



## Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

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### Press Release:

## ***New Outdoor Recreation Planner Joins Refuge Staff at Willapa NWR***

*Washington native “returns home” to lead environmental education and public access programs for Willapa Refuge Complex*

Naselle, WA – Thursday, June 12, 2003 – Kristine Massin joins the staff at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge as Outdoor Recreation Planner, returning to Washington State from her most recent posting at Rocky Mountain Arsenal Refuge near Denver, Colorado. Her responsibilities will include curricula development for educational outreach programs sponsored by the Refuge as well as public use plans for the 16,000 acre Willapa Refuge Complex. Her experiences at the Rocky Mountain Refuge during the past three years have prepared her well for Willapa; Massin published a quarterly newsletter, developed and presented weekend nature programs, designed exhibits for the Visitor Center, created and staffed booths at major community events such as Colorado county and state fairs, sportsmen’s shows, and community picnics.

Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader for the Willapa Refuge Complex, announced Massin’s appointment with enthusiasm. “Kristine’s background includes extensive experience in environmental education and public outreach. We’re very fortunate to attract her to Willapa to expand upon our educational programs and our public use plans for the Refuge.” Bev Arnoldy, President of The Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, a non-profit organization dedicated to support the Refuge, echoed Stenvall’s comments. “Our elementary school environmental program has been a great start towards building a greater sense of environmental stewardship in Pacific County youth. Kristine’s expertise will help us expand that program throughout the community.”

From her perspective, Kristine is “coming home.” Born on Washington’s Vashon Island, Kristine literally “grew up” on National Wildlife Refuges as her step-father was employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Her adult vocation is a “natural path” for her. “I’ve been trying to work my way back to the Pacific Northwest since my parents were transferred in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade!” confesses Massin. “It’s great to return to the rain and the ocean.”

Massin's skills in planning and leadership will be put to the test early this summer. Her first responsibilities include the reconstruction of the boat ramp at Refuge Headquarters and supervision of the construction of the Salmon Interpretative Trail. "Management of development projects is a regular drill in this job," notes Massin. "I admit, however, that learning how to drive an airboat is a new experience. We use airboats often here at Willapa, so mastering the techniques for their maneuverability is a priority."

Massin and her husband will initially make their home in Bay Center, where their house is filled with "critters," including two dogs, two cats, two horses, racing pigeons, several snakes and lizards, native fish tanks, and a peregrine falcon. "I guess my professional interests in fish and wildlife follow me home," Kristine laughs. "Of course, the educational benefit of non-releasable wildlife is significant; I've often used raptors and snakes in interpretative programs to help emphasize the impact that people have on wildlife."

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### **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, including the endangered western snowy plover and 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 celebrates 100 years of conservation success in 2003, its Centennial Year.

### **About the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge**

The Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge is a non-profit 503 (c) (3) organization dedicated to support and enhancement of Willapa Refuge programs. The Willapa Friends is one of over 220 volunteer groups nationwide who partner with local refuge staff to support specific Refuge programs. Nearly 200 individual and corporate members support Willapa Friends' education, maintenance, advocacy, and general assistance activities under direction of Refuge staff.