

Department of the Interior
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 Hanford Reach National Monument/
 Saddle Mountain NWR
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News Release



November 17, 2005

Contact: Mike Ritter, (509) 371-1801

Elk Management Actions Under Consideration

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is announcing a public comment period for three draft documents related to elk population management on the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve Unit (ALE) of the Hanford Reach National Monument (Monument). The draft documents include an environmental assessment, elk hunt plan, and compatibility determination. The documents are available for public review through the Monument's web site, hanfordreach.fws.gov/elk.html. Copies may also be requested from the Monument at (509) 371-1801.

The Service is proposing to implement elk management and monitoring on the Monument to assist the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in achieving its elk management objective for the Rattlesnake Hills Elk Herd, which ranges between the Monument and surrounding lands throughout the year. The environmental assessment addresses a range of management strategies, including both non-lethal and lethal methods, to achieve the herd objective of less than 350 animals and to control or remove elk that threaten or impact Monument resources, public safety, or private property.

The comment period closes December 18, 2005. Comments submitted by email must be received by 10:00 pm on the 18th. Comments sent by regular mail must be postmarked by the 18th. Emailed comments should be sent to: hanfordreach@fws.gov. Comments sent by mail should be addressed to: **Elk Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 3250 Port of Benton Boulevard, Richland, Washington 99354.**

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 542 national wildlife refuges, 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.

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NOTE: This news release and others can be viewed on either the Service's Pacific Regional home page on the Internet at <http://www.r1.fws.gov> or the National home page at: <http://www.fws.gov/r9extaff/renews.html>

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