



Scooper



Utah Airboat Inc.

Fall 2009

President's Message

Well, another fall is almost upon us! We had a great spring rainy season and it kept Willard Spur wet for most of the summer. The Sege Pondweed has had a productive growing season out there and should hold a lot of birds this fall. The Airboat Association put out 10 goose nests and 4 duck nests at the Spur this spring with the intention of seeing if geese and ducks would use them. It didn't look good for nesting success in our nests, but after talking with the DWR people, it may take several years for the birds to acclimate to the nests before they start using them. The terns loved them though! So, we will try it again next year and see what happens. If this goes well, we will start doing a much bigger project out on the Spur and will need to start having a "Goose Nest Building Party" each spring, like we used to do it.

We had a fun summer boat run at the Spur on August 1st. We cooked up almost 100 hot dogs for hungry airboaters and friends. We also bought 60 tons of road base to repair the airboat parking lot at Farmington Bay. The DWR just doesn't have the funds to keep these ramps and lots maintained to our satisfaction, so the Utah Airboat Association stepped up and took care of the problem. The ramp at Farmington Bay is also in need of repair and we will take care of that too. Next year it may be time to spend some time and money improving and enlarging the Pintail parking situation. It will be a BIG job, but that place really needs some help!

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GSL Mineral Lake Expansion – Update

The battle over the Great Salt Lake shoreline continues. The latest is an application by GSL Minerals for almost 350,000 acre feet of water for their expansion. We feel that his is excessive and could cause dramatic lake reductions in low water years. This could cause major migration changes and have unwanted detrimental effect on waterfowl hunting. No one wants to see GSL Minerals be denied the ability to make money from their mineral extraction leases, but there has to be a limit on the destruction of lake shore acres in relation to the return benefit to wildlife and waterfowl that need the lake to survive their migrations. The final outcome may be in the hands of lawyers for now, but we can still make our wishes and concerns known when possible. We feel that there should be some kind of return for the use of Utah's sovereign lands. Neither the state nor the mineral extraction industries have worked to protect the wetlands along the east shoreline from the destruction we have witnessed over the last 10 years even though both entities have enjoyed huge profits during the late 90's and most of this last decade. This is unacceptable and we will continue to keep this travesty on the front burner. The marsh needs us to become involved or it will continue down the current path of destruction.

News from the DWR

For the first time in 11 years, you can have two pintail ducks in your daily duck bag limit.

That change, and moving Utah's Youth Hunting Day into mid-September, was among the changes the Utah Wildlife Board approved recently for Utah's upcoming waterfowl hunting season.

Two pintails

Allowing you to have two pintails in your daily bag limit was one of the three bag limit changes the board approved.

You can also hunt canvasback ducks during the entire 107-day season this fall. And you can have up to three Scaup ducks in your seven-duck daily bag limit.

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There are still some important problems facing us as airboaters and waterfowl hunters... most notably the phragmites problem. The spring rains and higher water levels have allowed the phrag stands to really expand out and destroy more marshland. The Division of State Lands has agreed to complete a comprehensive management plan for invasive species by this winter. It is hoped that the state will take some time and money to try to control the widespread destruction of our hunting grounds and the marshes that millions of migrating birds depend on each year for their very survival.

The GSL Minerals expansion is also a dark cloud hanging over the marsh. It is in the hands of the US Army Corps of Engineers and a bunch of lawyers for now, but it is hoped that a solution can eventually be reached that will be acceptable to the industrial needs, but still protect the Bear River Bay and other sensitive lakeshore areas.

On a different note, there are some groups forming within Utah's waterfowl community that are trying to change the regulations that govern where motors are legal to use on waterfowl management areas. We are watching these developments closely to see how far they are going to push for special regulations. They are attacking mud motors this year, but we have to be on guard to stop any attacks on our airboating access. These types of proposals have the potential to really mess up the way the DWR manages its areas, and it could start a trend of many small special interest groups all pushing for specific regulations to benefit their needs at the expense of the general waterfowl hunter's desire to just go out and have a good time in the marsh. We'll keep you posted on this one.

The UABI is in good financial condition, and we are currently able to fund the projects that need to be handled. The Airboat Association is working to improve our ramps, become involved with legislative issues that threaten the marsh and to donate time/money for conservation causes. Our dues pay for most of this, although the shirt sales and the spring banquet also serve to help us raise the money necessary to achieve these goals. I hope we can all be proud to be part of this great organization and appreciate all the good folks that make up the Utah Airboat Association. We really depend on the success of the spring banquet to keep us in the black as far as money goes. This spring (2010) we will probably have to find a new and bigger venue to hold our banquet. We will also expand the banquet budget, prizes, and meals. It should make for a great time with lots of stuff to give away to our valuable members! But for now, we can all start gathering our hunting duds, digging out the decoys and changing the oil in our boats in preparation for opening day! Be careful out there and stay off the crackies!

R. Jefre Hicks
President

What the UAB is doing for our sport

There are many challenges in our marshes these days. The most insidious threat is Phragmites of course, but the list is substantial.

The state Division of Water Rights continues to grant permits for water use without regard to the needs of the lake, the wetlands, or the millions of migratory birds that depend on the lake. We have filed several protests with the state to try to protect the water. This will be an ongoing problem, and the Airboat Association will need to stay diligent in order to try to save the lake from severe de-watering.

We have filed letters of protest with the US Army Corps of Engineers about the expansion of the GSL Mineral Corporation into Bear River Bay. This would really damage one of the two remaining fresh water bays on the Great Salt Lake.

The UABI has also had discussions with the Division of Water Quality about the threats to the lake's water and the detrimental effects of Selenium and Mercury have on waterfowl and the hunters that eat them. The GSL Minerals expansion could also have harmful effects on birds in the area of Pintail Flats, this is due to heavy salt and mineral loading of outflows in the winter into the area northeast of Fremont Island.

The UABI has met numerous times with the Division of State Lands in our attempts to get the state to accept responsibility for the phragmites invasion on our state sovereign lands. We have also met with several state legislators about this issue in hopes of raising awareness. This is extremely important to us as airboaters and waterfowl hunters. They are slowly coming around to the idea of phrag management, but it will take time, and we don't have much time.

UABI members have provided boats for research on the lake as well as tours for wildlife biologists from around the west. We will continue to offer our assistance to these folks in our continuing effort to bring attention to the plight of our lake. We have partnered up with the Utah Mud Motor Association for several marsh cleanups, as well as clearing the phrag out of several channels. This is a big safety issue and we appreciate their help!

UABI members also volunteered a full day of their time to spray phrag in the south flow of Pintail Flat. We hope to get some of the blind corners cut out for visibility in the future. This is a very dangerous flow and we should stay out of it if possible.

As you can see, the Utah Airboat Association keeps busy protecting our marshes as well as looking out for the interests of airboaters. If you have a friend with a boat and he/she is not a member, now is the time to remind people of what we do.

Officer Elections

It is time for officer elections. On September 18th, there will be elections held for a northern Vice President and a southern Vice President. The office of president will also be available. Please consider helping out in one of these positions. If you are interested in serving as a vice president or as president, please contact one of the officers so we can make sure you get nominated at the fall party.

A big thanks goes out to all of our officers for serving and we all appreciate your help and contributions!

Boating Safely near Phragmites

There are a lot of members with very powerful power-plants this year. This is a lot of fun, but with this power comes great responsibility. We all know that phragmites has taken over nearly all of the marsh along the Great Salt Lake, and we will need to get through it or around it in our effort to hunt. The most dangerous thing we can do while operating our airboats around phrag is to push through it at a high speed without being absolutely sure of what is ahead of us. There is zero visibility while pushing through phrag and it doesn't allow any margin of error. If there is a boat parked in a flow or a hunter sitting on a bucket, it will be too late to avoid them unless you are driving **VERY SLOWLY**. **This is serious stuff and could be a matter of life and death for someone in the path of a speeding airboat cutting through a phrag patch!**

There are certain areas that will be especially dangerous to drive through phrag due to their proximity to dikes:

Farmington Bay - The marsh along the Turpin unit is very popular with foot soldiers and is also popular with airboaters. The north side of FB near Kaysville and the Nature Conservancy property both have a very large number of foot soldiers sitting on buckets in the phrag. Also, the south-side duck clubs have a few guys that walk out or take their ATV's out into the phrag, so that area should also be watched closely.

Ogden Bay – The most dangerous area out there is on the east side near the dikes. Guys walk a surprising distance west into traditional airboat areas and sit on buckets. Also keep a close eye out for mud motors out on the south flow.

The safest way to get a boat into or through an unknown area covered by phrag is to walk it first, determine your destination, and secure a safe path. The alternative to boating/phrag safety could be a tragic accident.

Last season, you couldn't hunt Canvasbacks. And the daily Scaup limit was capped at two birds.

"The biggest reason for the change is more water," says Tom Aldrich, migratory game bird coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Resources. "That extra water provided good habitat for nesting ducks this past spring. As a result, most of the species, including Pintail, Canvasback and Scaup, are doing better this year.

Some notable increases include Canvasbacks (+35%), Northern Shovelers (+25%), Northern Pintails (+25%), Mallards (+10%). Other species above the long-term averages were Gadwall, Green-Wing Teal, and Redheads.

Youth Day moved to Sept. 19, 2009

If you're 15 years of age or younger, you'll be able to kick this year's waterfowl season off earlier than ever before.

In the past, Utah's special Youth Hunting Day was held the Saturday before the general hunt opened. This season, it will be held Sept. 19. That's two weeks before the general season opens on Oct. 3.

"Several upland game hunts, including the chukar partridge hunt, now start on the last Saturday in September," Tom Aldrich says. "We want to give young hunters as many chances to hunt as we can. Moving the youth hunt to Sept. 19 will free these hunters up to participate in the upland game hunts that start on Sept. 26."

Burning Phragmites

If you enjoy hunting on the Ogden Bay or Farmington Bay waterfowl management areas, Aldrich has some news for you. If conditions are right, the DWR will burn phragmites plants on the two waterfowl management areas during the hunts this fall.

Parts of the two WMAs—or possibly the entire WMAs—will be closed to the public on the days the burns occur. As many as five burns could happen this fall. Most of the burns would happen at Ogden Bay. All of the burns would happen on weekdays.

"Atmospheric conditions and other conditions must be just right to burn areas we've sprayed for phragmites. Those conditions didn't come together this past spring or summer," Aldrich says.

"They may not come together this fall, either, but we need to take advantage of them if they do. If we don't, the areas we sprayed on these WMAs last fall could start to recover."

Fall Banquet / Trap Shoot

The UAB Fall Banquet / Trap shoot will be held Friday, September 18 starting at 4pm at the Golden Spike Trap Club.

The Trap club will open at 4pm for us. We can start shooting at this time. If you can't make it until later, there will be plenty of time to shoot. Cost per round (25 targets) is \$5.00. (UAB does not pay this) Please bring only low brass lead shot to use at the range.

Dinner will be served around 7pm. We have Steak or Chicken. There will be hot dogs for the kids. The club will also provide rolls / butter / drinks (homemade root-beer) and ice cream sandwiches.

Please bring a pot luck item (salad, dessert, vegetable, etc.) If everyone will bring something, there will be plenty for everyone to eat.

There will be prizes and raffle items. Bring a few extra \$\$ to buy some raffle tickets. The raffle will feature items you can use for the upcoming hunting season. We will have a coffin to shoot out of. Everyone who shoots out of the coffin will be registered in a drawing to win the coffin.

To get to the Golden Spike Trap Club, go north on I-15 to Brigham City. Take the Forest Street exit and go east.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Once you pass the old horse race track on your right, there will be a road on the South side of the road. Turn right on this road and drive south to the Trap club. If you have any questions about the banquet, please call Jeff Farr @ 435-723-7020. **See you on the 18th!!!**

Delta Youth Fair

Delta Waterfowl will hold their annual Youth Fair at Farmington Bay on September 12. If you have a youth hunter, be sure and take them to this great event. The activities will start at 8am. The first 300 kids will get a free call / lanyard. There is a free prize raffle for the kids Prizes include 50 dozen decoys, guns, blinds, and more.

AIRBOAT RIDES – at the end of the youth fair, the UAB offers the kids an airboat ride. If you would like to take kids out in your boat, please be at Farmington Bay around 11:30 to launch and prepare for rides. Rides start ~Noon.

www.utairboat.com

