



Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

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www.alaskarefugefriends.org

Letter from our Friends President

I had the opportunity to testify on April 19, 2007 before the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies concerning Fiscal Year 2008 National Wildlife Refuge System Appropriations. There was an excellent representation of testimony from Friends groups, the NWRA, and other national organizations. We all asked that the budget for the Refuges be increased from its inadequate \$385 million to \$451.5 million recommended by the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE). The Subcommittee was very knowledgeable about the Refuge System and expressed great concern about its plight. The Chairman Norman Dicks (D-Washington) indicated that they would do everything possible to find the funds within the inadequate budget cap imposed by the Administration. We are hopeful that the budget situation will be improved.

When in Washington, DC, I was able to visit the offices of our Congressional delegation and meet with key staff to explain the budgetary problems facing the refuges and enlist their support. I personally thanked Representative Young for signing the letter to the Subcommittee urging the adoption of the CARE recommendations. Unfortunately, Senator Murkowski failed to accept the invitation to sponsor a similar letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee and did not even sign the letter that was sent. At Senator Stevens office, I expressed appreciation for all he has done for the Refuges and asked that as a member of the Appropriations Committee he try to insert some language in the appropriations bill that encourages moving additional funds into the Refuge System budget.

Finally, I learned that the proposed bill to authorize the Izembek Cold Bay-King Cove road is expected to be introduced soon. Governor Palin has been pushing for the land exchange that would authorize a road across the extremely sensitive isthmus between Izembek and Kinzarof Lagoons. It would invade the Congressionally-designated wilderness and threaten the large numbers of migratory waterfowl that depend on the eelgrass beds in those lagoons that are the largest in North America, as well as threaten populations of bears and other wildlife and habitat. The Alaska Lands Act Coordinating Committee (in which Friends participates) has repeatedly expressed concern and opposition to the proposed road and exchange, but it appears that Senator Stevens will sponsor the legislation, which will add to the previous \$37 million appropriation already spent on a road and hovercraft that has apparently already solved the problem of access to Cold Bay from King Cove. The Wilderness Society is coordinating a major national effort to prevent this invasion and degradation that would set a precedent for other similar invasions of wilderness in refuges.

David Raskin, President



Update on Summer Projects

Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges are gearing up for two exciting state-wide summer projects. The Friends are sending 23 volunteers to 5 different outreach and education events on refuges. Friends will assist with children's science camps at Selawik, Innoko, and Yukon Flats Refuges; and will run outreach booths during community fairs at Tetlin and Kodiak Refuges. One new Friends member in Fairbanks, Kimberley Maher, is volunteering all summer to develop an education plan and curriculum for Yukon Flats Refuge.

The Friends are also continuing the "Friends Against Invasives" project that we started last summer. This summer's project will continue to control invasive plants on Kanuti, Tetlin, and Kenai Refuges. The Friends are still looking for volunteers to participate in these weed pulls! Weed pull dates are:

- Tetlin Refuge, Tok June 22-24
- Kanuti Refuge, along the Dalton Highway July 9-13
- Kenai Refuge, near Soldotna July 13-15

The Friends are providing transportation, food, and lodging for volunteers at each pull through a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant. Refuge staff will train the volunteers how to identify and control the targeted plants. Volunteers must be willing to work hard with a team of other volunteers and not mind bad weather and biting bugs. If you would like to spend some time on a beautiful Alaskan Refuge this summer, visit the Friends website at www.alaskarefugefriends.org/opportunities.php and fill out the on-line application, or call 786-3391.

The Friends group also needs volunteers to help with a variety of other tasks, including outreach, graphic design, writing, fundraising, and project management. If you would like to get involved, send an email to akrefugefriends@gmail.com.

Networking with Other Friends Groups Across the Country:

On March 30 through April 2, 2007, four members of the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges attended the Region 6 Workshop held in Rapid City, South Dakota. Attending the Workshop were David Raskin, President, Sharon Baur, Vice President, Patricia Wood, Membership/Fundraising Chair and Maeve Taylor, USFWS Volunteer and Grants Coordinator.

The workshop provided valuable hands on training and chance to network with other Friends groups and members.

The first portion of the workshop was *Strategic Thinking-Creating Your Blueprint*. Friends group members had the opportunity at each session to brainstorm and discuss their ideas for developing or adding to a strategic plan (work plan). These sessions were *Wildlife-dependent recreation, Wildlife and habitat, and Maintenance*.

The second portion of workshop was broken down in to Concurrent Training Sessions. The session topics were *All About Your Membership, Creating and Maintaining a Successful Executive Board and Fun and Innovative Outreach Ideas*. These were breakout sessions in which all of us were able to attend at least two of the sessions. At each session we were able to interact with members of other Friends Groups.

We came away from the workshop excited about new ideas and challenges for our group.

Some Highlights from the Workshop

- Use local resources.
- Do programs that reach children .
- Advocate for our Refuges and Refuge System.
- “Friends” add continuity to Refuges through the years.
- Share, Listen, Think and Write.
- Engage in a “Friends” exchange program.
- There is a backlog of deferred maintenance (we can help.)
- Open lines of communication.
- Get over the fear of “Asking”.

We also learned that Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges have accomplished so much in such a short time, although we have miles to go, we are well on our way. Our goals are within reach.

Friends Reach Over 100 Members!

We currently have 120 members with the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. We have grown tremendously from last year when we only had 38 members.

We now have pins for all new members that join. The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges also have T-shirts and caps to be given as gifts to new and renewing members who donate at a level of \$100 or more. The shirts are light blue with the Friends logo silk screened on the front; the caps are stone with an embroidered logo. Members who are eligible will be given the choice of shirt or cap. (See picture)

The Friends Board has also determined that, in addition, members who have taken part in the summer Rural Outreach program and the Invasive Plant Control program will also be given a t-shirt as thanks for their help in accomplishing these programs.

Annual Meeting 2007

Our Annual Meeting will be held on September 15/16 at the Kenai Refuge.

More information will be emailed out shortly.



Fundraising:

*Join the First Annual “Virtual Walk”
for Alaska National Wildlife Refuges*

Don't forget to email your completed Registration Form (below) to: patricia.wood@longandfoster.com
by September 30th visit us online at <http://www.AlaskaRefugeFriends.org>

Registration Deadline is September 30, 2007

The following prizes will be given out according to money collected:

\$25.00 Membership and pin

\$50.00 Refuge Cards

\$75.00 Tiglak DVD

\$100.00 or more T-shirt

***Walk at your favorite National Wildlife Refuge or “Virtually”
anywhere in the U.S. and help raise money for the Friends of
Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. We will be walking 16 miles--
one mile for each of the 16 refuges in Alaska. Walk a mile a day
or several. It is up to you.***

***All money collected will be used for projects for Alaska Refuges.
Ask your friends, family and co-workers to sponsor you in this event.***

Virtual Walk Registration Form:

Name: _____

(Please use one registration form per person.)

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

(day) _____

(evening) _____

We would like to know about your Virtual Walk...

Where will you be walking?

How many miles will you walk?

Please email completed registration forms to:

Patricia Wood patricia.wood@longandfoster.com

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