



Chena Flats Greenbelt Project

August 2007

e-newsletter

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Local residents support CFGF

When the Chena Flats working group organized into subcommittees last winter, the fundraising committee had only two members, but a full page full of notes of ideas for fundraising. With the addition of two part-time Project Coordinators, we had enough person-power to enact some of the items on that long list of ideas, and raised nearly \$13,000 from local fundraising efforts this past winter.

Last December, Project Coordinators, Sally Andersen and Marie Beaver, together with a handful of hard-working volunteers, Elaine Mayer, Karen Brewster, Larry and Karla Bright, Bob Henszey, Martha Raynolds, and Daniel Dashevsky, sent out a fund appeal to 1,200 residents in the Chena Flats neighborhood. Over the next few months, close to 60 people responded to the fund appeal, contributing over \$8,000 in much-needed support to the Project. Given that most fund solicitations to “cold” lists elicit a one percent response, the December fund appeal’s five percent response was an astonishing show of support. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the fund appeal! We will spend your dollars wisely and economically in support of creating more green space in the Chena Flats neighborhood.

We were gratified by this validation from the community, and were then buoyed by another display of support with attendance at the March 4 brunch and silent auction held at Pike’s Landing Waterfront Lodge. Project Coordinators and the same group of volunteers who helped out with the fund appeal, in addition to Jack Schmid, Kathy Campbell, and Janet Kidd, organized the auction, and despite the twenty below temperature that day, nearly 50 attended the event to enjoy a very pleasant brunch, an informative presentation about the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project by Bob Henszey, and a relaxed auction at which dozens of great items such as a mountain bike and a beautiful home-made quilt were auctioned off. The event grossed about \$4,600—a good turnout for a first time auction! Many thanks to all the businesses and individuals (over 57!) who donated items to the auction, and especially to Jay Ramras who donated the room at Pike’s. Of course, many thanks are due to the courageous volunteers who spent their precious free time engaged in the daunting task of soliciting auction items.

Property Update

The two major successes of the CFGF thus far remain the purchase of two large parcels of land in the heart of the greenbelt, parcels formerly belonging to Craig Ketzler (92 acres) and Michael and Kathy Craft (85 acres). These parcels are prime real estate for nesting sandhill cranes, ducks, and songbirds. Conserving 177 acres is certainly a feather in our cap; however, the hard work has only begun.

Both land ownership and land values are changing quickly in the Chena Ridge/Chena Pump area. We have been approached by two land owners interested in either selling property to the Greenbelt or including a conservation easement on their property, effectively joining their land to the envisioned Greenbelt. Discussions are in the works with at least one other landowner about a conservation easement. We are currently “on the horn,” trying to reach other landowners in the area to discuss the Greenbelt and options for property owners in the area.

Grants Awarded

We are pleased to announce that we have received a second grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grants Program (NAWCA), in the amount of \$75,000. In April, we happily learned that we were awarded the grant. The money will be combined with a grant from the Conservation Fund to purchase 92 acres of wetlands that belonged to Craig Ketzler in the heart of the greenbelt that the Conservation Fund purchased on our behalf last summer. We are excited at and thankful for this funding which will allow us to conserve these valuable wetlands for the wildlife and continued enjoyment of all Fairbanksans. We thank NAWCA and the Conservation Fund for believing in our cause and awarding us these grants.

Local Greenspace Efforts

Volunteers and staff members of The Chena Flats Greenbelt Project manned a booth at the Outdoor Show this past April. During my shift, someone walked by and said, "Good luck getting the idea of greenspace across in THIS town." I admit, at times the plethora of For Sale signs posted to trees can be a bit depressing. And some of the recent housing and commercial developments in town have certainly chosen clear cutting over careful placement of homes amongst the woodland. BUT, take heart. There is also a lot of positive activity around the idea of greenspace in Fairbanks, and the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project is only one of several active projects.

The Tanana Lakes Recreation Area (still known to most of us as the South Cushman ponds) looks like it will become a reality, with the Fairbanks North Star Borough transforming a dumping grounds in South Fairbanks into something like the popular Chena Lakes, with swimming areas and trails for both motorized and non-motorized use. Hundreds of junked cars and just plain junk have already been hauled off. Portions of the Skyline Ridge Trail, which forms a large loop with the Tanana Valley Railroad Trail in the Goldstream Valley are being purchased by the borough to guarantee access to recreational trail users, and the newly created Isberg Park, on Chena Ridge will add another 420 acres of "trail-focused recreation" to the local trail coffers. In addition, the Interior Alaska Land Trust facilitated the purchase of, and raised over \$45,000 for the purchase of Blueberry Acres in 2004, a 111-acre parcel located in the Goldstream Valley long used by mushers, skiers, and blueberry pickers.

Continued next page.

Thank You!

The following local business and individuals provided items for our fundraiser auction. We could not have held the auction without their generosity and support.

Joann Henszey
College Town Pizza
Apocalypse Design
Gulliver's Books
Water Wagon
Well Street Art Company
Molly Lee, Museum of the North
Beaver Sports and Greg Wisenhant
Elaine Mayer
Cache Creek Mercantile
Jen Landry
Ridgeview Chiropractic Clinic
Doug Simms
Ballroom Dance Club of Fairbanks
Blue Stone Massage
Chena Hot Springs Resort
The Blue Loon
Leaf it to Me
Alaska Feed
Susan Todd
Carol Roblee and Don Lokken
Polhavn Woodfabrik
Ingrid Herreid
Anna Marie Benson
Sandy Zirnheld
Jeff Merkel
Judy Regan
A Chimney Sweep
Renee Patten
Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation
Karen Brewster
Aldona Jonaitis
University of Alaska Press
Raven Sports
Carol Norton
Inua Wool Shoppe
Gayle Mayo
Arctic Wild
Michael Wald
Alaska Outdoor Rentals
Tom McLean
Calypso Farm and Ecology Center
Wendy Berg
Jan Lokken
Frank Keim
Janet Kidd
Susan Grace
Howard Feder
Sally Andersen
Test the Waters Adventure Sports
Patrick Mechanical
Pike's Waterfront Lodge
Jack Schmid
Dennis Witmer
Barbara Travis
The Artworks
Charles Scott

So change is in the air here in Fairbanks. Individuals, organizations, and our local government are working hard to recognize and preserve the values of our open spaces. Fairbanks is an eclectic place with all types of folks; that has always been one of its greatest assets to me. Let us hope that we can find ways that our land-use planning can recognize the needs and values of all of its residents.

Changes in the Flats

Several people have wondered about new development rumors in the Chena Flats. Over the winter, two new subdivision proposals were submitted to the Army Corps of Engineers and the Fairbanks North Star Borough Division of Community Planning.

The first, a property on the south side of Chena Point Avenue was recently permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers to develop two home sites and a small personal-use gravel pit. Although some residents in the area are concerned about the future of this property, only about 10 acres of the 80-acre parcel are now being developed and we remain hopeful that we can work with this landowner to find common ground and shared objectives.

The second proposal was submitted to the Fairbanks North Star Borough and would subdivide two 20-acre parcels along Roland Road into 18 lots ranging from 1.84 to 3.08 acres and provide access through the properties, connecting the existing Roland Road and Sea Way with a new road, Helm Drive. These parcels have been previously cleared and are on the edge of the proposed Greenbelt, thus we don't believe they are essential to the Project.

Clearly, development is a complex issue in Fairbanks, where land close to town is in high demand for residential development and other uses, wetlands of varying value are scattered throughout, and planning in general has had little public support. This is particularly true in the Chena Flats area which is now being used for so many different purposes - from older homesteads to air strips, from gravel pits to luxury home sites, to just homes for regular folks... Fairbanks needs a place for all of these activities, and we need to understand and work with these, at times, competing forces. However, Fairbanks also needs certain wetlands to protect its water quality, open space for recreation, habitat for wildlife, and the community spirit this all brings to its residents.



Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks enjoys the Chena Flats, Spring 2007.

What this boils down to is that we can't always depend on someone else, including our government, to protect what we hold dear, such as the trails and open space of the Chena Flats. This is why our work with the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project is so important. To everyone's credit, we have accomplished a great deal of work in a short period of time. If we had not purchased the two properties in 2006, they both could well be under development already. So, despite development pressures, we need to continue our collective efforts to share this vision of a greenbelt and to find ways to work with our neighbors to see it become a reality.

Fundraising Report

“The toughest part of any non-profit organization is often fundraising. Going door-to-door, or sending out requests for donations at first seems like a daunting task. Furthermore, it is difficult to find volunteers who are willing to take on this role.” These words prefaced the fundraising report from our July 2006 newsletter. However, that said, the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project has raised \$88,000 since July 2006! These funds have come in the form of grants (\$75,000 from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act) and local fundraising (\$8,000 from our fund appeal, and \$5,000 from the March fundraiser auction). We are proudest of our success with local fundraising and suspect that the “high-five” given to us by the community will provide leverage when applying for new grant funds. Thanks to everyone for all your support.

New Project Coordinators...Hello, Goodbye, and THANK YOU.

When previous coordinator Peggy Powell left last November to care for her not-yet newborn daughter and two-year old Julia, we had to hire TWO coordinators to fill her shoes. Since then Marie Beaver and Sally Andersen have been working together as Project Coordinators. However, Marie will be entering a Speech Therapy Degree Program in Bellingham, Washington this fall. She has accomplished a lot in her short time with the Greenbelt Project, helping to raise over \$13,000 from local fundraising. We will miss her enthusiasm and hard-working energy. Sally has fortunately agreed to continue with the Chena Flats Greenbelt as the sole Project Coordinator. We are fortunate to have such hard working and enthusiastic people representing our Project both in the past and into the future. The following are brief backgrounds for both Marie and Sally in case you did not get a chance to meet Marie, and so you will feel like an old friend the next time you see Sally.

Marie Beaver: I was hired as one of the Greenbelt’s Project Coordinators last fall. I have lived in Fairbanks for seventeen years, working primarily as a grant writer for a couple of environmental groups and as a wilderness guide in the Brooks Range. As an avid runner, skier, and berry glutton, I have also been an enthusiastic user and supporter of the trails and green space around Fairbanks. It has been extremely enjoyable putting my skills and passions to use for the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project. I have learned much during my short stint as Project Coordinator, including how land trusts and conservation easements work as well as how to discuss potentially volatile subjects. I’ve particularly enjoyed meeting all the great, kind



people involved in the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project and working closely with Sally. It will be hard to leave the Project and Fairbanks, but I have decided to move on to pursue a degree in speech therapy at Western Washington University. I hope to continue to help out the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project as best I can.



Sally Andersen: I am a lifelong resident of Fairbanks and a field research biologist with a Master’s Degree in Botany. But, as mother to a one-year old, I am choosing to stay a little closer to home these days. Being the Project Coordinator to the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project gives me the opportunity for meaningful work while keeping my fingers in the professional world. I feel lucky to have a job that contributes to open space in Fairbanks, some thing I care deeply about.

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