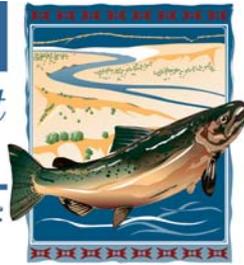


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

*Hanford Reach National Monument  
Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge*

*... protecting the last of the free-flowing Columbia River.*



**April 5, 2006**

## **Safety Day**

### **Cooperative Training for Hanford Reach National Monument, Columbia NWR and Mid-Columbia NWR Complex**

Bird flu, fires, communications, and vehicle related issues were the main themes on Wednesday April 5<sup>th</sup>, as staff from Hanford Reach National Monument/Saddle Mountain NWR, Mid-Columbia River NWR Complex, and Columbia NWR participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Safety Day. This annual event is held in conjunction with the Department of Interior's annual Safety and Health Awareness Week.

The event was held on the banks of the Columbia River at Columbia City Park in Kennewick, WA. (Just downstream from where the 9,300 year-old remains of Kennewick Man was discovered nearly ten years ago.) The light rain and overcast skies did not dampen the presentations and discussions.

Safety is the prime concern at each respective station and is the responsibility of each employee. Refuge Operations Specialist/Collateral Duty Safety Officer, Jack Heisler, again organized this year's mandatory training event. Safety and health awareness was the overall theme for the session and small employee groups rotated through four stations, each designed with an individual safety topic.



Jerry Vineyard tends the fire for extinguisher training

Photo: Ron Crouse/USFWS

Zone Firefighters, Jerry Vineyard and JJ Coats, again provided our annual fire extinguisher use training. They provided information on the various fire extinguishers that may be encountered at each field station. Every employee had to demonstrate the proper use of a fire extinguisher. Fire hazards are taken very seriously in the arid shrub-steppe habitat of the Columbia River Basin as they are the greatest threat to Refuge lands.

Zone Firefighters, Kurt Thompson and Aaron Bibe, repeated last year's topic on communication, including proper use of portable, mobile, and base radios. Frequencies, repeater stations, and general operations of each type of radio were covered.

Vehicle accidents are a major safety risk for all Service employees. This year McNary Refuge Manager, John Gahr, presented a station where participants discussed and practiced the safe operation of vehicles, trailer towing and proper hookup, securing loads, and other safe vehicle operation topics.

Also new was a station to discuss avian influenza, its risk to public health, and the role migratory birds may play in the spread of the disease. Station participants learned what role the Service will be playing in the surveillance and early detection of the HPAI H5N1 virus from Mid-Columbia River NWR Complex Deputy Project Leader, Dave Linehan. Complex Wildlife Biologist, Howard Browers, demonstrated safe wildlife collection and handling, use of personal protective equipment, and basic field hygiene using hand sanitizers when water is unavailable.

Heisler reported, “We had almost 40 staff attend this year’s event. We have been going through some changes with the combining/complexing of our respective stations. This was a good example of coming together for the safety and health of our employees. I received some comments on how well it went, especially concerning the weather we had. Again, I couldn’t do this without the help of all of our presenters and the participation of the staff.”



Photo: Ron Crouse/USFWS

Kurt Thompson explaining the fine points of communications equipment and acquiring signals

“The Columbia NWR staff was thrilled to be invited to this combined station safety training event,” exclaimed Deputy Project Leader, Rick Poetter. “We all need as many reminders as we can get to be safe and cautious while going about our daily duties. Heisler, as organizer, and all the instructors, did an outstanding job under less than desirable weather conditions. We look forward to future events that can get our staffs together. It was great to talk with employees we had not met before and those we had.”