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# NEWS RELEASE



Department of the Interior • U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service • 64 Maple Street • Burbank, Washington 99323 • (509) 546-8300

December 3, 2008

Contact: Randy Hill at (509) 488-2668

## COLUMBIA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FIRE RESTORATION TEMPORARY CLOSURES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will temporarily close approximately 2,500 acres south of the Potholes Reservoir in the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge for several days during a two-week period, December 3-16, 2008. The daily closures, which are weather-dependent, are to ensure the safety of workers and the public during aerial spraying of herbicides and seeding related to habitat restoration. Aerial spraying can only occur during periods of light wind, moderate temperatures, and no inversion layers.

The temporary closure area covers refuge lands west of Marsh Unit 1 and the Falcon Lakes, south of O'Sullivan Dam, east of Corral Lake, and north of Upper Goose Lake in Management Unit 1. A small portion of the adjacent Goose Lakes Wildlife Area north of Upper Goose Lake and around Corral Lake is included as a buffer. No access to Blythe, Chukar or Scaup Lakes will be allowed during this period.

Randy Hill, Wildlife Biologist for the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge noted, "The closure is needed to initiate restoration efforts on nearly 2,000 acres of native shrubs and grasses burned in a wildfire during July of 2008. Work will focus on aerial chemical treatments to control invasive cheatgrass, followed by seeding of native grasses, forbs and shrubs. These efforts are an attempt to reduce future fire risk and return native species to the area that will provide for its long-term stability."

Visitors may call the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge at (509) 488-2668 or the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex headquarters at (509) 546-8300 for up-to-date information on closures during this rehabilitation effort, including potential weekend closures.

– 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 548 national wildlife refuges—including two national monuments—thousands of wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 66 fishery resources offices, and more than 80 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.