



NEWS RELEASE



[Department of the Interior](#) • [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#) • [64 Maple Street](#) • [Burbank, Washington 99323](#) • [\(509\) 546-8300](#)

September 9, 2009

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Hanford Reach National Monument Wahluke Slope Area Closure

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is continuing habitat restoration efforts on the Wahluke Management Unit of the Hanford Reach National Monument. On July 13, 2007, the Overlook fire burned over 21,000 acres on the Wahluke Unit. This fire was actually three separate fires, started by dry lightning storms, that eventually burned together. Most of the burned are consisted of native shrub-steppe uplands, but substantial riparian and wetland habitats in the Wahluke (WB-10) Ponds and other low lying areas were also damaged.

Following this fire, in consultation with Tribes and local technical experts, the FWS developed Burned Area Rehabilitation Plans (BAER) to address short and long-term rehabilitation needs.

The most visible operation to the general public will be the aerial spraying operations, which will begin on or around September 10, 2009, depending on weather conditions. Several hundred acres of Russian olive and saltcedar trees in and around the Wahluke Ponds and between White Bluffs Road and the Columbia River will be treated over a period of several days. This application will help control these noxious, invasive non-native trees, and in turn allow the reintroduction and establishment of native riparian vegetation. The spraying areas have been clearly defined and mapped for treatment using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to avoid impacts to native species. All herbicide applications will be weather dependent to avoid drift into non-target areas. Buffer areas where the chemical will not be applied have been identified and will be strictly followed.

Because of the nature of the aerial operations for this project, the treatment areas will be closed to Public Access during the operations. Although this portion of the Wahluke Unit is in an area that is normally open for public access and recreation, visitors will be directed to remain out of designated areas for the duration of the treatment applications. Please watch for signs that will inform visitors of the closed areas. It is important that users obey the signs for their own safety and for the safety of the personnel conducting the restoration operations and we appreciate your cooperation.

For further information, contact: Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 64 Maple Street, Burbank, Washington 99323, (509) 546-8300.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The FWS manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges—including two national monuments—thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 70 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 governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid Program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.