



Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-Tailed Deer

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SEEKS COMMENT ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HUNT PLAN FOR THE JULIA BUTLER HANSEN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is available for a 30 day public review. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared the Draft (EA) to provide information and analysis regarding the Refuge waterfowl hunt on the Wallace Island Unit. An addendum to the Environmental Assessment of Elk Control on the refuge is also available for review.

The Draft (EA) was prepared as a result of the Fund for Animals lawsuit against the Service on March 14, 2003, alleging noncompliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in opening 37 refuges to hunting during the 1997-98 through 2002-03 seasons. On August 31, 2006, the U.S. District Court Judge granted the plaintiff's motion for summary judgment, agreeing that the Service did not adequately consider the cumulative impacts of opening these refuges to hunting. The Service's October 5, 2006 brief asked the court not to enjoin the hunt programs while the Service addressed the NEPA deficiencies in the original 37 hunting packages. In addition, the Service informed the court that by May 30, 2007, it would also correct possible NEPA deficiencies for refuges opened to hunting since the lawsuit was filed.

A public review and comment period for the Draft Supplement will begin on April 9, 2007. We encourage you to provide written comments on or before May 9, 2007 to: Rebecca Young, Refuge Planner, Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex; 3888 SR 101, Ilwaco, WA 98636. Comments may also be submitted via electronic mail to Rebecca_Young@fws.gov. Copies of the Draft (EA) can be obtained electronically at <http://www.fws.gov/willapa/JuliaButlerHansen/>, or by requesting a hardcopy at the address listed above.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94 million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 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 that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

