

December 12, 2003

News from Hanford Reach National Monument

### Site Dedication for Monument Interpretive Center

Cooperating partners in the Tri-Cities area joined together on December 5 for the official dedication of the site for the new Hanford Reach National Monument Heritage and Visitor Center. A crowd of over 100 dignitaries, elected officials, and interested citizens braved cold and rainy weather to gather at the 50 acre site where the Visitor Center will be located. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Friends of the Hanford Reach National Monument are partners in the project with the local Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology, the City of Richland, the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau, and various tribal partners. US Senator Patty Murray was on hand for the event and expressed gratitude to the diverse groups who have come together to make the Center a reality. Yakama tribal councilman Mathew Tomaskin addressed the crowd stating Native American concerns with building on the culturally significant site. Tomaskin said it is easier to address those issues as a partner in the project.

The site at Columbia Point South has received considerable habitat disturbance through the years and extensive rehabilitation activities will be conducted over the coming months. The Richland Public Facilities District began laying utilities to the site December 8 and building construction is scheduled to start late in 2004. It is projected that the total cost of the 54,000 square foot center and 50 acres of land donated by the City of Richland at the confluence of the Yakima and Columbia Rivers will be \$34 million and will be built in at least two phases. Phase one will be 12,000 to 15,000 square feet and is proposed to open in 2006. It will house an exhibit gallery, administrative offices, classroom, café, and gift shop. The Center will serve as a gateway to the Hanford Reach National Monument and is expected to become a significant regional visitor attraction, playing a strong role in helping to diversify the local economy.



