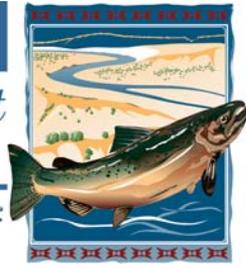




U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

*Hanford Reach National Monument  
Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge*

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



**February 28, 2006**

## **Native Willow Restoration attracts a Diverse Group of Volunteers to the Hanford Reach National Monument**

A project designed to replace non-native Russian olive trees with native willows attracted volunteers from the Richland Rod and Gun Club, Rattlesnake Ridge Riders Back Country Horseman, Washington Native Plant Society and Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society. This diverse and dedicated group put in 111 volunteer hours to help recover burned riparian areas that were damaged during the McLane Fire of August 2005. The McLane Fire started from an escaped agricultural burn, and consumed 6,068 acres of upland and riparian habitat. Burned trees, primarily Russian olive, were removed from areas along the creek following the fire. The rehabilitation project was designed to replace some of the habitat that was lost, and to improve the area by replacing non-native vegetation with native riparian species.



The rehabilitation project spanned two weekends. The first effort, February 3 and 4 (Friday and Saturday), saw five volunteers cutting native willow poles from sites along the Columbia River and Saddle Mountain Lakes. Willows 1" in diameter and at least 5' long were cut from native willow stands. These poles were bundled together into "willow wattles", of about 1' diameter. Willow whips, smaller stems, were also cut and retained for planting. All of the cut willows were soaked for one week by floating them in the White Bluffs ponds.



The following weekend, February 10 and 11, four volunteers assisted in removing the willows from the pond, and planting the trees. The “wattles” (bundles) were installed as a “living” version of “rip-rap” along the creek. The bundled willows were used as a physical structure to stabilize the creek bank and to prevent further erosion along the creek where the riparian vegetation had burned. Willow whips were installed above and below the waddles to begin to replace the trees and habitat that was destroyed by the fire.

Over time it is hoped that the native plantings will compete well with the non-native Russian olive, and that the willow will stabilize the creek bank, prevent further erosion, and provide excellent cover and habitat for wildlife along the creek.

