

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Inland Northwest NWR Complex
Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge
26010 S Smith Rd.
Cheney, Washington 99004
Phone: 509/235-4723
Fax: 509/235-4703
<http://turnbull.fws.gov>

News Release



Date: November 17, 2008
Contact: Nancy Curry 509-235-4723

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge 2009 Hunt Plan Available for Public Comment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge today released its draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and fall 2009 Hunt Plan for public review and comment. The EA provides a detailed analysis of the Refuge youth waterfowl and limited permit elk hunts proposed for the fall 2009 hunting season.

Public comments will be accepted until December 19, 2008. Turnbull staff will host an informational open house to address questions related to the draft EA and hunt plan on Thursday, December 11, 2008 from 6 – 8 PM at the Environmental Education Building at Turnbull Refuge headquarters.

“The decision to consider opening the refuge to these hunts was made through the Turnbull Comprehensive Conservation Planning process completed in 2007,” said Refuge Manager, Nancy Curry. “High elk numbers have damaged important migratory bird and wildlife refuge habitats.”

The elk hunt would be managed with a limited number of primarily antlerless (cow) elk permits in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Hunters would apply for permits through WDFW's special hunting permit application process.

The youth waterfowl hunt would coincide with the state's annual youth migratory bird hunt during the third weekend of September. The Service will offer a waterfowl identification class for those interested in participating in the youth hunt.

“By opening Turnbull to these two hunts we hope to reduce elk browsing damage on important wildlife habitat and provide a quality recreational hunting opportunity,” said Curry.

A recent WDFW survey recorded over 300 elk using Turnbull Refuge and adjacent land as a kind of security zone during fall hunting season. The concentration of elk on the refuge during this period magnifies browse damage to deciduous trees and shrubs, compromising important and rare habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife species. Once the hunting season ends, elk disperse back on to private lands where they may damage agricultural crops. Refuge and WDFW staff hope that the hunt will disperse elk during the hunting season and hunter harvest will gradually reduce the impact of the herd on refuge habitats and local agricultural crops.

Copies of the EA and Hunt Plan are available for viewing at the refuge office in Cheney, the Cheney and Spokane Public Library, and from the refuge website http://www.fws.gov/turnbull/refuge_planning.html. The Service will accept written comments via mail (Hunt Comments, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, 26010 S. Smith Rd., Cheney, WA 99004), facsimile (509-235-4703) and email (FW1TurnbullNWR@fws.gov). Comments must be received by December 19, 2008.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

#