

November 14, 2003

News from Hanford Reach National Monument

Third Annual “Hands on the Land” Program

November 4th saw the kick off of the third year of partnership between Hanford Reach National Monument and Kennewick High School’s Multi-lingual media class.

“Hands on the Land” is a network of field classrooms stretching across America from Alaska to Florida and is sponsored by Partners in Resource Education, a collaboration of five Federal agencies, a non-profit foundation, schools, and other private sector partners. “Hands on the Land” supports students studying environmental subjects and the creation and publication of web sites featuring their original web pages. The previous two years saw multi-lingual web programs on the mammals and birds of Hanford Reach, with their site linked to our official USFWS site. This year, students are going underwater to study the numerous fish species found in the Reach.

One of the highlights of the program is the chance for students to experience a day in the field. Through partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the field study began with a personal, in-depth tour by hatchery manager Dave Hardy of the Ringold and Meesberg Fish Hatcheries which are adjacent to the National Monument. Students learned how the hatchery operates, the aquifer which provides the water, and the maintenance activities that keep the fish healthy. Ringold is unique as it rears salmonides as well as warm water species. This year’s strong run of fall Chinook salmon was quite evident by the numerous large, brightly colored adult fish returning to the hatchery to spawn. Students were able to also see channel catfish, black crappie, muskies, bluegill, and the almost transparent walleye fry. Students were then led on a tour of Monument lands just upriver from the State’s hatchery. Several field sites along the Columbia River were studied. Biologists Heidi Newsome and Jenny Meisel led discussions on the Columbia watershed, the salmon life cycle, and dangers to the habitat and redds along the last free flowing stretch of the Columbia River. Students were able to don waders and try their hand at sampling fry with dip nets along the shore, but with little success. The fish were even too fast for Information and Education Specialist Ron Crouse who made a valiant effort to capture a salmon fry for inspection. Students will now work on their multi-lingual web site, creating graphics and gathering information on characteristics and life histories of individual species, and return to the Reach for a spring field trip to study the results of this year’s salmon spawning.

<http://www.handsontheland.org/home.cfm>

<http://www.handsontheland.org/classroom/04/intro.html>

http://www.handsontheland.org/classroom/11/index1_eng.html

