

Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge

Interim Management Plan March 1993

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PREFACE

Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge encompasses approximately 1,790 acres of state-owned land in the heart of the Fairbanks community. It is known best for the fields adjacent to College Road that attract large numbers of migrating waterfowl each spring, and provide open, pastoral views of the old Creamer's Dairy site. Thousands of people stop to view waterfowl and other wildlife from the roadside parking/viewing area off College Road each spring. After the waterfowl have left Creamer's for nesting grounds, many Fairbanksans and visitors continue to use the refuge for a variety of outdoor activities, or to simply enjoy the peaceful scenery.

Activities on the refuge include agriculture, research, wildlife watching, photography, walking, working-dog training, hunting, trapping, cross-country skiing, dog mushing, skijoring, and snowmachining. As tourism increases in Fairbanks, Creamer's is seeing more use by visitors from other areas, both individuals and tour groups. The regional headquarters for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (the department or ADF&G) is located on the refuge, next to College Road (see Map One).

Historically, waterfowl viewing at Creamer's Field began when dairy activities first started to attract migrating birds about 1910. The cleared fields with their residual grain and forage crops, and with manure spread on them, melted out early in the spring, providing shallow ponds and feed for waterfowl. Fairbanksans soon learned that excellent spring viewing of these birds was available from Ester Road (what College Road was first called) where it passed Creamer's Dairy. Local news media always featured (and still does) pictures and stories about this wondrous spring migration event along with news about the breakup of interior rivers.

When the dairy fields were put up for sale in 1966, Fairbanks residents who recognized their value for wildlife habitat and open space for the growing community came together to find a way to acquire the property for the public. In 1967 these people, operating through the Alaska Conservation Society, started a fund drive and collected enough money to buy an "option to purchase." This option held the land open until the state obtained federal Pittman-Robertson funds and state funds appropriated by the legislature to purchase the fields (about 250 acres). The Creamer family was anxious to see the dairy fields go to public ownership, and supported this effort by keeping the land off the open real estate market. The fund drive occurred just after the devastating 1967 flood, and its success at this difficult time shows the dedication of Fairbanksans to the concept of keeping Creamer's for wildlife.

Following the purchase, ADF&G worked with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to get 1,500 acres of adjacent state land, together with the dairy fields, administratively designated as the Fairbanks Wildlife Management Area, in order to protect the wildlife habitat values of the entire area. In 1979 the Alaska Legislature

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STATUTORY PURPOSES OF THE REFUGE

(see Appendix A for full text)

1. To provide protection and enhancement of habitat for migratory birds with special emphasis on waterfowl (Alaska Statutes (AS) 16.20.039(c)(1)).
2. To provide opportunity to view, photograph and study various species of plants, wildlife and geological features typical to Interior Alaska (AS 16.20.039(c)(2)).
3. To promote the above purposes by the development of a management plan for the refuge (AS 16.20.039(d)).

AS 16.29.039(d) further directs that recreational and agricultural activity is expressly permitted within the refuge if consistent with the management plan.

MANAGEMENT GOALS

(Mission Statement)

The Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge is managed to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, with special emphasis on waterfowl and other migratory birds, to promote conservation of wildlife, and to provide for compatible public uses. The management goals for the refuge are:

1. To protect and enhance the quality and diversity of habitat for wildlife with special emphasis on waterfowl and other migratory birds.
2. To protect and enhance the opportunity to view, photograph and gain an understanding of ecosystems, including wildlife species, plant species, geological and other features typical of Interior Alaska.
3. To encourage opportunities for public education about terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, wildlife, habitat, historical resources and other related topics.
4. To allow other public uses that are consistent with the above statutory purposes and management goals.