



# NEWS RELEASE



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## NEW MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS TO BEGIN AT COLUMBIA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Othello, Washington – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is beginning the process to develop a new management plan for the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR), a part of the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. For the past year, the FWS has been pulling together background information related to the refuge and its resources. Now, the agency will begin developing a new plan, a process that depends heavily on public participation.

To kick off the process, the FWS will host an open house on June 16, 2009, in the City of Othello Municipal Building's Council Room. The open house will run from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., with a short slide presentation on the planning process at 6:00 p.m. This will be the only formal presentation; the rest of the open house is devoted to listening to the public's concerns and ideas on management of the CNWR. The public will have the opportunity for one-on-one discussions with FWS staff about the future of the CNWR.

This open house also marks the start of a 30-day comment period in which the public can submit additional ideas, concerns and comments to the FWS over management of the refuge. This comment period, known as "public scoping," will expire on July 16, 2009. All comments must be postmarked by that date.

"We're excited about working with the public on a long-term management plan for the Columbia Refuge," said Greg Hughes, Project Leader for the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "This process will drive management of the refuge for at least the next 15 years and possibly longer."

Under the 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, all national wildlife refuges are required to have a management plan in place by 2012. These plans, known as Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs), address everything from protection of natural and cultural resources to visitor use and enjoyment of the refuge. Public participation is critical in helping the FWS in determining what the highest resource protection needs are and how best to protect those resources, while at the same time providing for public use of the refuge. This is the public's best opportunity to shape both the refuge's future and its own use of the CNWR.

The CNWR is one of eight refuges and one national monument within the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The other refuges are Cold Springs, McKay Creek, and Umatilla in Oregon, and

Conboy Lake, McNary, Saddle Mountain, and Toppenish in Washington. The Hanford Reach National Monument is also part of the complex.

**– FWS –**

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).