



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Wedgewood Wildlife Sanctuary

Fairbanks Fish & Wildlife Field Office

This project involves the reclamation of a retired 25 acre gravel pit (now known as Wander Lake) in an increasingly urbanized section of Fairbanks, Alaska east of Wedgewood Resort. Gravel was mined from the site for a number of years, ending some time in the 1990s. The current lake is very steep-sided, deep (up to 60') and has no outlet. The gravel banks support mainly invasive white sweet clover, and there are only three patches of shoreline that support aquatic vegetation such as bulrush and cattail. The only birds known to nest immediately adjacent to the lake include spotted sandpiper and semipalmated plover. There is a healthy aquatic insect population in the lake.

The goal of this project is to preserve and improve wildlife habitat in an area that's becoming increasingly developed. This will be accomplished with the following habitat improvements:

- Extensive transportation of gravel and soil to create five acres of shallow littoral zones and a number of



*The steep sides of the former gravel pit are being contoured to create shallow littoral zones.*

islands.

- Re-contouring of the shoreline in several areas to reduce erosion and promote vegetation growth.
- Sedges and other emergent native vegetation will be transplanted into the littoral zones.
- Non-game fish (longnose suckers, lake chub, and Alaska blackfish) have been transplanted into the former gravel pit to attract piscivorous mammals and birds such as

ducks, loons, kingfishers, terns, and ospreys.

Once the vegetation and fish populations are established, the lake will provide important stopover habitat for birds, including declining boreal-nesting ducks such as scaup and scoters, as well as other declining wetland breeders including horned grebes, lesser yellowlegs, and solitary sandpipers.



*Non-game fish like this longnose sucker are being transplanted into the rehabilitated lake to attract fish eating birds and mammals.*

In addition to natural colonization by willows and other vegetation, cattails, bulrush, sedge, grass clumps and willows will be transplanted to create the structure that will attract nesting rusty blackbirds, a species of conservation concern, into the new wetlands.



A plan to control invasive plants and plant native grass and wild-flower seeds is being implemented to promote thicker vegetation growth around the rest of the lake. Other improvements include installing duck-nesting boxes, carving a vertical bank to create bank swallow nesting habitat, and installing an osprey nesting platform.

A nature trail, observation deck, photography blinds, and interpretive signs are being added to the lake's perimeter to enhance visitor experience and provide environmental education about the area's plants and wildlife. In addition to serving visitors from the nearby Wedgewood Resort hotel, the trails will be enjoyed by other visitors, including area residents and school children on field trips.

This project has created several new jobs for laborers and project managers. It also provided an opportunity to partner with the Warrior Transition Unit, Company A on nearby Fort Wainwright, a program which provides job training and employment for wounded soldiers.



*Members of the Warrior Transition Unit, Company A, seine for non-game fish species that will be transplanted into the rehabilitated gravel pit and serve as food for piscivorous mammals and birds*

The primary project partner, Fountainhead Development, Inc. (FDI), is a Fairbanks real estate developer and hospitality organization. The corporation owns and manages hotels and multi-tenant commercial buildings and operates a year-round commercial construction division.

FDI is committed to the Fairbanks community, and proud of the role it has played in expanding commercial, retail, residential, and hotel opportunities.

*These are a few of the species that will benefit from the newly created wetland.*



*Horned Grebe*



*Common Loon*



*Greater Scaup*

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
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