



NEWS RELEASE



Department of the Interior • U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service • 3250 Port of Benton Boulevard • Richland, Washington 99354 • (509) 371-1801

Monday, January 29, 2007 – For Immediate Release

HANFORD REACH NATIONAL MONUMENT, McNARY & UMATILLA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is holding a series of public meetings over the next two weeks to discuss the recently released *Hanford Reach National Monument Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Draft Hanford CCP) and *McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment* (Draft McNary/Umatilla CCP).

Following an openhouse format, the six meetings will provide the public an opportunity for informal one-on-one discussions with FWS staff about the CCPs and to ask questions prior to submitting comments on the two plans. Members of the public may also submit formal, written comments at the open houses if they would like.

“We believe open houses provide the best option for the public to fully understand what is in the plans, said Supervisory Refuge Manager, Mike Ritter. “At the same time, we get a better understanding of the public’s concerns and needs through direct interactions, rather than listening to testimony.”

The Hanford Reach open houses are Tuesday, January 30, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, in the Mattawa Elementary School Gym; Wednesday, January 31, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, at the Sunnyside Community Center; Monday, February 5, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, at the Hampton Inn in Richland; and Thursday, February 8, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, at the Red Lion Hotel in Pasco. The February 8 meeting is a joint meeting with the McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges. Directions are available at hanfordreach.fws.gov/planning.html.

The McNary/Umatilla open houses are Thursday, February 1, 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm, at the Riverfront Center in Boardman; Tuesday, February 6, 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm, at the McNary Environmental Education Center in Burbank; and the February 8 meeting in Pasco.

Contact: Dan Haas, Mid-Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Complex, (509) 371-1801, hanfordreach@fws.gov

– FWS –

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The FWS manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges—including two national monuments—thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid Program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.