

Oregon Fish & Wildlife Office
2600 S.E. 98th Avenue, Suite 100
Portland, Oregon 97266
Phone: 503-231-6179
Fax: 503-231-6195

News Release



July 24, 2003

03-XXX

Contact: Craig Tuss, Roseburg Field Office, 541/957-3474

DOUGLAS COUNTY COLUMBIAN WHITE-TAILED DEER DELISTED **Species recovers due to partnership efforts in Oregon**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that the Douglas County, Oregon population of the Columbian white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*) has recovered and will be removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species.

Recovery of the Douglas County population of the Columbian white-tailed deer is due largely to conservation efforts made by Douglas County, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Bureau of Land Management, which worked in partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service to help remove threats and protect the population so that it could rebound. Recovery measures included acquisition and management of habitat, imposition of hunting restrictions, and application of local ordinances designed to protect the deer population. The Douglas County population is currently estimated at more than 6,000 deer.

“The delisting of any species denotes a triumph; a remarkable success achieved only through the diligent efforts of many,” said Dave Allen, Regional Director of the Service’s Pacific Region. “The recovery of the Douglas County Columbian white-tailed deer is the result of two decades of partnership and is an excellent example of how we can work together to conserve threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants.”

Local communities took steps to protect the deer by adopting zoning regulations to protect open space and streamside areas that are important habitat for the deer as well as fish and other wildlife species. Douglas County, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Bureau of Land Management helped to secure and protect habitat for the deer by negotiating land use restrictions, and/or acquiring land donations or exchanges. Considerations for the deer prompted the county and local communities to work together to protect valuable farm lands.

The Fish and Wildlife Service first proposed to delist this species in May of 1999. During the public comment period for that proposal, the Service received significant new information regarding the distribution of the deer and the management goals for parcels used by the deer. The new information led the Service to reinterpret its data and revise the proposal. On June 21, 2002, the Service published the revision in a supplemental proposed rule. Three independent scientists conducted a peer review of the revised proposal and concurred with the Service’s conclusions.

The Columbia white-tailed deer occurs in two distinct population segments: the Lower Columbia River population is found in Wahkiakum county in Washington, and Clatsop and Columbia counties in Oregon; the Douglas County population is found in the Umpqua River Basin in Douglas County in Oregon.

The lower Columbia River population of Columbian white-tailed deer, which suffered substantial losses during spring flooding in 1996 and has not yet rebounded, will continue to be listed as an endangered species.

The Columbian white-tailed deer is the westernmost representative of 30 subspecies of white-tailed deer in North and Central America. Reddish-brown in summer, and gray in winter, the medium-size deer has white rings around the eyes and a white ring around the nose. A relatively long brown tail sports white fringe and white underneath. Early records indicate that this subspecies was once numerous in its historic range, from the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and from Puget Sound in Washington southward to the Umpqua River Basin in southern Oregon. Intensive hunting by early settlers who also drained marshes and cleared the riparian areas used by the deer resulted in extensive loss of habitat and severe decrease in numbers. In the 1940s fewer than 700 Columbian white-tailed deer existed along the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington, and fewer than 300 existed in Douglas County.

The final rule to delist the Columbian white-tailed deer was published in today's *Federal Register*.

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 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 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 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 that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

NOTE: This news release and others can be viewed on either the Service's Pacific Regional home page on the Internet at <http://www.r1.fws.gov> or the National home page at: <http://www.fws.gov/r9extaff/renews.html>