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News Release



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Hanford Reach National Monument/Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Provides Economic Benefits Today, Conservation Benefits for Future Generations

The Hanford Reach National Monument/Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge generated \$926,500 in total economic activity related to refuge recreational use and 13 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. 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 Hanford Reach. 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.

The Monument/Refuge is the first of its kind under U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service management within the lower 48 states and is managed as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Located on lands once serving as a security buffer for the top-secret Manhattan Project during World War II, the Monument is jointly administered by the Service and the Department of Energy. Lands under Service management include the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve and the Saddle Mountain and Wahluke Units. These units encompass important riparian, aquatic, riverine and upland shrub-steppe habitats that are declining throughout the American west, and also preserve rich archaeological and paleontological records. A majority of the Monument is presently open by special permit only, with 57,000 acres on the Wahluke Unit open to the general public. With the assistance of a local Federal Advisory Committee, the Monument is preparing its first Comprehensive Conservation Plan, and does not yet have amenities like directional signs, visitor facilities or interpretive programs. Despite this, the Monument received 49,000 visitors in 2004. Refuge visitors often pulled off the highway and Monument roads to observe wildlife. Other recreational uses included fishing, hunting, kayaking, motorboating, hiking and equestrian use.

“Hanford Reach National Monument 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 also ensure benefits to future generations as we conserve the natural and cultural resources that are the foundation of our life and our heritage. We expect our visitation and economic impact to increase as planning is completed and facilities and programs are implemented on Monument lands,” said Refuge Manager, Greg Hughes.

During National Wildlife Refuge Week, celebrated October 9-15, selected wildlife refuges will feature a number of special events, festivals and environmental education programs. Additional information, including a list of special 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.