

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge
Press Release

Grand opening of the Salmon Trail this Fall - volunteers needed.

Long Beach, WA
September 8th, 2004

Volunteers are needed to help kick off the inaugural opening of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge's Salmon Trail during this coming Fall salmon spawning season. Normally, the Salmon Trail is open only Monday through Friday but the refuge would like visitors to be able to view the salmon run on weekends as well during the spawning season.

Volunteers can sign up for two or more shifts during the season (more is great!) Planned dates include; weekends of Oct 30/31, Nov 6/7, Nov 13/14, as well as either Oct 23/24 OR Nov 20/21 based on when the salmon starts coming in. Shifts are 10am-1pm and 1pm-4pm. A training/orientation session will be held Sat Oct 9, 10am-1pm at Refuge Headquarters ...we won't send you unprepared!

Volunteers will be responsible for answering visitors' basic questions about the trail and the salmon as well ensuring that visitors keep a respectful distance from the fish attempting to spawn. Volunteers' main duties will be: 1) answering basic questions 2) supervising the trail. Other duties may include: giving directions to visitors, maintaining a count of the number of visitors, giving group tours (if the volunteer is interested; but not required), maintaining the trail (sweeping debris from the trail, weeding), etc. Backpacks with field guides, information on trail history, salmon biology, etc. will be provided to volunteers.

The trail opening this fall marks the fourth year of returning salmon on a restoration project that began eight years ago restoration project that yielded a record return of chum salmon to the creek last year. "Between 400 and 500 salmon returned last fall, up from 300 the year before, and a mere dozen the year before that" said Kristine Massin, Outdoor Recreational Planner at the Willapa Refuge. Massin continues, "This project will further help protect the salmon here as well as demonstrate that small creek projects can be relatively easily restored to productive conditions for wildlife. Visitors will enjoy this up close look at nature at its best."

If you can't attend the training but are interested in volunteering, contact Kristine Massin, Outdoor Recreational Planner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, 360-484-3482 or kristine_massin@fws.gov.

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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