

# Eyak awarded nesting islands contract

**Anchorage**—Ducks Unlimited, Inc., (DU), awarded the Eyak Corporation a contract to install 200 artificial nesting islands in ponds on the Copper River Delta to help increase the world's only population of dusky Canada geese, which is on the decline.

The USDA Forest Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other members of the Pacific Flyway Council have been concerned for a number of years about the declining dusky Canada goose population. Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife is funding a substantial portion of the Copper River Delta project.

The Forest Service proposed placing the artificial structures in ponds away from vegetated banks where brown bears and coyotes frequent during spring goose nesting and rearing periods.

Two work crews made up of Eyak and Chugach Corporation shareholders began installing the nest islands in early October.

Eyak crews will construct 100 nesting islands supported by sandbags, and install 100 floating islands, half made of fiberglass-encased foam and half of foam-filled truck inner tubes (nicknamed dusky donuts) in Delta ponds.

Both types of artificial islands will be landscaped with grasses, sedge and bushes found on the Delta.

Dusky Canada geese, a dark subspecies of the Canada goose, breed exclusively on the Copper River Delta of the Chugach National Forest.

Artificial islands will be placed in ponds which are considered less likely to be visited by foraging mammals and egg-stealing birds. These predators eat eggs and sometimes adult duskies, thereby contributing to low gosling production and the declining numbers of geese migrating from the Delta.

The decrease in the dusky goose population is also attributed to selective harvest of duskies where they mix among Taverner's Canada geese wintering in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

Eyak Corporation is expected to complete installation of the artificial nesting structures before the geese return from Willamette Valley to the Copper River Delta next spring.

Eyak Corporation general manager Luke Borer says, "The corporation is pleased to participate in this conservation effort. We are eager to help improve habitat to increase the production of dusky Canada geese on the Copper River Delta."