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 FY2017

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

PERFORMANCE YEAR: July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

REPORT DUE DATE: September 1, 2019

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: Alaska State Parks (Office of Design and Construction) completed site surveys during this reporting period and initiated the environmental review and engineering process. Draft design is expected in fall 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 one ground-based trip to the Fox River and Watermelon trails to assess trail conditions and further identify repair needs. We contracted with the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District and developed a plan for repairs to both trails including the following:

<u>Fox River Trail</u> – 1) relocate two ATV bridges due to channel erosion; 2) repair and/or extend approaches to all seven bridges; and 3) as a means to test overwinter retention and feasibility for rerouting the trail, place test sections of Geoblock trail hardening panels in several areas on the open sedge flats.

<u>Watermelon Trail</u> – 1) install approximately 160 linear feet of Geoblock trail hardening panels at three locations where erosion and/or wetlands are affecting access along the trail and impacting surrounding habitats; and 2) repair and harden the approaches to the Beaver Creek bridge.

While this work was initiated during this reporting period, only the placement of the test panels on the Fox River Flats was completed. The other components of this work will be completed in the next (and last) reporting period of this grant.

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.

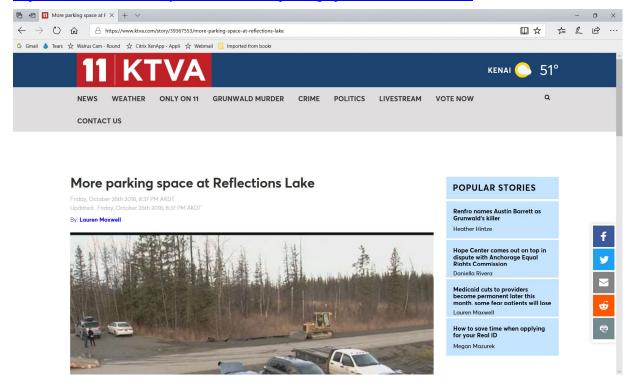
Accomplishments:

Palmer Hay Flats Refuge - Reflections Lake Parking Lot: parking was expanded along 400 feet of the road shoulder adjacent to the trailhead at Reflections Lake. Lacking a dedicated parking lot, approximately 20 vehicles can now safely park off the road surface and site users can walk to the trailhead. In addition, an approximately 232-foot-wide parking lot to accommodate trucks and boat trailers was constructed at the Knik River access site. This site serves as an alternative parking area for Reflections Lake and a primary parking and staging area for anglers and hunters launching boats on the river.

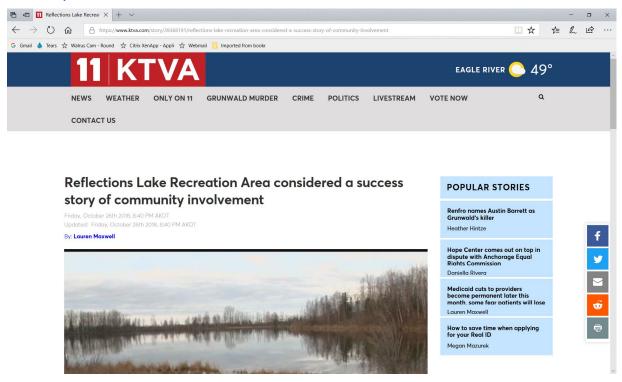
- II. SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED ON JOBS IDENTIFIED IN ANNUAL PLAN THIS PERIOD: N/A
- III. SIGNIFICANT DEVIATIONS AND/OR ADDITIONAL FEDERAL AID-FUNDED WORK NOT DESCRIBED ABOVE THAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED ON THIS PROJECT DURING THIS SEGMENT PERIOD:

IV. PUBLICATIONS: Two television news stories were produced as a result of our work at Reflections Lake:

https://www.ktva.com/story/39367553/more-parking-space-at-reflections-lake



https://www.ktva.com/story/39368191/reflections-lake-recreation-area-considered-a-success-story-of-community-involvement



V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT: none

Prepared by:

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Date: October 1, 2019