



Chena Flats Greenbelt Project

November 2008

Newsletter

Happy Holidays!

In this issue

- CFGP open house December 7
- Greenbelt grows by 20 acres
- Annual Fund Appeal
- CFGP awarded \$7,000 grant
- Two more property owners choose preservation

Greenbelt grows by 20 acres

Many of you may drive by Despain Lane (off of Chena Pump Road near Faith Baptist Church) every day on your way to and from work, but may not know that the land in this area is divided into 20, ~2.5 acre parcels north of Despain Lane and 10, ~2.5 acre parcels south of Despain Lane. Many of these parcels have not yet had homes built on them, but are platted with that possibility. With the assistance of The Conservation Fund, the Interior Alaska Land Trust was recently able to purchase eight of these lots for inclusion in the Greenbelt (see map next page). The property contains an old slough channel of Cripple Creek as well as scrub-shrub wetlands. Some residents of Sherwood Forest use this land for winter walks or skiing. We are very pleased to have acquired these parcels, which will make it easier to include a continuous greenbelt through the area.

Annual Fund Appeal

This newsletter will take the place of our annual December fund appeal. We are currently in the very early stages of two major land acquisitions and need your financial help. If you would like to contribute to our effort, please visit www.chenaflats.org to donate online, call 907-479-4345, or mail a check to The Interior Alaska Land Trust, PO Box 84169, Fairbanks, AK 99708 using the enclosed, pre-addressed envelope.

Open House

Sunday, December 7 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at 1160 Pickering Drive, the home of Mike and Kathy Craft

Are you new to the neighborhood and want to learn more about the Greenbelt Project? Have you not met your neighbors yet? Or have you been here forever and just want to catch up with old friends?

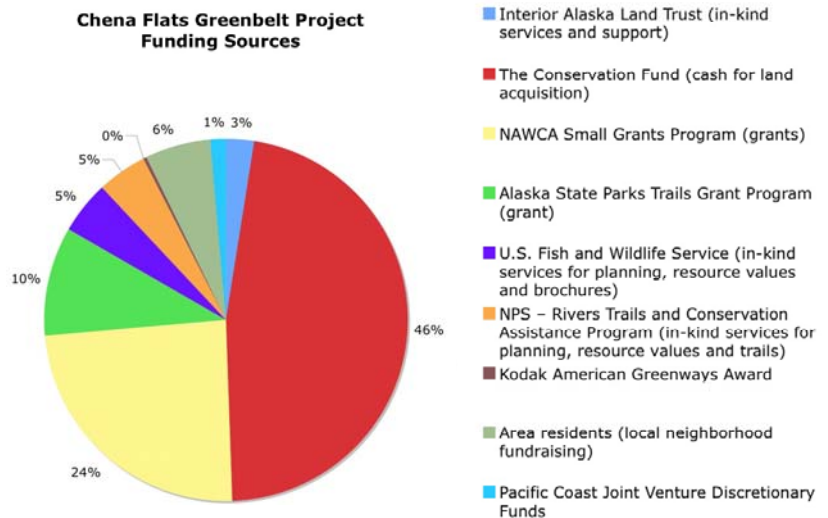
Mike and Kathy Craft (1160 Pickering Drive) have generously agreed to host an **open house for the Greenbelt Project on Sunday, December 7, from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm.**

We will provide light snacks and beverages, as well as an assortment of maps of the Greenbelt so you can track the progress and future goals of the Project. We hope to see you there.

Your support

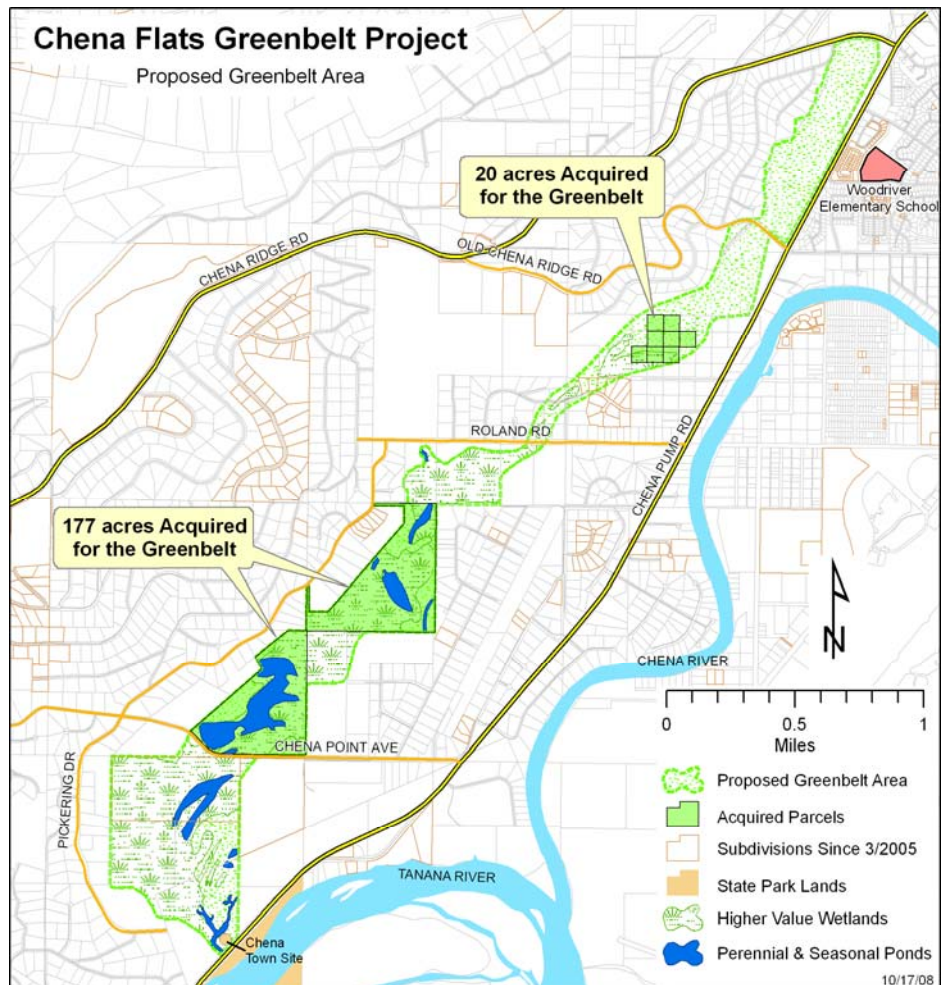
The downturn in the housing market (and the economy) has caused turmoil and financial instability even this far north. We are seeing properties on the market for a longer period, as well as lower prices in response to a struggling economy. The downturn in the economy has also affected the individuals and foundations that support efforts like ours as they see their nest eggs and endowments dwindle. This makes it more important than ever to retain a broad base of community support. It will take more people

contributing to the effort to achieve our goal of a 670-acre greenbelt at the base of Chena Ridge. In addition, both government and private foundations weight local contributions highly, looking to see that projects have both the enthusiasm AND financial support from the community before choosing to award funds. In the fundraising world, this is called leverage. Nearly all grants require matching funds in various proportions, and the more local dollars we have to leverage a grant, the better. It makes your contributions hugely valuable. So far area residents have contributed about 6% of the money needed to preserve 200 acres in the Chena Flats. Our goal for this coming year, in addition to preserving more land, is to increase that amount to 10%; this is a neighborhood level project, as local as it gets for all of us living in the Chena Ridge and Chena Pump areas as well as our community as a whole. Please join the effort!



Foundations continue to support the Greenbelt

The Pacific Coast Joint Venture, a consortium of government and non-governmental agencies committed to protecting wetlands and migratory bird habitat has awarded the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project \$7,000 to be applied towards land acquisition costs. We will use these funds to help reimburse the Conservation Fund for purchasing the 20 acres in the checkerboard area on DeSpain Lane that they purchased on our behalf (see map). The bulk of the money for these eight lots, however, has come from you and your neighbors—75% of the purchase price for these properties was raised from our annual fundraisers and spring auctions. Thank you, and thank your neighbors.



Three more property owners choose preservation

The CFGP is currently working with three landowners who are willing to subdivide off the wetland portion of their properties and sell that portion to the Greenbelt. These are very important parcels. The CFGP will help with the subdivision process, and will be prepared to buy the wetland portions. The Greenbelt is also interested in working with landowners who would like to retain all of their property, but may be willing to sell some of their development rights to the Greenbelt in a conservation easement. There are federal tax benefits (the value of the easement is considered a donation to a non-profit organization) and, likely, Borough tax benefits to this option (your FNSB property taxes will likely be reduced as a consequence of the easement). Please contact Sally Andersen at 479-4345 or chenaflats@gmail.com if you would like to learn more about conservation easements.

Development in the Greenbelt

We continue to follow the two area subdivisions we wrote about in our last newsletter, one off of Roland Road, and one off of Chena Point Avenue, that have been in the works for about a year now. The Roland Road subdivision was two, 20-acre parcels originally subdivided into 18 lots ranging from 1.84 to 3.08 acres, and was recently approved to be further subdivided into 34 lots about one acre each. 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. We hope to work with the developer to find ways that both the development and the Greenbelt can benefit from each other.

About ten acres on the south side of Chena Point Avenue was recently permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers for six home sites (which is now offered for sale as part of a 20-acre parcel) along with another 20 acres in the original 53-acre parcel. These lands would make a nice addition to the Greenbelt, but will need the financial help of local residents to make this happen.

Long-term property management

The Interior Alaska Land Trust is working with the Fairbanks North Star Borough to find the best way to manage the Chena Flat Greenbelt properties for the long-term. The Borough Parks Department and the Borough Mayor's Office have both been supportive of the Chena Flats Greenbelt Project. They recognize the need for greenspace in our area, for open land for recreational activities and for wetland habitat protection. The Interior Alaska Land Trust is working on an innovative approach to make use of the management expertise of the Borough Parks Department, and at the same time continue to protect the conservation values of the Greenbelt properties. The plan is to donate title of a property to the Borough, to be managed by the Parks Department. The Borough will in turn, donate back the conservation values to the Land Trust, as a Conservation Easement. The Land Trust will monitor the property to make sure that the conservation values are preserved, but will not have the liability and tax burden that comes with full



A skier pauses to enjoy the view from the trail.

ownership. The Borough and the Land Trust are close to agreement on the legal language that would govern this shared property ownership and management. We feel that this arrangement benefits all parties in the long run, and takes advantage of the Borough's expertise in property management, and the Land Trust's expertise in conserving lands valuable to the public.

New Partnership Formed with The Watershed School

The FNSB School Board approved a new charter school for the Fairbanks area in October. This school, which uses the Tanana Valley Watershed as its framework, and place-based education, outdoor physical education, and hands-on science education as its guiding principles, is now looking forward to approval by the State Legislature, and expects to accept students for the 2009-2010 school year. The next step for the school is to find a location and school building, with adjacent open land available for students to play and to learn. We have high hopes of locating The Watershed School within the Chena Flats Greenbelt, and are working on locating a suitable property. We are very excited about the idea of a school within the Greenbelt with children running through the woods and catching frogs in the wetlands. We don't want to "lock up" land; indeed, we want to open it up for people to become intimately acquainted with the land out their back door, or perhaps their schoolyard. While we want to hear birds singing and mosquitoes buzzing (okay, we don't really want to hear any mosquitoes), we also want to hear the voices of children as they discover what the natural world has to offer. Partnering with The Watershed School strengthens both the mission of the school and the mission of the Greenbelt. If you are interested in learning more about The Watershed School, please contact John Carlson at johncarlson@gci.net.

Project Coordinator attends Pittsburgh, PA Land Trust Rally

With assistance from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Interior Alaska Land Trust, Greenbelt Project Coordinator Sally Andersen recently traveled to Pittsburgh, PA for a land trust conference. Nearly 2000 people attended and presented topics on conservation finance, real estate tax law, conservation easements, GIS for land trusts, and many more of the ins and outs of the "business" of land conservation. We learned about several new tools for protecting properties that might be applicable to the Chena Flats Greenbelt. One of these tools is mitigation banking, an entrepreneurial enterprise for landowners to sell wetland "credits" by protecting their property to developers to offset development activities, much as carbon credits are now purchased by carbon producers. The Rally also gave our project coordinator an opportunity to meet face to face with officers from our two largest funders, the Conservation Fund, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grants Program, as well as with members of other land trusts around the country and the state (two people from the Kachemak Land Trust in Homer attended as well!). Next year's Rally will be held from October 11-14 in Portland, OR. If you are interested in learning more visit (<http://www.landtrustalliance.org/learning/rally/rally-2009-the-national-land-conservation>).

Contact Information: Sally Andersen at chenafats@gmail.com
www.chenafats.org
phone: 479-4345 (Sally at home—feel free to call!)