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April 7, 2015

Representative Jim Colver  
Alaska House of Representatives  
State Capitol Room 424  
Juneau, AK 99801

**RE: Support for HB 153**

Dear Representative Colver:

Ducks Unlimited is pleased to inform you of our support for House Bill 153, your measure to amend the boundaries of the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge to include lands previously acquired for conservation. As one of the most heavily visited state refuges, accessible to the majority of Alaskans, Palmer Hay Flats is highly important for waterfowl and moose hunting, fishing for salmon, many forms of outdoor recreation, and as a natural classroom for outdoor education.

As an organization committed to conserving wetlands for waterfowl, other wildlife and people, we appreciate your initiative to enhance public access to wildlife resources and habitat values on the refuge. We view the addition of the subject lands to the refuge as the culmination of efforts by many partners (including Ducks Unlimited) to produce a win-win outcome for the citizens of Alaska.

Ultimately, the acquisition of these parcels and incorporation into the refuge will have exceptional benefits:

- The owners of refuge inholdings that were largely undevelopable received fair value and tax benefits for the voluntary sale of their lands for conservation.
- The properties were acquired through collaboration between non-profit conservation organizations (who brought over \$1 million to the table), federal wetlands grants, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (State Duck Stamp and Sport Fish funds) without other appropriated state money.
- The acquisitions near Rabbit Slough created legal public access to the eastern half of the refuge for waterfowl hunting, boating and salmon fishing. As a result, ADFG has been able to upgrade the quality and convenience of the road and boat launch.
- Inclusion of these conservation lands in the refuge will consolidate management by ADFG under a well-written refuge plan, remove ambiguity about the authority to pursue wildlife and habitat projects, and clarify administrative and enforcement policies.

We understand that there have been discussions about amending the bill to include a parcel at Cottonwood Creek, long managed under an Interagency Land Management Agreement with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. We fully support such an amendment to consolidate management at the primary northern refuge access area for hunting and fishing. Nearly all refuge visitors use Cottonwood Creek and Rabbit Slough.

In amending refuge boundaries, your bill will not only consolidate management of the entire refuge, but it will fulfill obligations made to many partners that contributed to conservation of valuable habitats and expanding public access to wildlife resources. As a partner in several of the acquisitions, Ducks Unlimited thanks you for your efforts and offers its continuing support to bring this legislation to success.

Sincerely,



Mark Biddlecomb  
Director, Western Region  
Ducks Unlimited

Cc: House Resources Committee Co-Chair Rep. Ben Nageak  
House Resources Committee Co-Chair Rep. David Talerico  
Sam Cotton, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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Ducks Unlimited's nearly 675,000 members in North America partner with a wide range of corporations, governments, other NGO's, landowners, and private citizens to conserve, restore, and manage wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. In total, Ducks Unlimited has influenced and conserved over a total of 108 million acres in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. In the Pacific Flyway, Ducks Unlimited and its thousands of members have invested hundreds of millions of dollars and impacted over a million acres of habitat.