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**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Tarleton 15 min briefing 1st draft  
**Date:** Thursday, June 7, 2018 5:28:34 PM  
**Attachments:** [2018Presentation\\_for\\_DNWR\\_working\\_copy.doc](#)  
**Importance:** High

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Hi Kirk,  
Sending this to your computer. Need a print out of it,

Thanks

Gary

# **Interpretive Presentation for Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge**

Compiled and Written  
by  
Shawn Flaherty

Hello and welcome to the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge, part of the Washington Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Complex. This Complex includes the longest spit in the US the Dungeness Spit, it also includes Protection Island as well as approximately 83 other islands in the San Juan Islands and islands off of the West Coast of WA.

My name is \_Gary Tarleton and I hold the position of USFW Park Ranger and Caretaker at the Dungeness and I live in a cabin on the complex. In this presentation I will talk a little about the US Fish and Wildlife Service and give you some history and facts about the Dungeness Spit. As you travel down the trails and on the beach, I urge you to stop and listen and look at not only the nature surrounding you, but also to READ about the spit at the interpretive panels for rules and regulations that will keep you and the wildlife safe. Please hold any questions until the end.

## **USFWS History**

The earliest roots of the USFWS trace back to 1871 with the creation of the U.S. Commission on Fish and Fisheries. This group was charged with studying the decline in food fishes. In 1885, the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy was created to study how birds help control pests in agriculture. The first Federal Bird Reservation was on Pelican Island in Florida. This was established by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903, and this is usually referred to as the beginning of the current-day USFWS.

There were several other changes and laws enacted that eventually led to the creation of what is now known by name as the USFWS in 1939 by combining different departments that had been individually overseeing various types of wildlife.

The USFW emblem showing the FLYING GOOSE, where ever you come across it in the US from East Coast to West, hot desert or mountain, respect it and the wildlife within it, it is there domain.

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The mission statement of USFWS reads: **“The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.”** . This agency is the ONLY agency that has the primary responsibility of conserving fish, wildlife, and plants. Even though the Park Service and the Forest Service have different missions than the USFWS they do still manage wildlife, however that is not their primary mission. It IS the primary mission of the USFWS to actively and proactively do so. While these other two agencies may generally look at Trees or historic lands and objects first, on a wildlife refuge it is wildlife first.

Active management is critical to species survival. Biologists and researchers constantly learn new and different things about habitat and animals, and this affects change in how lands and wildlife are managed. What may have once been an accepted practice may now be discovered to be detrimental to wildlife so management of areas may need to undergo some changes to reflect this new knowledge. This is so important; in fact, that in 1997 Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act to strengthened the Refuge System mission. This Act also legislated for completion of Comprehensive Conservation Plans for every System refuge, and clarifies and directs the public use compatibility standards.

Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge is only one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge Systems in the US. This refuge consists of 636 acres of upland forest and sand spit.

## **Upland Forest**

As you **QUIETLY** walk down the trails toward The Spit you will go through the upland forest part of the refuge, a diverse, yet important part of, the Refuge. In this area you can see and hear many different types of birds, such as bald eagles, ravens, and songbirds. You may see black-tailed deer on the trail in front of you. A wide array of plants, bushes, and trees abound in this area - Oregon grape, snowberry, salal, madrone, big-leaf maple, alder and cedar are just a few.

I hope you will take the opportunity to explore both the Main trail and the primitive trail and see the differences between the two. (give directions)

## **History of "The Spit"**

The Dungeness Spit has a lot of interesting history. Before the designation as a National Wildlife Refuge in 1915 by President Woodrow Wilson there was actually quite a lot going on here.

The S'Klallam people used The Spit for thousands of years. On September 21, 1868 a group of 26 S'Klallam raided a party of 18 Tsimshian Indians who were camping on The Spit. The dead were buried in an area now known by the name "Graveyard Spit". The S'Klallam were eventually forced out of their villages by homesteaders in 1872 and spent a difficult year trying to live on The Spit before buying their own land in 1875 and established Jamestown to the east of Sequim.

Since the 1850s over 20 ships have run aground on The Spit, living up to its name of "Shipwreck Spit" given to it by mariners in the 1800s. The New Dungeness Lighthouse was first operational on December 14, 1857. It was approximately 100 feet tall when built, but when cracking was found in the tower it was shortened to 63 feet in 1927. (\_\_\_\_\_give tours of the lighthouse daily, and you can even rent rooms weekly. Please see their website, which is on the white sign across the main trail near the Pay Station. The hike from the parking lot is 11 miles roundtrip with no drinking

water or restrooms on the way so plan accordingly and return by the posted closing time.

Near the lighthouse there were anti-submarine nets placed across the Strait, and Voice of America Radio had a radio facility next to the lighthouse. In 1952 VOA also acquired nearly 1200 acres of farmland in this area and cleared it to put up a radio facility to beam programming behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. The project was scrapped, and part of that land is now part of the county park behind you.

### **Physical Characteristics of "The Spit"**

Undoubtedly many of you are here to see and walk the Dungeness Spit here at the refuge, more commonly called "The Spit".\_\_ A "spit" of land is defined by Merriam-Webster's as "*a small point of land, especially of sand or gravel, running into a body of water.*". A "spit" is different than a peninsula in that a spit is formed in the water by deposits, and a peninsula is a land mass surrounded by water. The term "spit" was originally derived from a word for "pointed" in Old High German language.

This definition fits The Spit perfectly; it is composed mostly of sand that has eroded from the bluffs on the other side of the forest directly behind the kiosk. When on the beach, these bluffs are to the west (or left) of The Spit. It is estimated that 200 years ago or so these bluffs were about two miles farther out into the water than they are currently. This erosion is continuously building The Spit 13 - 15 feet a year out on the end and some is deposited along the shoreline as well. To put this in perspective, the lighthouse was originally built 1/6 of a mile from the end of The Spit and is now about a half mile from the end. It is the longest natural sand spit in the U.S.

As you make your way down the hill on the last part of the trail you will see The Spit and two main bodies of water. On the left is the Strait of San Juan de Fuca; on the right is Dungeness Harbor. On the east side of Graveyard Spit (but not clearly visible at the bottom of the trail due to an optical illusion) is Dungeness Bay. Please refer to the maps we provide at the Pay Station for more detail. On the back of the map is a guide to activities and regulations for the Refuge.

If you venture out to the west along the beach PLEASE BE CAREFUL!!! The bluffs are closed areas and there is no climbing allowed on them. They can be very unstable so it is best to look at them from a few feet back, and if the tides are high there is no place you can run to avoid waves since there will be very little beach. Even during high tides it is still possible to get a view of this erosion by going down close to the water and west as far as you feel comfortable going. Not only can you see the erosion of the bluffs happening watching the 'sand falls', but you can see the different layers of sand, clay, rocks and even groundwater leaching out in some areas. In some parts this erosion is quite dramatic. If it is a sunny day, look at the water around The Spit on the open water side and you can see the eroded materials suspended in the currents waiting to be deposited. The water will be brown, then turn blue out beyond that. When you see this brown color you can understand just how much material is being relocated on a constant basis. As you look around on the beach you can even find big chunks of the clay, and some of them look like rounded balls with rocks in them.

The erosion is accelerated in the winter months, when there are higher high tides and stronger storms. With these storms and higher tides more rocks and gravel will wash up, as well as more logs and other debris. Some of these logs are perhaps from the logging that used to take place in the area; other logs are from trees falling down the slopes from above due to the erosion of the bluffs or disintegrating docks built years ago.

Your five senses can get a workout here. You can smell and taste the salty air, or perhaps you can smell the decaying vegetation. Look around you and see the constant building and destruction of where you are walking, something as simple as the patterns and footprints in the wet sand. If you look at the logs you can see that some have smooth ends... more than likely these were cut by someone. Stop and face the water and close your eyes and listen... the waves generally run in a direction that is west to east, so you can hear the wonderful, natural stereo effect of this motion as it builds in your left ear, runs through your brain, and you then hear it leave your right ear going eastward along the shore. Pick up things on the beach... the rocks, kelp, and wood - touch, feel, and look at them. Think about the forces of how those giant logs and rocks got to where they are... they were not put there by humans! If you are here during a storm you can

see and hear massive waves and feel the ground shake with the power as they crash onshore.

This is an exciting place that is alive with change and is in a constant state of motion. The forces in nature really come to life here, and they never stop.

### **Wildlife on “The Spit”**

The wildlife on and around The Spit is amazing and diverse. Fish, invertebrates, mammals, and birds all call this place home. You can really be surprised by what you see here.

Approximately 8000 ducks and 1500 black brant winter here. Green-winged teal, mallards, American wigeon, and bufflehead are just a few of the types of ducks here.

In the Spring, upwards of 25,000 shorebirds stop here to rest and feed, and the beginning of Fall migration starts in late July with the arrival of about 12,000 shorebirds, such as dunlin, sanderlings, and black-bellied plovers.

In Summer you can find double-crested cormorants, black oystercatchers, rhinoceros auklets among others.

Many species of songbirds sing out in the forested areas during Spring and Summer, if your quiet you might hear them.

Bald eagles frequent the area, as do peregrine falcon. If you are really lucky you might catch a glimpse of a snowy owl in the winter!

Or, perhaps in the late Winter or early Spring months you may see an orca or gray whale on the Strait side of The Spit!

Harbor seals frequent areas of The Spit and have pups in July, rogue orcas feed on these seals. There are areas in the Harbor for young salmon and trout to feed and grow, and other fishes can be found here as well. Those delicious Dungeness crab can be found in this area along with clams and other shellfish.

As you can see, The Spit is a very important and vital habitat for all of these creatures.

That is all I have for you in this presentation. In case I did not cover something you would like to know, are there any questions?

Please stop by the Pay Station for your permit on your way down the trail and take a map if you would like one. Restrooms and water are across the road.

In closing I would like to thank you for visiting the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge today.

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One last important item >

SAFETY:

Here we practise the Leave No Trace philosophy:

Walk -do not run- through the headlands and beach unless its an emergency.

Do not yell , scream or whistle.

No kites or brisbes or beach balls.

No collecting of artifacts, shells, wood or any objects , leave discoveries for others.

Pack out what you pack in.

Do not chase animals or get to close.

Do not approach, do not pet seal pups or get to close for selfies.

Use your thumb for distance reference.....

Do not build structures. They are dangerous to others.

Do not climb on the steep slopes or dig in the banks.

Leave no trace only footprints.

This environment is for the wild animals, you are their guests.

Our plundered planet, humanity has flourished beyond its proper limits.