the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge.

In addition to installing a hardened boat launch last year, a new boat dock and fishing platform were both completed. The platform conforms to standards in the Americans with Disabilities Act and provides sport fishing opportunities for those with mobility challenges. The dock will provide boaters the means to load passengers and gear without damaging critical streambank habitat.

Rabbit Slough is located within the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge near the intersection of the Parks and Glenn highways, and can be reached from the Glenn Highway frontage road at the Trunk Road exit. Rabbit Slough is one of four primary public access sites to the refuge and provides access to Wasilla Creek which supports a popular salmon fishery.

Each fall, hundreds of hunters use the Rabbit Slough site to access the open marshes and waterways located downstream and visited by thousands of waterfowl during their southerly migration.

Right now, Sam Ivey, Mat-Su Area Sport Fish Management Biologist for the ADF&G notes, "Lower Wasilla Creek is popular among anglers wanting to fish for salmon, particularly coho salmon, close town. With the recent access improvements, anglers of all ages and ability can enjoy this fishery." Ivey recommends looking for sockeye salmon to start arriving in late-July and early August while coho salmon are generally present through the month of August. This fishery is limited to weekends only from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. but be sure to check the ADF&G website for emergency orders which may extend or further restrict the fishery.

Funding for these projects came from the federal Wildlife Restoration Program (Pittman-Robertson Act) which generates funds through a national excise tax on firearms and ammunition, receipts from hunting license sales, and wetland mitigation funds generated from the Parks-Glenn Highway interchange expansion.

Joe Meehan, Refuges Program Coordinator for the ADF&G, hopes to seek additional funds to continue improvements, including installing a vault toilet and a foot bridge over Rabbit Slough to provide additional access downstream on Wasilla Creek. “These improvements will culminate the transition of this area from an abused garbage dumping and target shooting area into a more appropriate family-friendly recreational area,” said Meehan. Credit for this accomplishment goes to the many community and agency partners that stepped up to help with this effort.

The Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge encompasses over 30,000 acres of wetlands and other rich habitats at the head of Cook Inlet and is easily accessible to over half of Alaska’s population. Other public access sites include Reflections Lake at milepost 30 on the Glenn Highway and Cottonwood Creek off Hayfield Road. More information on this refuge and the other refuge areas managed by the ADF&G is available online at www.refuges.adfg.alaska.gov.

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