

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Ridgefield NWR
301 N. Third Avenue
Ridgefield, WA 98642
(360) 887-4106

News Release



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Contact: Tim Bodeen, (360) 887-4106

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

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge generated \$2,169,100 in total economic activity related to refuge recreational use and 25 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.

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge generated \$2.80 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 Ridgefield. 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.

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge had 138,959 visitors in 2004. The vast majority of recreation visits, over 133,000, were for non-consumptive activities, migratory bird hunting accounted for 1,758 visits and freshwater fishing accounted for 702 visits. About 80 percent of recreation visits were undertaken by area residents.

"Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is proud of our role in strengthening the health and well-being of our surrounding communities. 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 Complex Leader, Tim Bodeen. "We invite everyone to visit and experience the refuge's wonderful wildlife resources and the quaint community of Ridgefield."

Our autumn visitors are offered a variety of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities such as waterfowl hunting, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and environmental education. Also, the newly constructed Cathlapotle Plankhouse is available for visitation. Further information is available at <http://ridgefieldrefuges.fws.gov>. and www.plankhouse.org.

"The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is a wonderful place to spend a day outdoors. I am proud to volunteer my time to support the refuge," said Bill Michaels, a Vancouver, WA resident, who staffs the visitor contact station.

Together, the Friends of Ridgefield NWR and the refuge will host BirdFest on October 15-16, 2005 in Ridgefield, WA. The festival will feature guided refuge tours, environmental education activities, wildlife observation, and entertainment. Additional information about BirdFest and the Friends of Ridgefield NWR can be found at www.ridgefieldfriends.org. During National Wildlife Refuge Week, celebrated October 9-15, national wildlife refuges across the country 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/> and <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.