

Chena Flats Greenbelt Project

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e-newsletter

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Open House Success!

On December 13, 2005 at Woodriver Elementary nearly 70 people gathered to learn more about the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project. This event was an opportunity for sharing information and getting acquainted with neighbors in the Chena Ridge/Flats area. In general, strong support of the Project was expressed and many signed up to volunteer with the effort. Three people who attended were oppositional to the Project.

Thank you for your attendance and for helping those of us who are actively working on the project to see many perspectives. We value and welcome your opinions. We are moving forward and will keep you updated on our progress.

Development on the Flats

In recent weeks, two permit applications have been submitted to the US Army Corps of Engineers for gravel mining operations in the Chena Flats. Many of you have responded to the public notices with letters of concern and we support your positive involvement in the planning process. Contrary to a recent news article, the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project is not anti-development. We understand that development in the greenbelt area may occur, but we wish to help landowners find ways to conserve recreational, wildlife and open space values while achieving their own personal goals for the property. We firmly believe conserving a system of trails and open space will improve the lives of area residents as well as increase property values for the community overall. The viability of this project lies with the property owners on the Flats being recognized as our neighbors and we want to maintain friendly discourse with each of them, respecting their rights while working to reach our goals. For more information, you can access the Corp of Engineers public notices at <http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/PNNNew.htm> (POA-1997-832-O.pdf and POA-2005-1848-4.pdf).

Get to Know Us

Project Coordinator Profiles

The Interior Alaska Land Trust has hired two part time coordinators for the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project.

Peggy Powell has lived in Alaska nine years teaching high school English in the bush and in North Pole. She and her family live in the Chena Flats area and have been involved in this Project since its inception. Her role in the CFGP has been that of facilitator, holding neighborhood meetings, presenting the Project to various organizations, working with property owners, writing grants, fundraising and organizing events to promote the Project.

Nick Lisuzzo is a recent graduate from UAF, where he just finished a degree in Botany. Originally from Detroit, Michigan he has lived in Fairbanks for four short years. Nick has spent most of the summers in that time running a riverboat up and down the Chena and Tanana conducting scientific research for the University. Nick's expertise in local ecosystems and his experience with mapping and computers will be a great asset to the Project.

Borough Connection

On January 9th, Peggy, Nick and Martha Raynolds from The Interior Alaska Land Trust presented information to the Borough Parks and Recreation Commission. A meeting with Mayor Whitaker is scheduled for February 3rd. Nick, Peggy and Martha will present the Project to the mayor with the hope of gaining support from the Borough.

Grants in the Hopper

The Interior Alaska Land Trust has submitted a NAWCAA Grant application and an Alaska State Parks Recreational Trails Grant application for funds for the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project. Both applications are being reviewed presently. Each of these grants is worth up to \$50,000 and would aid in land acquisition for the Project. We are anxiously awaiting the outcome of these submissions.

Host a Neighborhood Get-Together

As part of our effort to “get the word out” about the Greenbelt, we want to begin networking with area residents. One person can only talk to so many individuals, but if we have a core group of informed people all working together, it becomes much easier. If you have some neighbors who might be interested in the Project or have heard friends asking questions about the Greenbelt, and would like to host a small informational session in your home, let us know! Nick and Peggy would be happy to give a short presentation, answer your questions, and hear your great ideas. Let’s spread the word, and help the community pull together for a project that will benefit all its members.

Fundraising Gift



We are excited to announce that the CFGP will begin its first raffle fundraiser! Our sincere gratitude is extended to Judy Regan of Juneau, Alaska who made and donated this beautiful sampler quilt to help with our efforts. Details about tickets will be sent in a follow-up email soon. Buying a ticket (or two or three) is a wonderful way to lend your support to the Greenbelt Project!

A Brief History of the

Interior Alaska Land Trust

The Interior Alaska Land Trust (IALT) was incorporated in August 1995, to work with Interior Alaska landowners to safeguard the character of the land and natural resources of our community. IALT is a private, tax-exempt charitable, 501(c)(3) organization that works with private landowners to acquire, protect or manage natural, scenic, recreational, agricultural, historic, or cultural aspects of property. An all-volunteer association, IALT operates under the guidance of the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization that ensures that land trusts are stable, well-run organizations. IALT is a member of the Land Trust Alliance, and has adopted and followed their standards and guidelines since its inception. IALT board members participate in national and regional conferences to receive training and work with the other five Alaska-based land trusts to back up each other’s conservation work.

History of the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project

The Chena Flats Greenbelt Project is a coalition of residents, property owners and non-government organizations seeking to establish a multi-purpose corridor of open space between the base of Chena Ridge and Chena Pump Road in Fairbanks, Alaska. This area is privately owned, but is used by snowmachiners, dog mushers, skiers and walkers. These lowlands encompass some of the last natural lakes and wet-meadow wetlands remaining in the immediate Fairbanks area and are frequented by moose, swans, cranes, owls, lynx and the occasional coyote. In addition, the southern portion of the area includes a portion of the original town site of Chena, which could be managed as a historic site and/or a small campground.

As our community grows, this area of open space, habitat and recreation will become increasingly valuable. At the same time, land available for development will become increasingly limited and valuable as well. The goal is to work collaboratively with property owners to conserve a portion of this area for the long-term benefit of the community. Clearly, we need the willing participation of property owners to succeed.

Formed in May of 2005, the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project has now joined forces with the Interior Alaska Land Trust to acquire contributions for the purchase of land and conservation easements, which will be necessary to make this idea a reality. The Conservation Fund is another non-government organization that is working with the Project to secure funds. In order to secure outside contributions, we need to show sincere interest on our part. The more fundraising that can be done within the community, the better our chances are of being awarded larger grant monies used to realize our objective.

Spring Gathering



Although it is bitter cold outside at the moment, the sun is shining longer and longer each day. You know what that means... spring is just around the bend! With all of the support and momentum the CFGP has gained this winter, we feel like there is a lot to celebrate. So keep your eyes peeled; we'll be planning a springtime gathering of our friends and supporters in the coming months. Rumor has it there will be food, information to let you know what has been happening since the open house in December, and even a beautiful quilt to raffle. Hopefully the last cold days of winter, and the mud from break-up won't slow us down, and we will be even closer to having a new Greenbelt in town!

Open House Comments

As we had hoped, the Open House served as a forum to express ideas. We want to anonymously share the comments we received from attendees; in some cases names given within comments have been omitted. Perhaps these remarks will further prod your thoughts on how the Project could advance.

- "I am not in support of this if the money to fund it comes strictly from property taxes. I would rather have taxes go to paving the road."
- "Love the idea of greenbelt and protecting an area that is important to me as open space. I'm an active trail user in winter of the wetlands and want those protected."
- "How will lands be included and protected?"
- "I like the idea of saving some of the remaining trails I've been using for more than 35 years."
- "I am very much in support of preserving the outlined area, both for the recreational (skiing) and environmental benefits."
- "My concern is not having a project like this implemented."
- "I like the idea of connection of residential neighborhoods for alternative transportation: ski/dogs/snowshoeing"
- "Maybe readjusting the boundaries for property boundaries- any former dumps or problem areas?"
- "My husband and I own property on Chena Ridge. We have a power line access beside our property that people have used for trails **before** we purchased this property. It is gated off. I have been threatened by a crazy guy with a gun. I have been beaten by bikers on this property. I am in total opposition (so is my husband) and we will do everything in our power to make sure this plan fails. P.S. A true greenbelt is for the sanctity of protection of animals, birds, etc."
- "I think it would be good to have a campground with a "camp host" on site 24 hours a day at the Tanana boat launch. There is a lot of vandalism and partying in that area."
- "I believe it would be good for Woodriver School students and residents of University West to have access to ski trails. I live on Chena Ridge and I would like to be able to use the area for skiing and skiing. I think this would be good for property values and would make the whole area more "user friendly" and would help preserve the natural beauty of the area."
- "I like the fact that I would keep my privacy by not having neighbors below my house."
- "The gravel pit that is trying to develop; well water levels affected"

Terms to Know **Conservation Easement**

To achieve our objective in attaining protected trails and habitat, conservation easements are a good way for property owners to contribute to the Greenbelt.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It leaves land in private ownership and can result in an income tax deduction and reduced property and estate taxes.

For more information on Conservation Easements see:

www.ptialaska.net/~Indtrust/

Click on "land conservation options"

Making a Financial Contribution

Effort made on the part of the community to raise money for the Project will go a long way in trying to secure larger grants down the road. To make a financial contribution to the Project, please contact Peggy Powell at pgpowell3@yahoo.com. Your contribution is a tax-deductible charitable donation. Checks can be made to "Interior Alaska Land Trust", and in the memo "Chena Flats Greenbelt Project". Your contribution of any amount will play a role in making the Greenbelt a reality!

Ways You Can Help

Please be watching for an e-invitation to an organizational meeting that will be held in the coming weeks. At this meeting you will have chance to sign up to share your talents and speak with others also interested in helping. We hope to establish a core group of volunteers that can help do the following:

- Write letters of support for grant proposals and to organizations that could aid the Project.
- Host an informational neighborhood meeting
- Give a financial contribution
- Attend borough meetings to speak on behalf of the Project
- Design a web page
- Help with fundraising
- Provide food for events
- Help with mailings
- Design a logo
- Distribute brochures

Contact Information:

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