

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge
Press Release

First Annual Long Island Hike and BBQ

Sept. 27, 2004
Ilwaco, WA

Nearly 100 Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge members gathered at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge headquarters to enjoy the camaraderie and celebrate a year of successes in; public school environmental education programs, adult environmental education programs, and increased awareness of the Refuge both nationally and locally. Friends had an opportunity to ride the barge over to Long Island to hike to the island's Old Growth Cedar Forest. The nearly 6 mile scenic hike offered hikers a view of the incredible natural beauty of the island as well as well as glimpses of the native amphibian population including; rough-skinned newts, Pacific tree frogs, and red-legged frogs. The island showcases both what a healthy forest looks and sounds like and what areas are prime locations for reforestation efforts. Friends members Linda and Royce Rotmark commented, "You could feel the history in that forest". Enormous stumps with cuts etched into the bases are reminders of the men whose livelihood depended on logging years ago and the sheer size of these trees.

Terri Bulter, Deputy Project Leader for the Willapa Complex shared, "These Friends events are wonderful ways to introduce the public to the Refuge. People are amazed at the resources that are here". Ms. Butler informed the group of upcoming efforts the Refuge will pursue in Forest Management projects in conjunction with Ellsworth Creek Preserve managed by The Nature Conservancy of Washington. Forest and tidal restoration works towards a healthier habitat for the Marbled Murrelet, Bald Eagles, as well as runs of Coho and Chum Salmon and Sea-run Cutthroat trout. David Gonzales, Manager of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge commented "I always enjoy talking with the various Friends members, they have so much passion and excitement in what they do and their efforts are wonderful".

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife has over 250 members with over 40 active members who volunteered this year to see such projects through as: monitoring waterfowl and shorebirds, assisting with the fall goose hunting season, hauling and spreading oystershells for snowy plover nests (which showed so much success that the area is being expanded to 10 acres this coming year), and teaching the fourth grade environmental education program. Boundless volunteer opportunities always exist with this active Friends group.

People interested in membership and/or volunteering, or learning more, should contact Bev Arnoldy at 665-1234 or bev@pacifier.com. Both financial and human resources are both so appreciated and needed. Local businesses that sponsored the Friends BBQ included; Jack's Country Store, Oakies Sentry Supermarket, Sid's IGA Supermarket and Cottage Bakery & Deli.

About Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

Willapa Bay is the largest estuary in the northwest United States region outside Puget Sound, covering approximately 88,000 acres at high tide with over 100 miles of shoreline. The Bay is the defining geography for the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, which comprises nearly 14,000 acres of upland forest, tidelands, beach dunes, freshwater marshes, diked grasslands,

and other wetland habitat. Aquatic habitats and grasslands on the Refuge support migratory populations of literally hundreds of bird species such as black brant, trumpeter swans, Canada geese, scaup, canvasback, bufflehead, scoters, and American wigeon. The Refuge also hosts some of the largest concentrations of shorebirds on the Pacific Coast and provides habitat for the threatened western snowy plover and a threatened seabird, the marbled murrelet. Black bear, black-tailed deer, Roosevelt elk, bats, bobcats, and grouse can be found in the forests and upland habitats. The cool, wet climate of Willapa Bay makes the area a "hotspot" of amphibian and fish diversity, where Refuge habitats support over half of the 24 native amphibians that occur in the state and provide spawning grounds for chinook, coho, and chum salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout. Willapa is one of over 500 national wildlife refuges in the United States operated by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only national network of public lands in the world set aside specifically for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. Encompassing 93 million acres, the Refuge System boasts more units than the National Forest System and more acres than the National Park System. The Refuge system celebrated 100 years of conservation success in 2003, its Centennial year.

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