

(6 May '13) Update for 2013 Western Rangelands Partnership Annual Meeting in Alaska



Okay, now that you are registered for the meeting, have reserved your rooms, made your travel arrangements and, more importantly, we have your money, it is time for the real question. The question is, where the heck is Spring this year??? We know it is Spring because: 1) the first grizzly bear of the season was spotted in Denali, 2) the Farm fields are full of geese, ducks, swans and cranes heading North, and 3) it is still light at 10 pm. However, it snowed all day Saturday, the lakes are still frozen and it is hard to tell if there is more bare or snow-covered ground.

The good news is that the 10-day forecast (if you choose to believe it) shows temperatures warming to the low 50s during the day and the upper 30s at night. We will not discuss what the weather predictions are for our meeting dates because we hope they are wrong like usual.

We will have 24 attendees at the meeting with another 10 people joining us for the Sunday social and the Tuesday night event at the Matanuska Experiment Farm. Each group tour has about 24 people signed up. We are thrilled with the number of people attending even though we completely filled the Eagle Hotel and had to book a few people at our overflow location, the Valley Hotel, in Palmer.

The group trip on Saturday has evolved somewhat, we are now going to stop for dinner on the way back to the hotel. We will be going to the Sourdough Mining Company, an iconic Alaskan eatery, for dinner (everybody will be responsible for their own bill). The restaurant has a unique décor (typical of Alaska), a wide range of items with reasonable prices, and build-it-yourself ice cream sundaes which are included with each dinner. It is also located across the street from the Wildberry Chocolate Factory with its 20 ft. chocolate fall and tasty candies.

The group trip on Wednesday is more problematic. The last stop listed at the Independence Mine will probably not take place as Hatcher's Pass got over two feet of snow over the weekend. This is probably why the State Parks do not open the site until June 1st. We were hoping to show you a sample of the upland (alpine) tundra rangeland of Alaska but unless you bring your snowshoes that will tough.

The agenda for the meeting is shaping up nicely and we have everything pretty much in place (at least we think we do). We should finalize everything at our next meeting of the planning committee on Monday.

This should be a great meeting and we are excited you can join us for this event (in spite of the late Spring),

Norm Harris

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