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National Wildlife Refuges in Northwest Provide Economic Boost to Region

Recreational uses on national wildlife refuges in the Pacific Northwest generated nearly \$137 million in economic return and created more than 2,500 private sector jobs during fiscal year 2006, according to a new report released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The report, titled *Banking on Nature 2006: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation*, showed that nationwide, recreational uses on national wildlife refuges in 2006 generated almost \$1.7 billion in total economic activity.

According to the report, compiled by Service economists, nearly 35 million people nationwide visited national wildlife refuges in 2006, supporting almost 27,000 private sector jobs and producing about \$543 million in employment income. The national economic benefit is almost four times the \$383 million appropriated to the National Wildlife Refuge System in fiscal year 2006. In addition, recreational spending on national wildlife refuges nationwide generated nearly \$185.3 million in tax revenue at the local, county, state and federal level.

In the Pacific Northwest, national wildlife refuges welcomed more than 3.7 million visitors in 2006, creating more than \$46 million in job income. For its analysis of Pacific Northwest refuges, the report looked at Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Using findings from 80 national wildlife refuges considered typical in terms of the nation's recreational interests and spending habits, the report analyzed recreational participation in and expenditures for freshwater fishing, saltwater fishing, migratory bird hunting, small game hunting, big game hunting and non-consumptive activities, including wildlife observation. Calculation of the total economic activity included money spent for food and refreshments, lodging at motels, cabins, lodges or campgrounds, and transportation.

In making its calculations, *Banking on Nature 2006* used the Service's "2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation" and the visitation numbers from the individual refuges. Units with fewer than 1,500 visitors per year and those in Hawaii and Alaska (because travel there is so expensive) were excluded from the final calculations. Therefore, the *Banking on Nature* study estimates that 34.8 million people

visited wildlife refuges—a tally smaller than the actual visitation figure of more than 37 million reported by all refuges.

“We’ve always known that national wildlife refuges enrich Americans’ lives,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall. “This report reveals that the Refuge System, while admirably fulfilling its conservation mission, also repays us in dollars and cents. Those economic benefits go far beyond the system’s mandated mission to ensure wild creatures will always have a place on the American landscape.”

The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses 97 million acres and 548 national wildlife refuges. While the primary purpose of the Refuge System is to conserve native fish and wildlife and their habitat, priority is given to hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, environmental education, and interpretation.

Nationwide and in the Pacific region, about 87 percent of refuge visitors travel from outside the local area to take part in recreation on national wildlife refuges. Among significant other findings:

- About 82 percent of total expenditures came from non-consumptive recreation (recreation other than hunting and fishing) on national wildlife refuges. Fishing accounted for 12 percent of total expenditures, while hunting accounted for 6 percent.

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, published every five years by the Service, found that more than 87 million Americans, or 38 percent of the United States' population age 16 and older, pursued outdoor recreation in 2006. They spent \$120 billion that year pursuing those activities. About 71 million people observed wildlife, while 30 million fished and 12.5 million hunted.

- Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, on the Lower Columbia River 10 miles from the Portland metro area, welcomed more than 178,000 visitors and generated \$2.9 million in economic return in 2006. It was responsible for the creation of more than 36 private sector jobs, which generated nearly \$1.2 million in job income. The 5,217-acre refuge returned \$4.25 for every dollar in refuge budget expenditures.
- Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1909 and located just southwest of Boise, Idaho, includes the Snake River Islands. The islands provide a rich diversity of habitats, from small wetlands to sagebrush uplands. Several islands house heron rookeries and gull colonies, and provide resting and feeding spots for migratory birds. The refuge welcomed more than 118,000 people in 2006. It generated more than \$2 million in economic return for the surrounding community and created 33 private sector jobs. It returned \$10.29 for each refuge budget dollar it received in fiscal year 2006.
- Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County in southeast Oregon generated about \$4.4 million in economic return. More than 63,000 people visited Malheur in 2006 to enjoy its prime wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing. The refuge was responsible for the creation of 104 private sector jobs, generating about \$1.7 million in job income, the report states, and total tax revenue of \$578,000. For every dollar in refuge budget expenditures, the 187,000 -acre refuge returned \$5.69 to the community.

For a copy of the report or to find more information on the National Wildlife Refuge System, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuges>.

For more information about the following Refuges' results visit:

William L. Finley NWR	http://www.fws.gov/WillametteValley/finley/index.html
Dungeness NWR	http://www.fws.gov/washingtonmaritime/dungeness/
Ridgefield NWR	http://www.fws.gov/ridgefieldrefuges/RNWRHome.htm
Bandon Marsh NWR	http://www.fws.gov/oregoncoast/bandonmarsh/index.htm
Kiluea NWR	http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/wnwr/kkilaueanwr.html

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 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 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.

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