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News Release



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Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge Provides Economic Benefits Today, Conservation Benefits for Future Generations

Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge generated \$2,185,300 in total economic activity related to refuge recreational use and generated 43 new jobs for the nearby community, according to Banking on Nature 2004: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation. The same report, issued during National Wildlife Refuge Week, found that national wildlife refuges are major economic engines for communities, putting almost \$1.4 billion into the economy.

Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge generated \$4.29 for every dollar received for the refuge's operations and maintenance last fiscal year. Nationally, the \$1.4 billion in total economic activity related to national wildlife refuge recreational use is nearly four times the \$391 million that the Refuge System received in fiscal year 2004 for operations and maintenance.

Moreover, the National Wildlife Refuge System created nearly 24,000 private sector jobs as the \$1.4 billion flowed through the economy, generating about \$454 million in employment income. Additionally, recreational spending on national wildlife refuges generated nearly \$151 million in tax revenue at the local, county, state and federal level.

The national report details findings from 93 national wildlife refuges, including Kootenai. The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses nearly 100 million acres and 545 national wildlife refuges. The Banking on Nature 2004 study included money spent for food and refreshments, lodging at motels, cabins, lodges or campgrounds, and transportation when it calculated the total economic activity related to refuge recreational use.

Kootenai NWR had 21,523 visitors in 2004. Non-residents accounted for approximately two-thirds of all recreational visits.

"Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge is proud of our role in strengthening the health and well-being of the community. We not only provide an economic benefit for our citizens today, but national wildlife refuges also ensure benefits to future generations as we conserve the natural resources that are the foundation of our life and our heritage," said Refuge Manager, Dianna Ellis. "We invite everyone to visit the refuge this week and in the future to learn about our wildlife and outdoor recreation programs."

Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge, located 5 miles west of Bonners Ferry, Idaho, was established in 1965 as a nesting, resting, and feeding area for migratory waterfowl. The 2,774 acre refuge contains a diversity of habitats including wetlands, grasslands, shrubland, and forest adjacent to the Kootenai River. The refuge has a variety of foot trails, and a four and a half mile long Auto Tour Route. The refuge offers all of the “Big 6” wildlife dependent recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and photography, environmental education and interpretation.

“Kootenai is a wonderful place to spend a day outdoors. I enjoy volunteering my time to support the refuge and I love seeing the diversity of wildlife such as moose, elk, and the numerous ducks, geese, and swans.” said Ray Walsh, a Sagle, Idaho resident and member of the Friends of Kootenai NWR, Inc., the first Friends Group to be established in the state of Idaho.

For more information about Kootenai NWR or the new Friends Group, contact the Refuge Manager at (208) 267-3888.

During National Wildlife Refuge Week, celebrated October 9-15, many wildlife refuges will feature a number of special events, festivals and environmental education programs. Additional information, including a list of selected events, is available online at <http://refuges.fws.gov/>

For more information about Refuges in the Pacific Region, go to <http://pacific.fws.gov>.

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 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 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 and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.