

Chena River Flood Control Project
Veteran Wheelchair Hunt Facts:

1. The Chena Flood Control Project hosted the first-ever Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) moose hunt in the country on Corps lands in September, 2003. This hunt is offered through a national MOU with the Corps and PVA. The Chena Project had responded to a national solicitation earlier in the year made by USACE looking for Corps projects that offered potential hunting opportunities to members of PVA. Representatives from PVA subsequently made a site visit to Chena and immediately accepted the Corps' invitation to use the Project as a hunt site.
2. Hunters for the PVA moose hunt are selected by a national lottery of the PVA's membership each year. Expenses are usually paid by a number of PVA's national sponsors including Budweiser, Savage Arms, Ruger, Leopold Optics and others.
3. The PVA hunt is dependent upon local volunteers who assist the veterans throughout the hunt. Most years, approximately 20 volunteers help with the hunt. Local businesses donate meals, services and products to support the hunt. One of the local service clubs, the Borealis Kiwanis, contributed many hours of labor to design and build accessible hunting blinds for the hunters.
4. To date, the Chena Project has hosted 26 PVA hunters from the 'lower 48' plus three disabled Alaska hunters. Five of those hunters have successfully harvested a moose on Corps lands. In 2010, due to PVA funding difficulties, the Chena Project expanded the hunt to include more local Alaska hunters with mobility impairments that were confined to wheelchairs and not necessarily members of PVA. Priority was given to those veterans confined to wheelchairs.
4. This hunt has highlighted the Corps as a public land manager and supporter of the mobility impaired community. The hunt has been a tremendous opportunity to showcase the USACE, Alaska District and Chena Project and our commitment to our land/resource stewardship activities and national partnership agreements that serve a growing variety of customers. It has also opened the first door to public lands in Alaska to mobility impaired Alaskan hunters who now are welcomed to hunt public lands by the Corps of Engineers. The Corps is the first and only federal agency to offer and support hunts on public lands for persons with special needs.
5. As the PVA hunt has evolved over the years, the need for a specialized facility to help support the hunt become more evident. The Project office, until recently was not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and did not have space in which the hunters and volunteers could gather, store hunting gear, eat and relax. Considering the hunters and volunteers would assemble and mobilize three times a day at the Project Office (early morning, lunchtime and evening) and needed a dedicated space, one of the Project's rangers proposed we build a rustic cabin to better support the hunt. This proposal slowly developed into a volunteer project in which local contractors and the Corps' own volunteer hosts would be utilized for labor and local timber resources harvested on the Project could be used for the building. This would result in a minimum expenditure for the government for only cabin pads, roofing, insulation, log screws and assorted hardware.

6. The cabin plans were developed and building site identified in 2010. The Project had stockpiled logs cut from an earlier power utility right-of-way across the Project and a volunteer had loaned the Project a band saw mill for siding the logs and cutting dimensional lumber and timbers. Cabin pads for the foundation were purchased by the Corps and a local contractor volunteered his crew to prepare the site and survey in the pads for a log cabin foundation. The Project's volunteer host couple then began work building the cabin's timber foundation and floor. They also erected the log walls of the cabin and were successful in locating some surplus treated timbers at Eielson AFB for a wheelchair access ramp and windows for the cabin. The roof was then completed by a Corps park ranger with help from employees of our local cost-sharing sponsor and partner, the Fairbanks North Star Borough who manage a leased recreation area on the Chena Project.

7. In 2011, the same volunteer host couple returned and completed the remaining exterior construction work. They installed the windows, custom built the doors, constructed the access ramp and trimmed out the gable end walls. The exterior was completed with the installation of a trophy set of moose antlers donated by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game on the front of the cabin. This agency also donated a set of elk antlers, a Dall sheep mount and grizzly bear rug for the cabin. Much interior work remains to be finished, but the rustic cabin is in usable condition for the 2011 hunt. It will eventually have a wood stove, kitchen, hunter gear cubbies, folding beds and other furniture for use by the hunters.

8. The 'Wheeling Hunter' cabin will be used by our hunters and volunteers to assemble, mobilize, eat and rest for the first time during the 2011 veteran moose hunt on the Chena Project and annually thereafter. It will be primarily used by members of our military who have serious mobility impairments and are confined to wheelchairs. The cabin is not only a functional asset for Chena, but offers a great interpretive opportunity and chance to promote our agency, volunteer program, partnerships and unique moose hunt. It showcases the Corps commitment to our military community and intent to make our public lands accessible to everyone.

