



# Scooper



Utah Airboat Inc.

Spring 2009

## President's Message

This will be a very active year for the Utah Airboat Association. There are many legislative and regulatory changes in the works that will affect us as waterfowlers. There are also a few projects that we will participate in to help make the wetlands a better place for birds as well as airboaters. As the president of the UABI, I have been attending many, many meetings concerning threats to the lake from industry, chemicals, and nasty vegetation like phragmites. Our association will also be participating in a coalition of concerned waterfowling groups in an effort to help the DWR deal with this invasion of the marsh. There are many ideas, and we hope to work together to raise awareness and money to fight phragmites in the future.

Our website, [www.utairboat.com](http://www.utairboat.com) is getting a bit more traffic, but not enough to really keep all of our members fully informed. I encourage all of our members to visit our website regularly to keep up to date on the happenings of our organization. We would also like to get as many email addresses as possible from our members in order to send out up-to-the-minute information without spending so much on postage. It really is a fun website and it is neat to see some pictures of our members in action. It is also a great way to stay up to date with projects and meetings. Please visit our website soon!

The spring banquet is coming soon (April 18<sup>th</sup>) and I want to

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## Phragmites Update

Phragmites continues to swallow our precious wetlands. Although the state is giving the DWR \$200,000.00 per year to fight phrag, they are only able to fight it within the diked units of WMA's. The DWR is doing a good job with the money and manpower that they have, but it is not nearly enough. As we all know, phragmites is expanding rapidly and uncontrollably outside of the dikes. Unfortunately, this is where airboaters are allowed to go. This is diminishing the available hunting area and has replaced prime waterfowl habitat with useless phragmites. This also affects the usable area to hunt. While it is true that there are a growing number of airboats using the Great Salt Lake shoreline, increased numbers of airboaters is not the main reason it is getting so crowded out there. The fact is that phrag has forced us into an ever-shrinking area and it is affecting the quality of our experience. The wetland transition zones such as salicornia, bulrush and shallow pools have been lost to phragmites and the birds are being forced to move on prematurely. The remaining birds are increasingly becoming nocturnal (even more than usual) in order to use the remaining habitat without disruption. It doesn't look like there will be any help for us out there. We have two options, pray for floods and the resulting high water (like the 80's), or try to fight phrag privately.

The Airboat Association is participating in discussions with a coalition of other concerned waterfowling groups to try to figure out alternative ways to help the state fight phragmites. Among the ideas are to create a separate foundation specifically for fundraising and donated monies. This could be used to get matching funds from the feds or from DU. We can also do private spraying in small, select areas. We can also ask the state to impose a fee on all waterfowlers to help pay for more phrag control. Other ideas include asking the DWR to allow intensive rotational grazing on WMA's, and asking the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL) to allow intensive grazing outside the dikes on state lands. As airboaters, we can identify certain areas that could be attacked privately and do it as a group project. Private efforts would necessarily be very small, but it would be better than doing nothing at all. We have also talked about doing a project called Adopt-A-Flow where we work to keep a specific flow open to navigation. We will try this first at the north Willard Ramp and see how it goes.

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remind everyone to RSVP if you will be attending the dinner. This is very important and will allow the restaurant to be able to handle the food and the seating better. Last year we got a bit overwhelmed by the number of folks in attendance. A large turnout of our members at the banquet is a good thing, but we want to be better prepared this year and your RSVP will help us do just that. Once again, we will have drawings, silent auctions, and updates on the UABI projects and meetings. If anyone cares to donate items for our banquet, please contact a UABI officer... We would love to have your donation!

Our association is strong financially and we have a strong reputation with other conservation and hunting groups in Utah. I hope we can continue to increase our membership and our influence in the future. With your support, we will continue to exercise our influence on important issues that affect us as airboaters, hunters and sportsmen.

R. Jefre Hicks

## Member Profile – Wally Thompson

There are only a few of our members that have been running these contraptions as long as Wally Thompson. Wally has lived his whole life in Utah. He attended Ben Lomond High School in North Ogden. He started hunting when he was 12 years old. He spent many a day jump-shooting along the Weber River. Eventually, he started hunting out around Pintail Flats. He started spending much of his hunting time walking for miles out onto the flats to hunt. He enjoyed great hunting, but it was tiring. Wally says “ It was about 1972 when I decided that I was either going to get an airboat or quit hunting!”. We’re glad he decided to go with the airboat. He built his first boat in 1972 and hasn’t looked back. Most of us know that if you have a problem with your aircraft motor, the first thing you do is call Wally and ask his advice. That’s to be expected when you spend 37 years tinkering with airboats and aircraft motors. Nowadays he spends most of the hunting season running boats out of the Willard Duck Club. On any given day, he can be seen running their members out and back from the club’s blinds. You will also see him giving his phone number out to airboaters to use if they get in trouble out on the Spur. Wally has been a member of the Utah Airboat Association longer than many of our members have been alive, he has plenty of real-life experience to share and we are a better club because of it. So, the next time you launch your airboat at Willard Spur by the Willard clubhouse, give Wally a friendly wave...and you can bet it will be returned with a smile! Here are a few pictures Wally had of his boat and hunting trips.



## Summer Plans

There are some ideas in the works for some summer projects. We will be working with the manager of Ogden Bay to try and improve the boat ramp and outflow of the west airboat channel. We would also like to bring in some road base for the Pintail parking lot. Another idea is to have a summer boat run at the Willard launch in May. While we are there, we would like to have a phrag-attack party. By this, we mean to go down to the end of the flow and whack down the phrag and cattails along the boat channel. As a follow up, we could spray it with Round-Up when it starts growing back. Although that idea may seem crazy, it is no crazier than running your boat around a blind curve in the dark! With enough manpower, it should be done in about an hour or so, after that, we could have a cookout and run our boats for a while! All of these ideas are open to discussion, and we hope our members will contact any of the officers with suggestions or comments. Please keep an eye on our website to see what is happening and to make comments on our member's forum!

Phragmites is the single most important issue facing waterfowl hunters and if we don't start to do something about it ourselves, nothing will get done in the areas that we use. I hope that we can come together as a group to develop ways to help in the fight to save our wetlands and our hunting areas. As always, the input of members of the UABI is requested and appreciated.



## Spring 2009 Nesting Projects

In February, the Airboat Association participated in the annual duck nesting project at Farmington Bay. We had a huge turnout and we were all over that refuge like a bunch of monkeys! Duck nests were repaired and re-stuffed in all the units as well as outside the dikes in the airboat channel area. This year we also repaired the goose nesting platforms. It was fun running our boats in the interior areas of Farmington Bay, and it allowed us to get a much better appreciation of how complex the marsh system out there really is. Farmington Bay is definitely the crown jewel of our waterfowl management areas and we are pleased to help out each year. The highlight of the day was back at the parking lot after the nesting project was complete. Jeff Farr cooked up a pot of Duck Gumbo, and the Association supplied drinks and cookies for everybody that showed up! Boy, was that gumbo good!



On March 7<sup>th</sup>, we participated in yet another nesting project. This was a test project done in conjunction with the Mud motor Association. The airboaters and some mud motor guys got together and built 10 goose nests to install out on Willard Spur. We put them along the Bear River Refuge boundary, in the dog-ears, and on the grass islands over by the GSL Mineral dike. There was a great time had by all as we drove around and put up the nests. In a few months, after the nesting season ends, we will be going back out to pull the posts out and store the nests until next season. If this goes well, we will be doing a few more next year! We can all be proud that our association is working toward helping raise a few more birds. Thank you for all your support!



## GSL Minerals Update Part III

As you all know, Great Salt Lake Minerals is currently seeking approval from the US Army Corps of Engineers to create 33,000 acres of potassium-sulfate evaporation ponds west of Gunnison Island in the Great Salt Lake. Well, now they have come up with an additional plan that will add to the total. This fall (2008) GSL Minerals announced that they have agreed to a land swap with the state of Utah, which would allow them to develop 37,083 acres on the lake's northwestern shore. To get this additional land, they agreed to give up their right to lease 30,181 acres near Promontory Point. This area also includes the mud flats along the railroad tracks west of Pintail Flats. This is land that they would have had a very difficult time developing anyway, so it amounts to a great deal for GSL and no real advantage to wildlife and hunters. The scary part is that GSL Minerals refused to relinquish their mining lease rights to the 8000 acres in Bear River Bay. That means that the company is positioning themselves to drastically increase their production capability and will eventually need to expand into our hunting areas. This is a bad deal for the millions of shorebirds and waterfowl that depend on that area of the Bear River Bay and Willard Spur and it is a bad deal for the public trust that we put into our government to protect our state lands. We'll keep you posted...

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



## Membership Dues

Just a reminder that all membership fees are due at the time of the Spring Banquet. We are continuing the effort to get all dues coming in at the same time (Spring Banquet) each year. If you are a new member or paid in the last 6 months, you are considered paid up until Spring Banquet 2010. If you are not going to attend the spring banquet, mail your dues to Jeff Farr, 56 S. Meadow Rd. Mantua, UT. 84324.

Remember to visit the web site for current information

[www.utairboat.com](http://www.utairboat.com)

### See You at the Spring Banquet

The Spring Banquet will be held on April 18 at Joy Luck Restaurant. The address is: 566 West 1350 South. This is just off 500W. in Bountiful. The doors will open at 6:00pm. Dinner at 6:30pm. If anyone has items they would like to donate for the raffle or auction, please contact a member of the presidency. There will be lots of great prizes given away. – See you there!

