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**SPONSOR STATEMENT**

**HB 153 – Expanding the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge**

HB 153 adds three state-owned sections of land to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge which would expand the refuge by approximately 1360 acres.

The refuge was created in 1975 and protects 28,800 acres of coastal and freshwater wetlands, tidal sloughs, mudflats, lakes & streams, as well as upland birch forests. Its location at the head of Cook Inlet and its proximity to over half of Alaska's population has made the Palmer Hay Flats refuge one of the most important year-round wildlife and outdoor recreation areas in Alaska.

The additional acreage to be added to the refuge were acquired at various times since 1990 and passage of HB 153 will formally protect these lands and ensure they are available for future generations to use for hunting, trapping, fishing, mushing, hiking, skiing, snow-machining, and outdoor education opportunities.