

National Elk Refuge News – February 2, 2009

Programs Target Area Latino Families and Students



A family poses next to the team of horses that pulled their sleigh during the Day of Discovery event on the National Elk Refuge.

A series of programs targeting the ever-growing Latino population in the Jackson Hole valley continued on the National Elk Refuge last month, including both environmental education programs and a family event.

The refuge public use staff partnered with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival to offer a *Day of Discovery* on Saturday, January 10. The event was one in a series of organized outreach programs planned for the Latino community this year. Carmina Oaks, executive director of the Latino Resource Center, facilitated

the event, noting many Latinos who live and work here have had limited outdoor experiences in the valley, particularly on federal lands. “We need to let them know not only what amazing resources are available in our community, but how to go about enjoying them safely,” Oaks explained. Many of the collaborative programs like the *Day of Discovery* have come from requests by Latinos in the community, including the outing on the National Elk Refuge.

Fifty people enjoyed the event on the refuge, the highest attendance thus far of any of the *Day of*

Discovery programs. Participants were charged a nominal fee, with additional costs supported by grants. The trip included a sleigh ride onto the refuge, a tour and wildlife film at the National Museum of Wildlife Art, and lunch.

Several groups of English Language Learners (ELL) from the Jackson middle school and high school also took a sleigh ride last month as part of a new environmental education program that targets both an increase in language proficiency and a basic knowledge of local wildlife and habitat.



A bald eagle flies overhead as students capture images.



The students were able to closely view elk and study details.

A group of high school ELL students who visited the refuge in the fall returned for a second field during the first week of January for a winter excursion. The students are using digital cameras to collect photographs on their trips and, through coordination with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, will display their pictures in the spring.

In mid-January, 30 middle school ELL students took a sleigh ride as part of an interdisciplinary science and writing project. After

weeks of preparatory work in the classroom, they visited the refuge and returned to school to use the real life experiences in their writing practice. Alivia Bingham, who teaches the middle school ELL writing classes, discussed the elements of a story with the students, challenging them to write a realistic fiction story from the point of view of one of the animals they had studied. The students brainstormed descriptive verbs and adjectives and were encouraged to use similes and metaphors as they created their stories and developed characters.

“Blanka was a coyote,” wrote one student as he began a draft of his story. “She was as beautiful as a model.”

The students will combine their stories with digital images they took during their trip, using an Apple computer program called *iMovie* to create their stories and *iPhoto* and *GarbageBand* software to edit the pictures and add sound effects and music. Bingham would like to eventually put the stories on DVDs and have them be available for checkout in the school libraries.



Students completed an outline prior to the start of their story, identifying the basic story elements.



Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson helps a student develop his story.