

Introduced by: Don W. Baird, Council Member
Date: May 9, 2006
Action: Passed
Vote: Unanimous

CITY OF BETHEL, ALASKA

Resolution # 06-16

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A BIRDING ASSESSMENT OF BETHEL AND THE SURROUNDING AREA AS A WAY TO GAUGE BIRDING TOURISM POTENTIAL

WHEREAS, there are four major birding tourism companies in the Lower 48 states and 12 birding tourism companies that bring people to Alaska every year;

WHEREAS, St. Mary's represents the "draw" for avid birders to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta area because the rare Bristle-Thighed Curlew can be spotted there in May-June;

WHEREAS, Karl Hart, Watchable Wildlife Program Coordinator for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, with encouragement from the City of Bethel and Bethel's Visitor Industry Panel, has taken the initiative to arrange for a birding assessment of Bethel and several villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta;

WHEREAS, birding experts from Alaska and the Lower 48, including the Conference Coordinator for the American Birding Association, will be arriving in Bethel on May 31, 2006 and completing a birding assessment of Bethel, St. Mary's, Chevak, and one or two other villages by June 8, 2006;

WHEREAS, as of April 28, 2006, 10 of the 19 birders to conduct the assessment, purchased tickets to Bethel and are planning to follow the birding schedule arranged by Karla Hart;

WHEREAS, Bethel will not only serve in its traditional role as a transportation hub for the birders, but will be the overnight starting and ending point for the YK Birding Assessment group, hosting one group of four birders for four days, and providing a venue for a full debriefing on June 7, 2006;

WHEREAS, the City and community of Bethel stand to benefit by the birding assessment in one or more of the following ways: increase the potential for business development to serve birders, achieve sales of goods and services of the birding assessment group while in Bethel, advertise by word-of-mouth—the birding potential and other reasons for visiting the YK Delta, serve as a key component in a broader Bethel Tourism Plan;

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WHEREAS, one potential outcome of the birding assessment to be conducted this May-June 2006, is that the regional division of the American Birding Association consider St. Mary's as the location for its June 2007 birding conference;

WHEREAS, birding assessment tour funding for airfare transportation from Bethel to surrounding villages is coming from an Economic Development Administration tourism grant received by the State Tourism Office;

WHEREAS, nineteen birders are largely funding their own way to Bethel and selected villages and are not being compensated for their time, knowledge, and birding ability;

WHEREAS, Kuskokwim Wilderness Adventures, a Bethel business hosting annual birding tours by water, recognized the value of this birding assessment and agreed to donate the use of guides and boats for the YK Birding Assessment;

WHEREAS, the efforts of Karla Hart have thus far only been supported by the City of Bethel through the provision of information, technical assistance, and help from the City's Tourism VISTA;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel is in a position to offer the group in-kind donations, including the use of City buildings like the Youth Center and Log Cabin for showers, meetings, and floor space for sleeping, if more suitable accommodations cannot be arranged;

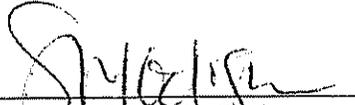
WHEREAS, many costs of the Birding Assessment Tour remain uncovered, including overnight accommodations, food, transportation from Bethel Airport to town, and meeting space;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Bethel City Council agrees to support the YK Birding Assessment Tour by contributing in-kind City resources considered reasonable and available and donate up to \$5,000 as needed to fund Bethel-related trip components.

ENACTED THIS 9TH DAY OF MAY 2006 BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE IN FAVOR.


R. Thor Williams, Mayor

ATTEST:


Sandra Modigh, City Clerk