

Hanford Reach National Monument
Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge

Visitor Services Review

July 8 – 12, 2002

US Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wildlife Refuge System

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ALE Reserve	Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve
BLM	U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management
BOR	U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation
CCP	Comprehensive Conservation Plan
CLUP	Comprehensive Land Use Plan
DOE	U.S. Department of Energy
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Service	U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service
GIS	Geographic Information System
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
Monument	Hanford Reach National Monument
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NERP	National Environmental Research Park
NPS	U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
ORP	Outdoor Recreation Planner
RNA	Research Natural Area
ROD	Record of Decision
WADOT	Washington Department of Transportation
WDFW	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

I. Introduction

This document discusses issues and concerns and provides recommendations generated at the Hanford Reach National Monument/Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge (Monument) Visitor Services Review (Review) held on July 8 – 12, 2002. According to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) draft Refuge Review policy (601 FW 8), reviews ensure that the Refuge System and its individual units are managed consistently, in compliance with legal and policy requirements, and in an effective and efficient manner. Program-specific Refuge Reviews, such as a Visitor Services Review, are conducted on an as-needed basis unless policy requires otherwise. Refuge Reviews, such as this one at Hanford, are also conducted to assist with internal scoping prior to development or revision of a refuge a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

The Service is developing a CCP and associated Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS) for the Monument (Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 113, pages 40333-40337. When completed, the CCP will establish the long-term vision and management goals, objectives and strategies for the Monument for the next 15 years. The Visitor Services Review occurred during the scoping phase of the CCP/EIS. In scoping the Service encourages the public to help identify potential issues, management actions and concerns, significant problems or impacts, and opportunities or alternatives to resolve them. Internal scoping was also identifies preliminary issues, concerns and opportunities to be addressed in the plan and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document (in this case an EIS). The issues and recommendations contained in this document will be used by the Service in combination with all other issues, concerns and opportunities raised by the public in the scoping phase to develop and evaluate a range of alternative plans.

II. Purpose of Review

The Visitor Services Review brought together a team of experts to discuss existing uses, conditions, issues, and potential opportunities related to public use management on the Monument. The recommendations contained in this report were formulated by Monument staff and core review team members identified in the appendix.

The purpose of this Review was to:

- Help develop the long-term vision for visitor services for the Monument that will be used to develop goals and objectives;
- Determine the extent to which the Monument's current visitor services opportunities support Monument purposes, priorities, goals and objectives; the National Wildlife Refuge System mission; and Service policies regarding visitor services;
- Evaluate existing opportunities, concerns, and issues and constraints limiting visitor service opportunities;
- Identify the existing and potential opportunities for visitor services programs on the Monument and nearby non-Monument lands
- Identify inventory, monitoring, and research needs required to make management decisions regarding visitor services;

- Identify staffing/equipment needs required to implement high quality visitor service programs on the Monument; and
- Evaluate which new opportunities are feasible or not feasible.

III. Monument and Refuge Purposes

The Monument includes approximately 195,000 acres of land in four counties (Benton, Franklin, Grant, and Adams) in south-central Washington directly northwest of the Tri-Cities area. The Monument forms a large C-shaped region, bisected by the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River. All of the land is controlled by the Department of Energy (DOE) and is part of the 360,000 acre Hanford Site. The Hanford Site was established by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1943 as a national security area for the production of weapons-grade plutonium and siting associated purification facilities. For more than 40 years, the primary mission at Hanford was associated with the production of nuclear materials for national defense. However, large tracts of land used as protective buffer zones for safety and security purposes were left undisturbed. These buffer zones preserved a biological and cultural resource setting unique in the Columbia Basin region.

Presidential Proclamation Establishing the Monument

The Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation in June, 2000. The Proclamation directs the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Service to protect and conserve the area's native biological communities (i.e., native plant, fish, and wildlife), specifically recognizing the nationally significant scientific values provided by the area's biologically diverse shrub-steppe ecosystem and the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River. The Proclamation further directs the DOE and Service to protect and preserve the archaeological and historical (cultural) resources that are found in abundance within the Monument. Additionally, the Proclamation specifically prohibits all motorized and mechanized off-road vehicle use (except for emergency or other federally authorized purposes) and livestock grazing within the Monument. The Proclamation also states that as lands under DOE management become suitable for Service management they will be transferred to the Service.

IV. Management Authority

The Service and DOE are joint stewards of the Monument. The Service manages some of the lands within the Monument area under permits and agreements with DOE, as directed by the Proclamation. The Service and the DOE are expected to extend the agreements to other lands included in the Monument that are not now managed by the Service. As directed in the Proclamation, the Service manages lands under its management jurisdiction pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, 16 U.S.C. § 668dd-ee, and in accordance with agreements with DOE. The DOE will manage lands within the Monument that are not subject to management agreements with the Service (primarily the land bordering the south side of the Hanford Reach) under its existing authorities and consistent with the purposes of the Monument.

V. DOE Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The Service signed a Record of Decision adopting the DOE's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The DOE's Preferred Alternative includes increasing recreational access to the Columbia River and expanding the Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge to include all of the North Slope (Hanford Site lands north and east of the River), those islands found in Grant and Franklin counties, the McGee Ranch and Riverlands, and the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve (ALE). The CLUP is the template that the DOE will use to define the range of management options on Monument lands at the Hanford Site.

VI. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recreation Policy

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans (National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997). The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended, states that "compatible wildlife-dependent recreation is a legitimate and appropriate general public use of the System, directly related to the mission of the System and the purposes of many refuges, and which generally fosters refuge management and through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife." The Act specifies six priority general public uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System: 1) hunting; 2) fishing; 3) wildlife observation; 4) wildlife photography; 5) environmental education; and 6) interpretation. Further, the Act states that these "Big 6" uses shall receive priority consideration, and that all visitor services and recreation activities and associated facilities on Service managed lands should be determined to be compatible with the mission of the System and the purposes of the refuge.

VII. Existing Recreational Use and Opportunities on the Monument

This section describes the public access, natural and cultural features, and recreation opportunities at the Monument.

Public Access

Portions of the Monument are open during daylight hours. Currently, there are no fees associated with visitation. Visitors primarily access the Monument by vehicle or by boat on the river. Visitors can also access the Monument by horse, on foot, or by bicycle. Off-highway vehicles (OHV) are not permitted in the Monument.

Located within a one-half day's drive of more than four million people, the Monument currently provides locally and regionally significant semi-primitive opportunities for fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, photography, hiking, biking, horseback riding, environmental education, and motorized and non-motorized boating. Visitors may access approximately 57,000 acres of the Wahluke Unit, 800 acres of the Vernita Bridge Unit, a portion of the McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit, and over 50 miles of river along the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River (River Corridor Unit). The 77,000-acre Fitzner/Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) Reserve Unit and the 32,000-acre Saddle Mountain Unit are generally closed to public use but

are open for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) or DOE approved research and educational pursuits. The scenery, wildlife, and seasonal opportunities for solitude contribute to the high quality of recreational opportunities in this area. Current visitor facilities consist of several access roads, parking areas, and boat launches (developed and primitive).

Several roads provide public access to the Monument (Figure 1). State Route (SR) 24 bisects the Wahluke Unit and the Saddle Mountain Units roughly in an east-west direction along the base of the Saddle Mountains. Ringold Road provides access to the southern portion of the Wahluke Unit. SR 24 and SR 243 border the Vernita Bridge Unit on the northern and eastern side of the unit, respectively. Additionally, SR 24 provides the southern and eastern border of the McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit. SR 240 travels from the northwest to the southeast along the eastern border of the ALE Reserve Unit.

Public access to the Monument is limited to four of the six administrative units—the Wahluke Unit, Vernita Bridge Unit, McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit, and the River Corridor Unit. While both the Saddle Mountain and ALE Reserve Units are closed to general public access, both units can be accessed for approved educational purposes. The Saddle Mountain Unit can be accessed from SR 24, and the ALE Reserve Unit can be accessed from SR 240. Interior roads in the ALE Reserve Unit provide access to: an observatory operated for educational purposes that has associated instrumentation to monitor climatological, meteorological and seismic conditions on the top of Rattlesnake Mountain; the fire staging area at the decommissioned Nike site; and the Rattlesnake Springs area.

Vehicular access to the Wahluke Unit is possible along three interior access roads. At the southern end of the unit, the public can access the Monument on Ringold Road. Ringold Road is gated between Parking Lot 8 and the White Bluffs Scenic Overlook. At the northern end of the unit, the public can access the Monument on two interior roads off of SR 24. The first road (located approximately at mile marker 63.2 of SR 24) provides access to the interior ponds (WB-10 Ponds), the White Bluffs Boat Launch, and the White Bluffs Scenic Overlook. The second road (located approximately at mile marker 60.1 of SR 24) provides access to the Saddle Mountains. Visitors can also access the Wahluke Unit from the BLM's Saddle Mountain Management Area, located along the northern border of the Saddle Mountain and Wahluke Units.

Vehicle access to the McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit is possible along the Midway Road off of SR 24. Public use of the unit, however, is limited to the area between Midway Road and the Columbia River.

On the northern shoreline of the river, across from the McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit, vehicle access to the Vernita Bridge Unit is possible from SR 243. An undeveloped interior road provides unconfined vehicle and pedestrian access to much of the shoreline within this unit.

The River Corridor Unit is primarily accessed by boat, though vehicular access is possible at several locations along the river reach. Within the Monument, boat launching primarily occurs at four areas along the river. The most heavily used boat launch area along the northern section of the river reach is located within the Vernita Bridge Unit. While not developed, several shoreline locations within this unit are used by visitors to launch boats. Along the southern

shoreline across from the Vernita Bridge Unit, an undeveloped boat launch provides access to the river from the McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit. The remaining two river access areas are located within the Wahluke Unit at the White Bluffs Boat Launch and at Parking Lot 7. The White Bluffs Boat Launch is the only developed public boat launch in the Monument and has a single concrete lane. The boat launch on the south side of the river at White Bluffs is closed to public use. All of the other boat launches (discussed above) are primitive (gravel and/or dirt ramps) with no specifically designated lanes.

Upstream from the Monument, boat access to the river is limited by the Priest Rapids Dam. However, several boat launches downstream of the Monument provide boat access to the River Corridor Unit. An undeveloped boat launch managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is located just south of the Wahluke Unit at the Ringold Fish Hatchery. This boat launch receives heavy use during summer and fall salmon and steelhead fishing seasons. Additionally, there are approximately 13 other boat launches in the Tri-Cities area that can be used to access the River Corridor Unit.

Natural and Cultural Features of the Monument

Various notable features are found throughout the Monument and distinguish it from other regional recreation areas. One of the most notable natural features of the Monument is the 51-mile stretch of the Columbia River that runs through it. The Hanford Reach of the Columbia River has been found suitable and eligible for Recreational River designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (NPS 1994). This river segment is under interim protection status through Public Law (PL) 100-605, as amended by Section 404 of PL104-333, and is managed by the Service.

While similar recreational opportunities are available at other regional locations, the exceptional views, undisturbed habitats, abundant wildlife, and historical importance of the Hanford Site make the Monument a unique and extraordinary destination for recreational pursuits. The natural features of the Monument, as well as the historical importance of the area, provide both opportunities and constraints to recreational activities and development at the Monument.

Regionally, various managing agencies provide for a diverse range of recreational opportunities in the vicinity of the Monument. These agencies include the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Chelan Public Utility District (PUD), Douglas PUD, Benton County, Franklin County, Yakima County, several city park departments, and the Service. Many of the areas managed by these agencies provide similar recreational opportunities to those found on the Monument, including opportunities for boating, fishing, hunting, swimming, interpretive facilities, environmental education, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and wildlife observation, among others. However, despite similar recreational opportunities in the vicinity, the Monument is a unique regional recreation destination due to its notable features and historical importance (discussed below), as well as its relatively undisturbed natural setting, exceptional salmon and steelhead angling, abundance of migratory waterfowl, opportunities for solitude, and wildlife and wildflower viewing opportunities, among others.

The multiple notable natural features of the Monument provide recreational opportunities for many activities including sightseeing and nature appreciation, photography, education and interpretation, hiking, horseback riding, boating, hunting, and angling, among others. These same features, however, pose constraints on activities and public access, as many of the features are ecologically and culturally sensitive and could be easily impacted (ecologically and visually) by recreational activities and development.

Recreation

It is estimated that approximately 60,000 people per year visit the Monument to participate in a variety of wildlife-dependent recreational and educational activities. These include hunting, angling, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, and interpretation. Recreational and educational use of the Monument tends to be focused in areas currently developed for these purposes and in other areas of specific interest, including Rattlesnake Mountain, Saddle Mountain, Wahluke Slope, White Bluffs, and Hanford Reach.

Estimate of Recreational and Educational Use of the Monument

Currently, there is a lack of comprehensive recreational use studies for the Monument. As part of the Wild and Scenic River Study of the Hanford Reach, the National Park Service (NPS) summarized traffic count data for the area (provided by the WDFW) for the period of time from July 1988 to July 1989. Limited traffic counter data from various years between 1985 and 1997 are also available for certain areas within the Monument.

Table 1 details vehicles and estimated visits to the Wahluke Unit (previously the Wahluke Wildlife Recreation Area) between July 1988 and July 1989. According to the traffic counter data, approximately 41,630 visitors (assuming 2.3 visitors per vehicle) used the Wahluke area during this time span. More than half of the estimated visits are attributed to the Vernita Bridge area (NPS 1994).

Table 1. Visitation at the Wahluke Unit, 1988-1989.

Traffic Counter Area	Vehicles	Estimated Visits
Vernita Bridge	9,250	21,275
White Bluffs	4,250	9,775
Ringold	3,600	8,280
Wahluke Slope	1,000	2,300
TOTAL	18,100	41,630

Source: NPS (1994)

In addition to recreational visits originating within the Monument, the NPS estimated that approximately 20 percent of use could be attributed to boaters using launches outside of the Monument to access the Hanford Reach. Supplementing the traffic count visitation estimates with an estimate of water-based visits, the NPS determined that approximately 10,000 recreational visits could be attributed to land-based visits, while 40,000 visits could be attributed to water-based visits (total estimate of roughly 50,000 visitors). Land-based visitors included hunters, trappers, and non-consumptive users. Water-based visitors were primarily anglers (NPS 1994).

The NPS based much of the use information contained in the River Conservation Study on traffic counter data provided by the WDFW. Traffic counters were placed at three access areas including the Wahluke Mountain Road, Ringold area, and White Bluffs area. The traffic counters recorded each vehicle as it crossed the counter. Traffic counter data were used to compile the visitor estimates in Table 1 above.

The most current estimate of visitation of the three administrative units at the Monument comes from the RMIS database. Visitation estimates in the database are used to track not only total visitation to an area, but also to track visitors by activity type. Activities tracked through RMIS include interpretation and nature observation (e.g., kiosks, nature trails and wildlife observation), environmental education (e.g., staff and volunteer-led educational programs and workshops), and recreation (e.g., hunting, fishing, beach and water uses, and other activities). Visitation estimates for the 3 administrative units of the Monument (Wahluke, Saddle Mountain, and ALE Reserve Units) is summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. RMIS database use estimates for the Wahluke, Saddle Mountain, and ALE Reserve Units of the Monument (10/1/00—9/30/2001).

Activity	Visitors
Interpretation and Nature Observation	13,575
Environmental Education	485
Recreation	9,946
TOTAL	24,006

Source: FWS (2002a).

Based on visitation estimates by the NPS and RMIS, regional activity participation projections (IAC 1990 and Cordell 1999), and increasing publicity (and visitation) of the area as a result of “Monument” designation, it is estimated that approximately 60,000 users per year currently visit the Monument. While visitation at federal parks in Washington has generally decreased over the past 10 years, it is predicted that the Monument did not experience a similar decrease in visitation (WOFM 2001). Given the historical importance of the Hanford Site, and the fact that visitation at other historically important federal areas in Washington has increased in the past 10 years, visitation at the Monument has likely increased since 1990 and is expected to continue to increase as more people learn about the area.

Increases in activity participation rates also influenced the estimated increase in visitation at the Monument over the past 10 years. According to the 1990-1995 Washington Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), most recreational uses of the Monument were estimated to increase between 1987 and 2000. Many activities, including outdoor photography, picnicking, sightseeing, nature study, and wildlife observation, were projected to have growth rates of 35 percent or more by 2000. Other activities were projected to have less robust growth rates, including boating and fishing, while others were estimated to experience minimal growth, including waterfowl hunting and small game hunting (IAC 1990). Participation in fishing and hunting, two of the more popular activities in the Monument, has decreased slightly statewide in the past 10 years. The number of big game hunting licenses issued in Washington has decreased by 16 percent from 1990 to 2000, but has seen a slight recovery in recent years. Sport fishing statistics have been more variable in the period of time from 1990 to 2000 and are dependent on the number of sport fish returning to an area (such as

steelhead and salmon) (WOFM 2001). However, due to the popularity of fishing and hunting along the Hanford Reach, it is estimated that any local (within the Monument) decreases in these activities were not as pronounced as statewide decreases over the past 10 years.

It is projected that visitation to the Monument will continue to increase in the future. In addition to becoming a more publicized regional attraction (e.g., articles in national publications, site addition to maps and gazetteers, and television coverage), many of the activities that currently occur on the Monument are estimated to increase over the next 20 years. Table 3 details current and future participation in various outdoor recreation activities currently occurring in the Monument. These activity participation trends are based on estimated changes in population, changes in the supply of recreational opportunities, and changes in demographic variables, such as age, race, and income. Regional and national participation is estimated to increase for all but one activity—hunting. In general, the increase in activity participation is expected to be larger in the Pacific Region than for the nation as a whole, though several activities (visiting historic places, biking, and fishing) will see larger national increases. It is also estimated that any changes in regional participation will be more pronounced in Washington state due to high existing participation rates in activities that occur at the Monument (IAC 2002).

Table 3. Pacific Region and National Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends from 2000 to 2020.

Activity	PACIFIC REGION ¹			NATIONAL		
	2000 Participation ²	2020 Participation ²	2000-2020 Percent Change ³	2000 Participation ²	2020 Participation ²	2000-2020 Percent Change ³
Sightseeing	20.165	26.27	+30%	119.07	149.688	+26%
Non-consumptive wildlife activities	18.036	22.879	+27%	121.368	150.543	+24%
Developed camping	9.328	11.616	+25%	42.33	49.385	+17%
Hiking	11.772	14.606	+24%	49.234	58.794	+19%
Walking	22.788	28.274	+24%	137.711	161.777	+17%
Motorboating	6.741	8.316	+23%	48.41	56.87	+17%
Visiting a beach or waterside	22.356	27.531	+23%	130.62	154.256	+18%
Horseback riding	2.52	3.096	+23%	14.586	17.589	+21%
Canoeing	1.272	1.56	+23%	14.382	16.215	+13%
Visiting historic places	14.904	18.354	+23%	93.704	116.688	+25%
Non-pool swimming	12.296	14.964	+22%	80.443	94.501	+17%
Biking	10.388	12.642	+22%	59.696	73.472	+23%
Picnicking	16.906	20.698	+22%	102.232	122.875	+20%
Family gathering	20.651	20.09	+21%	128.752	153.512	+19%
Backpacking	3.99	4.674	+17%	15.2	16.872	+11%
Primitive camping	5.88	6.888	+17%	28	29.12	+4%
Fishing	7.875	9	+14%	59.637	71.217	+19%
Hunting	1.598	1.343	-16%	18.042	16.926	-6%

¹ The Pacific Region is defined as California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii.

² Millions of participants.

³ The percent change in activity participation was not tested for statistical significance.

Source: Cordell (1999)

In addition to increases in activity participation rates, population changes will also likely affect future use of the Monument. Traditionally, most use of the Monument has come from Washington State residents, mainly from the eastern portion of the state, but also from the western portion. It is anticipated that Monument-status for the area will attract visitors from a larger region. Table 4 details population projections for various counties adjacent to the Monument, eastern and western Washington, nearby states, and the Pacific region. This table indicates the rapid growth is projected to continue at least until the year 2020. This growth in population will likely increase the number of visitors to the Monument and also the number of recreational demands placed on the Monument as a regional recreation destination.

Table 4. County, State, and region population estimates and forecasts through 2020.

Area	2000 Population	Projected 2020 Population	2000-2020 Percent Change¹
Washington Counties Near the Monument			
Adams	16,428	20,919	+27%
Benton	142,475	177,388	+25%
Douglas	32,603	44,920	+38%
Franklin	49,347	64,687	+31%
Grant	74,698	95,715	+28%
Kittitas	33,362	41,776	+25%
Walla Walla	55,180	64,856	+18%
Yakima	222,581	269,401	+21%
Washington			
Eastern	1,306,948	1,638,199	+25%
Western	4,587,173	5,907,070	+29%
Statewide	5,894,121	7,545,269	+28%
Oregon			
	3,397,000	4,177,000	+23%
Idaho			
	1,347,000	1,683,000	+25%
Alaska			
	653,000	838,000	+28%
Pacific Region			
	43,687,000	59,416,000	+36%

¹The percent change in population was not tested for statistical significance.

Source: WOFM (2002), U.S. Census Bureau (1997).

General Seasons of Use

Informal estimates of visitors to the Monument indicate that use is increasing. During the peak use seasons, certain areas of the Monument can get very crowded. During these times the parking areas tend to be full, there can be significant wait times at the boat launches, and there is heavy boat use on the river. Additionally, many visitors during the peak seasons spend most of the day at the Monument, arriving in the early morning and staying until late in the evening.

There are three traditional peak use periods during the year: the April-May fishing season, the August-October fishing season, and the fall hunting season. Additionally, a fourth peak use season seems to be emerging during the spring, primarily for nature appreciation-related activities. However, heavy use is not limited to these peak use seasons, as there are other periods of heavy visitation at the Monument including during the summer sturgeon fishing season.

April to May Fishing Season: This season primarily attracts bass anglers to the Ringold area of the Monument.

August to October Fishing Season: Salmon and steelhead anglers primarily use the river during this season. The fishing season begins in early August and closes at the end of October, but the fishing tends to be best from early to mid-October. The river can get very crowded during this season, especially around the White Bluffs area.

Fall Hunting Season: Beginning in mid-October, big game and waterfowl hunters use certain areas of the Monument (primarily the Wahluke and River Corridor Units). Deer season lasts a couple of weeks, but waterfowl hunting continues through approximately mid-November through mid-January on the river.

Spring appears to be another developing peak use season of the Monument. The lower elevation and desert climate of the Monument allows hikers, horseback riders, bikers, wildflower enthusiasts, and migratory bird watchers to use the area when higher elevation recreation areas are still inaccessible due to snow. Currently, the number of these visitors is less than the hunter/angler population that has traditionally used the Monument. However, it is expected that these visitors will increase in number as public awareness of the Monument increases.

Wildlife-Dependent Recreational Activities

Hunting

Special hunting regulations are in place for the Monument, including firearm limitations and specific big game (white-tailed deer, mule deer, and elk) seasons. In terms of firearms, modern rifles and handguns are not allowed on the Monument. Only those firearms used for a particular season are allowed within the Monument. During hunting season, those firearms that are allowed must be cased and/or dismantled when not in use. Additionally, non-toxic shot is required for all bird hunting (waterfowl and upland) on the Monument.

In general, big game hunting seasons begin in September and end in December. Table 5 on the next page summarizes 2002 big game seasons in the Monument.

The waterfowl hunting season follows Washington State regulations and generally runs from September through late January.

Traditionally, waterfowl hunting has been the primary hunting activity in the Hanford Reach due to the large populations of migratory and resident waterfowl in the area. The availability of favorable conditions for hunting also adds to the appeal of the area and makes the Hanford Reach a regionally significant resource. Because the Reach is closed to waterfowl hunting (within 1/4 mile of the river shoreline), most waterfowl hunting occurs as pass shooting along the White Bluffs area of the Wahluke Unit during the fall and winter months. Hunting pits (approximately 22) have been documented in the vicinity of the White Bluffs and are used primarily by waterfowl hunters. Parking Lots 4 through 8 are also used by waterfowl hunters. The White Bluffs boat launch area is closed from late October until June 1 to provide resting habitat for

winter waterfowl. Additionally, the Columbia River and lands within 1/4 mile of the river between the old Hanford Town site (wooden tower powerlines) to Vernita Bridge are closed to all waterfowl hunting.

Table 5. Big Game Hunting Seasons within the Monument.

Season	Dates	Notes
<u>Modern Fire Arm (shotgun only)</u>		
White-tailed deer	October 12-25	GMU ¹ 278 and 381—any buck
Mule deer	October 12-20	GMU 278—3 point minimum GMU 381—any deer
Elk	October 26-November 15	Grant, Adams, and Franklin Counties—any elk
<u>Archery</u>		
White-tailed deer	September 1-30	GMU 278—any deer
Mule Deer	September 1-15	GMU 278—3 point minimum or antlerless GMU 381—any deer
	September 16-30	GMU 278—3 point minimum or antlerless GMU 381—any deer
<u>Muzzleloader</u>		
White-tailed deer	October 5-9	GMU 381—any buck
Mule deer	October 5-9	GMU 381—any deer
<u>Late Muzzleloader</u>		
Mule deer	November 22-December 8	GMU 381—3 point minimum or antlerless

¹GMU = Game Management Unit

Source: FWS (2002b)

While most hunting in the Hanford Reach is attributed to waterfowl, some upland game hunting occurs. According to the NPS, “hunting of upland birds (pheasant, chukar, and quail) and deer also occurs within the [Wahluke Unit] during the fall hunting seasons” (NPS 1994). The Ringold and Wahluke Game Management Units accounted for a total of 626 hunter days during the 1988-1989 deer hunting season. Most big game hunting in the Monument takes place in the Wahluke Unit, generally toward the northern end of the Ringold access road. Upland bird hunting is also concentrated on the Wahluke Unit and primarily occurs in the area from Parking Lot 4 to the southern boundary of the Monument. Some trapping occurred in the past along the Hanford Reach, though it only accounted for a small proportion (less than 1 percent) of the total use of the area (NPS 1994). Trapping is no longer allowed within the Monument.

Angling

The Hanford Reach receives heavy use from anglers. The primary sport fish include steelhead, chinook salmon, sturgeon, and smallmouth bass. All state fishing regulations are in effect. Sport fishing seasons on the Hanford Reach generally begin in February and run through the end of October. The salmon season usually begins mid-August and continues through mid to late October, while the sturgeon season begins in mid-June and ends at the same time. The fall chinook salmon and steelhead runs are important regional recreation resources and attract anglers from all over Washington, as well as neighboring states. In addition to angling on the river reach, there is a limited amount of angling that occurs on the interior WB-10 ponds in the Wahluke Unit.

Most anglers access the Hanford Reach by boat from one of the boat launches within or in the vicinity of the Monument. Bank fishing is permitted within the Monument along the non-reactor side of the river; however, shoreline access is limited in many areas due to steep topography. Anglers can access the WB-10 ponds by foot from an adjacent parking area.

The most current angler counts were compiled by the NPS in 1994. The NPS estimated that an average of 21,000 chinook salmon angling trips occurred each fall season between 1985 and 1991. Additionally, an average of 19,000 steelhead angling trips occurred each summer between 1985 and 1989. Data on river angling trips associated with other types of fish and angling trips to the interior ponds were not available at the time of the NPS report (NPS 1994).

Wildlife Observation and Photography

The Monument offers some of the best opportunities for wildlife and wildflower observation in eastern Washington. Although wildlife observation and photography are possible year-round at the Monument, the best times for wildlife viewing are fall, winter, and spring (in large part due to the high summer temperatures). Wildflower viewing is best in spring. Bald eagles, common loons, white pelicans, terns, gulls, great blue herons and black-crowned night-herons, mule deer and white-tailed deer, elk, coyotes, porcupines, and beavers are commonly observed.

Outstanding opportunities for birding are available on the Monument, especially during spring's influx of migratory songbirds. The NPS estimates from 1988-1989 indicate that approximately eight percent of visitors to the Monument (Wahluke Unit) were related to non-consumptive recreational activities, including wildlife observation, photography, and sightseeing, among others (NPS 1994).

Environmental Education and Interpretation

Currently, there are no developed environmental education programs or facilities at the Monument. There are, however, limited interpretive signs about the Hanford Site located along SR 24. Despite the lack of developed programs and facilities, many schools, universities, and nature-appreciation groups (Native Plant Society, Audubon Society, etc.) use the Monument for educational field trips.

In addition to school and nature appreciation groups that visit the Wahluke Unit, several other research groups have access to various areas of the Monument. Biological research projects are allowed with Service permission on the Saddle Mountain, ALE and Wahluke Units. The ALE Reserve Unit also provides unique settings for other research-oriented projects including an observatory and an underground gravitational research lab. Located on the top of Rattlesnake Mountain, the observatory is owned by Battelle and operated by the Alliance for Advancement of Science Through Astronomy, a non-profit organization, for educational purposes. The observatory is used by high schools and universities and can also be accessed via the Internet. Instrumentation adjacent to the observatory also monitors climatological, meteorological, and seismic conditions. Located in a decommissioned Nike installation, the gravitational research lab is currently operated by researchers from the University of California at Irvine through a grant from the National Science Foundation. Research at the lab is aimed at increasing the precision of the gravitational constant.

Boating

While boating is generally not considered a priority (wildlife-dependent) recreation activity, angling on the Hanford Reach accounts for much of the boating at the Monument. The scenery, abundance of wildlife, and opportunities for solitude also attract other boaters to the Reach. Both motorized and non-motorized recreational boating occurs along the entire Reach. Non-motorized boating (canoeing and kayaking) is currently limited on the river due to the length of the Reach and a restriction on overnight camping within the Monument. The majority of motorized boaters access the river from one of the boat launches within or adjacent to the Monument, while non-motorized boaters tend to put in at the Vernita Bridge unit and take out at the Ringold Fish Hatchery, a distance 47 miles. Currently, there are no Service-mandated surface-water regulations (e.g., boat speed limits, no wake zones, and seasonal closures) on the river reach, and surface water boating regulations are enforced by county and state law enforcement agencies.

Other boating-related activities within the Monument include water-skiing, personal watercraft (PWC) use, and commercial sightseeing boat tours. Most water-skiing and PWC use occurs during the summer between Labor Day and Memorial Day and is generally confined to the southern end of the Hanford Reach in the Ringold area. This confinement is not mandated and is likely due to the area's proximity to the Tri-Cities and residential development along the river downstream from the Monument.

Commercial sightseeing boat tours of the Monument occur along the entire length of the river reach. The number of visitors participating in these types of boat tours is reported to be increasing (pers. comm., Arntzen, Columbia River Journeys Inc., 2002). It is unknown how many boat tour companies currently operate on the river. There are also several hunting and fishing guides operating on the river as well as on land. However, tracking use of commercial guides in the Monument is difficult due to the lack of a guide licensing system in the state of Washington.

Non-Wildlife Dependent Recreational Activities

In addition to the wildlife-dependent recreational activities described above, several non-wildlife dependent activities occur on the Monument including horseback riding, bicycling, hiking, swimming, and dog trials, among others.

Equestrian Use

Traditionally, the Wahluke Unit of the Monument has been used for horseback riding. Equestrian use continues to be a popular activity, as well as a means to access interior areas of the unit inaccessible by vehicle. There are, however, no designated horse trails or horse-specific developed facilities in the Monument. Currently, horseback riding is allowed in all areas of the Wahluke Unit and is not confined to official trails.

Bicycling

Bicycles, including mountain bikes, are considered vehicles by the Service and must follow all vehicle restrictions within the Monument. Similar to other types of vehicle use, bicycling off-road is strictly prohibited. Bicycling, however, is allowed on specific roads within the

Monument and on some roads where other vehicle use is prohibited. Bicycling is allowed on the gated road between Parking Lot 8 and the White Bluffs Overlook and on the road from the WB-10 ponds parking lot to the ponds. Despite restrictions, some off-road bicycle use occurs illegally in the Monument.

Hiking

Hiking is allowed within the Monument, though hiking opportunities are limited to the Wahluke Unit. Similar to horseback riding, currently there are no official hiking trails or other developed trail features (trailheads, signboards) in the Monument. Some short trails (user-defined) provide access from parking areas to popular use areas.

Swimming

While there are no developed swimming areas along the Hanford Reach, visitors to the area do swim along the shoreline and from boats.

Dog Trials

The Wahluke Slope (Wahluke Unit) has been used for many years for dog trials. These trials traditionally took place during five to six weekends in the spring and fall. Dog trials on the Wahluke Slope have decreased.

Prohibited Activities

The Service specifically prohibits certain activities from occurring on the Monument. Prohibited activities include OHV use, hang-gliding, paragliding, remote control airplane use, collecting (including antlers, bones, rocks, artifacts, and plant life), and overnight camping. Additionally, fires, disturbing plant life, and all digging are not allowed in the Monument.

Despite being prohibited, ongoing illegal activities include off-road dirt-biking, four-wheeling, target practice, coyote hunting, artifact collecting, driving on closed administrative roads, graffiti carving on White Bluffs, paragliding, hang-gliding, remote control airplane use, and off-road mountain biking. Some of these violators are entering the Monument from long-established access routes from adjacent private lands.

VIII. Topics, Issues and Recommendations from the Visitor Services Review

This section is arranged according to geographic units of the Monument. Issues that occur throughout the entire Monument are addressed in the first section. The four geographic units of the Monument are managed differently according to the agreements with DOE, therefore activities and facilities are different. In addition, adjacent lands owned and/or managed by other agencies are also included in this document because their locations and facilities impact visitor services on the Monument.

A. Monument-wide Visitor Services Planning

During the review, a number of issues and topics were raised and opportunities were identified that could be applied broadly across large portions of the Monument and adjacent lands. For discussion purposes, these issues are presented separately below.

Recommendations

- Develop the following to help guide planning and development of visitor services on the Monument:
 - Monument-wide transportation resources plan, including access points, roads, parking lots, trails, signs, boat ramps, etc.
 - Inventory the visual resources of the Monument
 - Map existing disturbed sites in the Monument
 - Identify, inventory, and map sensitive cultural, historical, biological, geological, and paleontological resource areas in the Monument
 - Identify, inventory and map public use opportunities and associated facilities (existing and proposed) in vicinity of the Monument. Of special interest are off-Monument opportunities for horseback riding, jet skiing, dog trials, coyote hunting, bicycling, hiking, swimming, and camping.
 - Map recreational opportunities and constraints
 - Collect baseline data for public access and recreational use areas within the Monument—monitoring possibilities for baseline recreation data include Gary Machlis (University of Idaho, NPS), Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, and other commercial contractors.

- Establish a volunteer coordinator position to create and maintain an active volunteer program. Volunteers can be extremely effective in helping the Monument accomplish its mission as well as that of the Service. Consider how volunteers can help with:
 - Environmental education
 - Law enforcement monitoring
 - Special tours, programs and events
 - Various other programs and needs

- Identify all private guides so they can be included in outreach efforts. Explore needs and options for managing guides, such as a permit system.

1. Values

Several values were strongly tied to many topics of discussion throughout the review. These values were important to those participants who live in the area, as well as those who were seeing the Monument for the first time. Several were mentioned repeatedly, and helped shape recommendations from the participants. They included solitude; quiet; beauty; high quality salmon and steelhead fishing; uncrowded public use conditions (e.g., horseback riding); primitive landscape (one with little or no development); and importance of cultural and historical resources of the area.

Recommendations

- Explore options and impacts of keeping the majority of recreational development on the periphery of the Monument, including outside of the Monument boundaries. *The Outdoor Recreation at HRNM and Adjacent Areas: Research Compilation* includes recreational opportunities on adjacent and nearby lands owned by other entities.
- Consider establishing a zone that is the “Heart of the Monument;” the central area of this zone would be the White Bluffs area along the Hanford Reach. Within this zone, allow those recreational opportunities that are more primitive, quiet, and uncrowded. The participants noted that recreational opportunities provided on the Monument should emphasize and interpret the unique resources within the Monument. The opportunity for a quiet, uncrowded, peaceful experience in an area of great beauty and cultural and historical importance is something the Monument can offer to visitors that perhaps other nearby areas cannot or do not.
- Explore opportunities to provide periodic access to closed areas, such as the ALE, through special events, such as wildflower tours.

2. Cultural Resources

The Monument preserves cultural resource sites and sensitive areas, including Traditional Cultural Properties and sacred sites that are highly significant to Native Americans. Four Federally recognized tribes: the Yakama; Umatilla; Colville; and Nez Perce; and the Wanapum People, have ties to the Monument lands and resources.

Euro-Americans first visited the region with the Lewis and Clark expedition, followed by fur trappers, military units, miners, and settlers. By 1880, cattle ranches and farms were established on lands currently within the monument/Monument. The federal government acquired 1,517 square km (586 square miles) for the Hanford Engineer Works in 1943, evacuating all citizens and razing most structures. Still, historic sites have been documented throughout the Monument, including the White Bluffs log cabin and ferry landing, natural gas exploration wells, mine tailings, remnants of homesteads and agricultural structures, and historic debris scatters. More recent historic sites on the Monument include structures and facilities associated with Cold War activities.

Recommendations

- Consider tribal concerns at all existing public use areas and facilities on the Monument, and when prescribing and planning potential future public uses and facilities. Invite members of all four Tribes and the Wanapum People to participate in public use planning processes. Recommendations for specific historical features are included under each unit (e.g. recommendations for the B Reactor, which is located on DOE lands, are in section F. Recreational Opportunities on Adjacent Lands).

3. Welcoming Visitors and Meeting Their Needs

Visitation to the Monument is estimated to be 60,000 people per year. This number is predicted to increase and to include visitors from a larger region than in the past decade. Visitors to the Monument include local residents, tourists from large cities in the Pacific Northwest including Seattle, Spokane and Portland, and national and international tourists. Non-local visitors are drawn for several reasons, including the quality of salmon and steelhead fishing opportunities; and interest in the area due to its designation as a National Monument.

Further, the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau is aggressively promoting the area as both a tourism destination and a desirable place to hold business conventions and large sporting events. Marketing materials highlight the Monument, especially the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River. Washington Senator Patti Murray secured \$250,000 of Housing and Urban Development funds for the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau to assess economic impacts and opportunities arising from the Monument designation. The study will assess potential locations for a visitor center for the Monument.

Recommendations

- After completion of the CCP, establish a team from within the Service to develop a step-down visitor services plan for the Monument. This plan needs to develop specific prescriptions for:
 - Programs and associated facilities to welcome and orient visitors
 - Programs and associated facilities for quality hunting, fishing, and environmental education
 - Programs and associated facilities for quality wildlife observation, interpretation and photography opportunities
 - Building volunteer programs and partnerships with refuge support groups and other entities in local communities
 - Addressing accessibility, including the need for information in other languages, especially as it relates to safety and regulations.

4. Environmental Education

According to Karen Weida, there is more demand for environmental education than is currently being met. The current Partners for Arid Lands Stewardship (PALS) environmental education program is popular with area schools and fits well with the Service's draft policy on environmental education.

Recommendations

- Get copies of PALS studies
- Strongly recommend continuing to support the PALS program. If demands for environmental education continue to increase, explore how to expand or augment the PALS program by working with local schools, the PALS program, and other interested parties to develop a plan for environmental education that identifies:

- Needs and geographic scope of EE program
 - Range of potential grades and age groups
 - Other potential partners
 - Resources needed to enhance the PALS program
 - Potential funding sources
 - Functions, sizes and locations of sites and facilities
- Explore the potential for mobile environmental education lab/classroom
 - Explore the applicability of the Leave No Trace program/messages for use as additional educational messages at the Monument. Consider incorporating or providing material with Leave No Trace messages.

5. Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is an important management tool to ensure visitor safety and to protect the resources listed in the Proclamation for which the Monument was established. The Service currently has one permanent and one temporary law enforcement officers to cover the entire Monument; the effectiveness of one person to patrol a 195,000-acre area is extremely limited. Unless there is a change in funding, the monument will be reduced to one officer next spring. DOE contracts with Benton County's Sheriff Department to enforce trespass laws on DOE's Benton County portion of the Monument.

Recommendations

- Work with partners to develop a strategy to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement throughout the Monument. Explore the following during the process:
 - The placement and effectiveness of regulatory and safety signs
 - Methods to protect cultural resources/sites
 - Developing an educational/outreach plan
 - Increasing the law enforcement presence in the area through working together with the WDFW, DOE, counties, and others
 - Incorporating Service law enforcement in an agreement with the State to allow Monument officers to enforce state law
 - The potential for law enforcement agreements between BLM and State

6. Wilderness

All Service lands must be evaluated for eligibility and suitability as wilderness.

Recommendations

- Obtain BLM wilderness suitability criteria (for similar-type arid land environments) in order to study potential wilderness areas within the Monument
- ALE unit may have greatest potential for wilderness designation within the Monument

B. River Corridor

Surrounded by arid shrub steppe, the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River, together with its associated riparian habitat and the White Bluffs is the main focus of current recreational use on the Monument and will likely continue to be. The Hanford Reach is a destination for salmon and steelhead anglers; peak use is during the fall Chinook salmon run. Canoeing and kayaking is popular, as is use of jet skis and motorized boats. Boat tours are also very popular; demand for these services is expected to increase as destination tourism in the area increases.

Various agencies own and manage different river resources. The islands within the Monument are under DOE, BLM, State, and private management. The Service manages seven islands immediately downstream of the Monument boundary. The DOE retains management of the south rivershore, the Service manages the north rivershore, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources manages the riverbottom below the mean high water mark, the Washington Department of Parks and Recreation oversees boating licensing, the Benton, Franklin and Grant county sheriff's departments enforce boating regulations on the water, and the WDFW enforces hunting and fishing regulations on the water.

1. Access to and Use of the River

Currently, the segment of the Columbia River between the wooden power poles and Vernita Bridge offer two unimproved launching areas—Parking Lot 7 and north of Vernita Bridge—and one concrete ramp at the White Bluffs boat landing. During peak use periods (fall Chinook salmon run) these sites are heavily congested, with parking spilling into adjacent areas and long waits to launch boats. An additional concrete ramp located on DOE land opposite the river shore of the White Bluffs ramp is not open for public use.

The Reach is growing in popularity with non-motorized boaters (canoe and kayak). Currently, paddlers wishing to travel the entire Reach must either put in a 12 to 16-hour day paddling from the Vernita Bridge to the Ringold Fish Hatchery (the first legal camping area) or the North Richland boat launch. With increased use, this could become a safety issue for those who may not be able to complete the trip in one long day.

There are currently an unknown number of commercial outfitters and one tour boat operation that are unmonitored and unrestricted. Demand for these services is expected to increase as destination tourism in the area increases.

Recommendations

- It is essential to first establish a point of coordination for jurisdiction on the river and to work with the others to develop a cooperative agreement among all jurisdictions. Explore jurisdiction alternatives before planning for any public access or recreational developments.
- After jurisdiction is defined, and with input gathered through the CCP process, establish uses that will be allowed on the river water surface.

- Because the Service does not have sole authority, partnerships should be developed with other state and federal agencies to regulate public access and develop a public access plan. Address river access from Priest Rapids Dam to Richland. As part of this plan, consider the need for camping associated with river use to consolidate the footprints of potential sites. As part of the planning process:
 - Gather all documentation regarding the DOE boat launch proposal.
 - Explore opportunities on both private and public lands both on and off the Monument, especially along the river upstream to the Priest Rapids Dam.
 - Address access, such as hardened boat launching facilities, as well as needs for facilities associated with river use, such as parking lots, restrooms, and camping.
 - Evaluate impacts to both natural and cultural resources as well as human values of the area along the river corridor associated with current and increased future recreational use.
 - Identify opportunities to consolidate uses and facilities to the extent possible to minimize the footprint of potential development.
 - Explore the opportunities offered by the WDOT redevelopment/expansion plan for the existing rest stop at Vernita Bridge.
 - Where applicable, explore the feasibility of concessionaire(s) running campground(s).
 - Explore options to address access inconsistencies such as areas officially opened versus those that are closed, regulations enforced/not enforced.
- For safety reasons, seriously consider developing landing sites and over-night camping for non-motorized boaters near the White Bluffs boat landing. Although the area is disturbed and currently has some facilities, consideration should be given regarding how development of such sites would impact human values associated with the “Heart of the Monument” concept. Consideration must also be given as to how development would impact the biological, cultural and historical resources in this area, (e.g. heron rookery, historic cabin).
- Identify information needed by the public using each of these sites that can be used to develop consistent information/orientation signage for sites along the river corridor. As part of this, identify which languages should be used in developing the information.

2. Wild and Scenic River Designation

The Hanford Reach was found eligible and suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (*Hanford Reach of the Columbia River Conservation Study and EIS, 1994*). This river segment is under interim protection status through Public Law (PL) 100-605, as amended by Section 404 of PL104-333. Interim protection is administered by the Service.

The Service is responsible for reviewing proposed projects that could impact the eligibility of the Hanford Reach for Congressional designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The resources making the river suitable include fall Chinook salmon, cultural resources, archaeological sites, hydrology, geology, and federally recognized rare plant and animal species.

Recommendations

- Because the Hanford Reach is a wild and scenic river study area, determine the type and extent of jurisdiction the Service has under this designation.
- Review proposed projects to determine how the impacts of proposed uses or water resources development would affect the river's eligibility.

C. Wahluke Unit

The Wahluke Unit is locally popular for upland bird and deer hunting. The Hanford Reach and Wahluke Unit offer some of the best opportunities for wildlife observation in eastern Washington. Outstanding opportunities for birding are available on the Wahluke Unit, especially during spring's influx of migratory songbirds.

In 1971, the DOE transferred management of Wahluke Unit to the WDFW. The WDFW administered the Wahluke Wildlife and Recreation Area as a multiple use area, including public uses, grazing, and sharecropping. The WDFW hardened public access points along the river and upland areas that are still in use today as semi-primitive gravel and dirt roads, small parking areas and boat ramps.

In 1999, the WDFW and Service agreed that the Service would take over administration of the Wahluke Unit, with the WDFW retaining management of the 800-acre Vernita Bridge parcel. In a letter signed by both the WDFW and the Service, the Service committed to *“continuing to allow compatible public access for the purposes of hunting, fishing, wildlife and natural history enjoyment, and other wildlife dependent recreation that does not conflict with preserving the area's ecological integrity”*; and to *“continue working towards establishing a public camping area compatible with the refuge in the vicinity of the White Bluffs boat landing area.”*

In 2000, the Wahluke Unit was included in the Hanford Reach National Monument designation. The Service currently manages the Wahluke Unit, which is open to the public for day use year-round.

Compatible Public Uses

The Monument does not have compatibility determinations that comply with current policy. An “interim” compatibility determination was completed in 1999. This document found hunting, fishing, environmental education, interpretation, and wildlife observation and photography to be compatible. The document states that dog field trials and associated camping could be allowed, in the interim, on a case-by-case basis by special permit as funding and staff become available.

There are a number of existing public uses that were established under former WDFW management that will need to be reviewed for compatibility with resource protection and Monument purposes. These include: cross-country horseback riding and hiking, informal vehicle pullouts, numerous established waterfowl pass-shooting pits, put-and-take pheasant releases, river fishing derbies, and dog field trials.

In addition, there are ongoing activities that are illegal. These include off-road dirt-biking, four-wheeling, target practice, artifact collecting, driving on closed administrative roads, carving graffiti on White Bluffs, paragliding, hang gliding, remote control airplane use, and off-road mountain biking.

Outfitter and guide uses on the uplands are currently unmonitored and unrestricted. Such uses are expected to increase as visitation and public awareness of the Monument increases.

1. Main Road from Ringold Area Through the Wahluke Unit to SR24

One main road runs from the Ringold area north to SR24; several smaller roads run from this main road to provide access to various locations in the Wahluke unit. This public use road system currently includes paved, gravel, and dirt roads. Through TEA-21 funding, the Ringold access road and the White Bluffs boat launch and scenic overlook access roads are scheduled to be improved in fiscal years 02 and 03. Currently, a short section of road that connects Ringold and SR24 is closed to vehicle use due to roadbed erosion and unstable cliffs.

Recommendations

- Determine ownership of the existing Ringold-Wahluke Road
- Develop an interpretive plan for the Monument that considers establishing an auto tour along the main road, (one stop would be the overlook) Explore the need and options to discourage heavy use as a through road by commuters. If need exists, consider options such as speed bumps, gravel, speed limits, seasonal closures, and one-way road designations to discourage potential conflicts with tourists.
- Explore various road options for Ringold-Wahluke Road including:
 - Road remains closed, but northern and southern existing road sections should be improved (gravel or pavement)
 - Open the entire length of the road (would require road improvement such as gravel or pavement)
- Pave road to the overlook area from SR 24
- Pave road to the overlook area from Ringold entrance

2. Auto Tour to Top of Saddle Mountain

A narrow, very steep road runs to the Saddle Mountain crest. The road narrows to one lane along the ridge. A site at the top of the ridge affords a stunning view of the Monument and surrounding area.

Recommendations

- In developing the visitor services or interpretive plan for the Monument, consider:

- Improving Saddle Mountain Road so it would be safe and accessible to vehicles to drive to the top of the ridge as part of an auto tour
 - Creating an overlook area
 - Developing a parking area with a trail head at the base of Saddle Mountain; the trail would provide access to the top
 - Because of the powerful impact of the view on top of the ridge, strongly consider having no interpretative panels, facilities, or structures at the site
 - Including this in the interpretive plan
- Improvements on Saddle Mountain should be coordinated with the BLM, which manages land immediately adjacent to this area.

3. Southern Entrance to Wahluke Unit via Ringold Road

Driving north from Richland, this is the main entrance to the Monument. This is also the main access point for the majority of recreational use areas that currently exist on the Monument. Visitors first pass by the WDFW-managed Ringold Fish Hatchery before reaching the boundary of the Monument, which is currently marked by an existing entrance sign and a regulatory signboard.

Recommendations

- Strongly consider the potential to invest in the area as a southeastern gateway to the Monument by developing a multi-agency visitor center/contact facility to welcome and orient visitors, and provide interpretation. Also consider a multi-agency visitor kiosk at the Ringold hatchery that would support the main visitor contact station at this site on the Monument.
- Explore potential gateway funding from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant
- Also strongly consider providing formal hardened camping and boat launching facilities and user fees. Enhancing those that exist at the Ringold Fish Hatchery can create some of these hardened facilities. (for more information about the hatchery site, see discussion in Section F., Ringold Fish Hatchery).
- In the interpretive plan for the Monument, consider orientation and interpretation needs here and at Ringold fish hatchery site.

4. Ringold Road Parking and Boat Launch Facilities

There are currently eight parking areas along the Ringold Road that were established mainly to accommodate hunting and fishing. There are three boat launch areas at this southernmost end of the Reach: 1) one in Richland; 2) a small, unimproved site at the WDFW Ringold Fish Hatchery; and 3) a primitive site suitable for 4-wheel drive vehicles only at Parking Lot 7. During peak use periods (fall Chinook salmon run) the site at Parking Lot 7 (as well as the site north of Vernita Bridge) is heavily congested, with parking spilling into adjacent areas and long waits to launch boats.

Camping occurs south of the Ringold Fish Hatchery, presenting safety and other issues because of fires, garbage, litter and maintenance costs. Fire especially poses significant threats to the Monument resources and visitors.

Recommendations

- Assess the need for river access and parking lots in this area. If need is legitimate and cannot be better addressed elsewhere, consider consolidating the existing 5-7 facilities into one, then restore all the abandoned sites.
- Assess the need, and current supply and demand for camping in this area and on adjacent lands. Explore potential to partner with WDFW and other state, Federal and private landowners to expand and develop hardened camping facilities at Ringold Fish Hatchery and on adjacent lands.
- If camping is allowed or enhanced on or near the Wahluke Unit, evaluate ways to minimize the possibility of human-caused fire ignitions. Develop an outreach strategy to educate the public about the impact of wildland fires and ways to avoid starting them.

5. Overlook at White Bluffs

The overlook provides an excellent scenic view of the Monument as well as central Hanford. Currently, vehicles can drive right up to the edge of the bluff, which blocks the view for other visitors. Unmanaged public use impacts the site's fragile resources (e.g., rare plants, microbiotic crust).

Recommendations

- Develop an interpretive plan for the Monument. If an auto tour is planned, include the White Bluffs overlook as a feature. The quality of the scenic view and the potential to interpret many important and unique resources of the Monument, including shrub-steppe, White Bluffs, rare plants and plant communities (e.g., microbiotic crust) as well the nuclear facilities associated with central Hanford. would make it a key feature.
- Because the White Bluffs overlook is susceptible to disturbance (e.g., rare plants, microbiotic crust), identify and assess ways to minimize the impacts to the site, such as locating the parking area away from bluff and creating a short trail from parking area to the overlook.

6. White Bluffs Boat Launch

Because it is located halfway between the Vernita Bridge boat launch site, and other sites closer to Richland, and because it is already disturbed, this site could be considered as a potential place for non-motorized boaters to camp. The site is attractive for several reasons: 1) there is shady riparian habitat, which could provide an attractive place to camp, rest, and observe wildlife; 2) there is much history here that could be interpreted (e.g. the historic use of the White Bluffs Road as a transportation hub of the WA territory; the Wiehl homestead site; the White Bluffs

town site and log cabin; and a Wanapum village and fishing stations). Another boat launch exists almost across the river on DOE land from this one on the opposite shore (see Section F, item B); this facility is not open to the public.

Recommendations

- Need baseline data for recreational use.
- If the amount of non-motorized boating use continues—even at its current level—seriously explore developing a primitive camp area for non-motorized boaters.
- Consider what effects increased recreational development at this site might have on the “Heart of the Monument.”
- If primitive camping is allowed at this location, evaluate ways to minimize the possibility of human-caused fire ignitions. Develop an outreach strategy to educate the public about the impact of fires and ways to avoid starting them.
- If there is increased recreational development at this site, evaluate and make recommendations to protect the cultural features in the area, such as the White Bluffs log cabin.

7. Hunting

Hunting on the Wahluke unit includes waterfowl hunting (mostly north of Parking Lot 4) and upland game hunting (mostly south of Parking Lot 4). Deer and elk hunting occur on northern end of Ringold area. Historically, there was a coyote hunting program in the area; it is not currently allowed on the Monument. Weapons allowed for hunting at Wahluke include shotguns, muzzleloaders, and bows; there are restrictions regarding lead shot.

Currently there are 22 documented hunting pit blinds in a 1.5-mile area near the White Bluffs Overlook; during hunting season, there are 12 to 15 cars parked per day in the area of these pits. Digging goose pit blinds along the White Bluffs disturbs highly sensitive plant species (White Bluff bladderpod) and communities (sagebrush with microbiotic crust). In addition, digging also is an illegal activity.

A put-and-take pheasant hunting program currently exists on the Wahluke Unit. The Wildlife and Habitat Review Report discusses Service policy regarding stocking pheasants, and makes recommendations about pheasant hunting opportunities.

Another existing use on the Wahluke Unit is the state of Washington’s pike-minnow fishing program that encourages anglers to catch pike-minnow by paying a specific amount of money per fish.

Recommendations

- Biologists and public use specialists need to evaluate the potential for allowing other hunting opportunities. This evaluation should also consider the number and type of hunting opportunities on nearby lands.
- Because of the disturbance caused by digging goose pit blinds, and because digging is illegal, the Monument staff should explore options and alternatives to the existing dugout pits. Consider:
 - Establishing official blinds that would be available by a lottery system
 - Establishing official hunting sites equipped with permanently installed stakes (around which hunters can set up their temporary/portable blinds)
 - Establishing a fee system for use of the official blinds/sites
 - Requiring the use of temporary (portable) blinds
 - Mapping existing pit blinds to use as a base if a new system of official blinds or sites is established
 - Developing an outreach strategy to educate people about why digging is illegal and problematic
- Consider establishing special limited hunt programs, if appropriate (e.g. youth hunt, master hunter)
- Explore range and velocity of allowed hunting firearms. Assess the need for hunting retrieval and safety zones in the Monument, especially around any existing and potential recreational developments.
- Explore suitable/potential areas for hunter check stations
- Review Service policy regarding hunting and fishing for native species relative to the State of Washington's pike-minnow fishing program and Chinese ring-necked pheasant hunting.

8. Fishing at WB-10 Ponds

The WB-10 ponds are created and maintained by off-site irrigation runoff. It is unknown if fish in these ponds are exposed to, or accumulate potential agricultural chemicals.

In addition, the ponds are possibly contributing to landslides occurring along the Hanford Reach; this could seriously impact the scenic quality of the area, especially the White Bluffs. The Bluffs are a strong component of the "Heart of the Monument" concept.

The Wildlife and Habitat Review includes a recommendation that addresses the need to assess potential contaminant threats.

Recommendations

- Seriously consider closing access to the ponds until it is known for certain whether contaminants are a human health hazard.
- Consider posting signs at the ponds until it is known for certain whether fish can be safely consumed.
- Work with the appropriate public health authorities and WDFW to ascertain if the water and fish in the ponds exceed state standards for contaminants.
- If there are hazards to humans, develop outreach strategy to warn anglers of possible danger in consuming fish caught at these ponds. Determine which languages will need to be used to reach all current users.
- Explore potential access and parking options at WB-10 ponds; consider upgrading the road to provide access from the east (along the eastern boundary of the Monument) to the WB-10 ponds and the Monument.
- Continue researching the sloughing issue to find solutions to the problem before the White Bluffs are irreparably damaged.

9. Horseback Riding

Unrestricted horseback riding currently occurs on the Wahluke Unit. No trails or facilities (e.g. parking lots, water, toilets, corrals) currently are available for horseback riders anywhere on the Monument. The White Bluffs boat launch area has been and continues to be used as a trailhead for trailer-in horse users. Users fall into two categories: same-day riders who live close enough to complete a ride in one day; and multi-day users, who live far enough away that they cannot complete a ride in one day and thus require overnight facilities for themselves, their horses, and their vehicles. These two users have different facility needs.

There are few horseback riding areas in the Tri-Cities region, however there are many statewide. There is a small existing area for horseback riding area south of Rattlesnake Mountain.

Repeated horse use tramples the microbiotic crust. During the dry season this can be especially problematic as the crust is less resilient.

Recommendations

- Assess the current supply and demand for horseback riding facilities on nearby and adjacent lands. Explore potential to partner with WDFW and other state, Federal and private landowners to expand and develop hardened facilities on adjacent lands. Determine the types of opportunities and experiences that are available on the Monument that are not available elsewhere. This information can guide future recommendations for facility development. In this assessment, include the horse-related facilities in the area south of Rattlesnake Mountain,

and explore horseback riding opportunities and facilities in the Horn Rapids Park area near/adjacent to Rattlesnake Mountain.

- If a trail system that includes horseback riding is considered for development on the Monument:
 - Explore options and alternatives for use of trails by multiple users (e.g. hikers, bike riders and horseback rider), and for horse riders use only
 - Explore current findings about potential conflicts for multiple-use trails
 - Explore ways to reduce impacts of horseback riding to the resources
 - Consider whether development and use of facilities and trails will impact the “Heart of the Monument” concept
 - Explore local BLM management of horseback riding, which includes a special permit for more than five horseback riders.
 - Develop partnerships with local horseback riding groups to design, develop, and maintain trails and facilities.
 - Explore interpretive and wildlife observation opportunities associated with trails
 - Consider developing an educational “Don’t Bust the Crust” outreach program
- The Wildlife and Habitat Review also contains a recommendation regarding horse use on the Monument.

10. Trail Use

Currently there are no designated hiking trails within the Monument although unrestricted hiking occurs within the Wahluke Unit. Bicycles are ridden on this Unit; use is limited to existing roads; off-road riding is prohibited.

Recommendations

- Assess existing trails and trail use on lands adjacent and near to the Monument to determine the supply and demand for trail use. Determine the types of opportunities and experiences that are available on the Monument that are not available elsewhere. This information can guide future trail development recommendations. Consider:
 - Whether development and use of facilities and trails will impact the “Heart of the Monument” concept
 - Linking the John Wayne Trail to potential trails within the Monument
 - Exploring current findings about potential conflicts for multiple-use trails
 - Which activities, if determined to be compatible, would be allowed on trails in the Monument, such as hiking, biking, horse use
 - For all user groups that may use a trail system on the Monument, determining the appropriate number of people in a group, and if needed, establish limits accordingly
 - Interpretive and wildlife observation opportunities associated with trails

D. Fitzner/Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) Reserve Unit

The ALE was designated a Research Natural Area (RNA) in 1971 and a National Environmental Research Park (NERP) in 1975. There are seven NERPS across the nation on DOE lands; they were established to provide for national, regional, and local priority ecological research and environmental education purposes. As such, the ALE has been the focus of 30 years of air, water, and land resource studies. A strong contingency of local scientists has stated their wishes to continue to have access to the ALE for research. In addition, the FAC has highlighted the value of the ALE for research and education.

The ALE Unit is currently closed to public access except through a Special Use Permit. Both the State and the Nature Conservancy are trying to acquire other lands adjacent to the ALE. Significant cultural resources are found throughout the ALE.

Unit-wide Recommendations

- As part of the Monument-wide visitor services plan:
 - Consider allowing public access to some areas of ALE through regularly or seasonally scheduled guided tours, such as geological, wildflower or wildlife viewing

1. Existing Facilities

A. Observatory and Research Facilities on Rattlesnake Mountain

Rattlesnake Mountain is considered a Traditional Cultural Property of importance to several of the regional Native American groups. Currently the Service does not have complete management authority on top of Rattlesnake Mountain. Developments on top of Rattlesnake Mountain are permitted by DOE and include communications, local utilities, and research facilities; DOE currently retains property rights and responsibilities and associated roads, facilities and utilities.

The observatory is a multi-million dollar private facility owned by Battelle and run by the Alliance for Advancement of Science through Astronomy, a non-profit organization established for educational purposes. The observatory is used by high schools, colleges, universities, and via the internet. The telescope is linked directly to local schools for educational purposes. There has been some extended use (overnight and on weekends) by students during good star viewing conditions. Recent proposals for use of the observatory include educational workshops with overnight use. The remoteness and elevation of this site help make it unique and important to the types of research conducted here. The nearest other observatory is located in Goldendale, WA however, the observatory on the ALE is larger, more advanced and has a more developed program to provide environmental education in classrooms.

In addition to the observatory, the site includes communication towers, utility rights-of-way, and research equipment to monitor seismic and atmospheric conditions; information from this monitoring is important to the environment and homeland security.

All existing historical structures on Rattlesnake Mountain have been inventoried. Some of the existing facilities have lead and asbestos. The County has stated that it supports reducing visual impacts both from existing and future facilities.

Recommendations

- Explore having DOE retain primary jurisdiction and responsibilities and associated roads, facilities, and utilities.
- Consider having DOE remove all structures at this site that are not associated with the observatory or research, and which are not historically significant.
- Explore options to reduce visual impacts of structures on Rattlesnake Mountain (e.g. burying or consolidating utilities that serve the facilities).

B. The Historic Nike Missile Site and Underground Lab

This is the most significant Nike site at Hanford. It is only one of four original Nike sites that retains a number of the original structures. This site includes an underground facility, which is considered a superb site for research that may be impacted by vibrations, such as the current “Hunt for the Big G” project aimed at increasing the precision of a gravitational constant.

Above ground, the site and its related facilities are used as by the Service a fire staging area

Recommendations

- Explore having DOE retain primary jurisdiction and responsibilities and associated roads, facilities, and utilities.

2. Elk Hunting and Viewing

The ALE is home to the Rattlesnake Hills Elk Herd. The herd currently numbers approximately 450 animals. Over the past several years (2000-2002) the Service, WDFW and Tribes have conducted targeted capture and relocation efforts to manage the herd size however, some depredation on adjacent agricultural fields occasionally occurs. The Washington State Management Plan indicates a target population of approximately 350 animals. Population control measures have included increased hunting opportunities on adjacent private lands in combination with planned relocation efforts.

To control the herd population, the WDFW, Benton County, and some local stakeholders have expressed the desire to open the ALE for elk hunting to control the herd. The State and other stakeholders have expressed an interest in establishing a hunt to reduce crop damage claims and to provide recreational elk hunting opportunities. There are elk hunting opportunities on nearby/adjacent lands, including the Wahluke Unit.

On this issue, the Wildlife and Habitat Review makes recommendations regarding hunting and managing this elk herd.

People driving on the highway often stop to watch the elk herd. There is no established pull off for this activity at this time and there may be safety issues associated with this activity.

Recommendations

- Monitor elk impacts on the ALE. If it is biologically necessary for population management of the herd:
 - Evaluate Tribal opportunities to hunt elk on ALE
 - Explore the potential for tribal hunts, a permit hunt, or other hunting programs.
- If hunting is found to be a desirable management tool, consider limiting where hunters can go to protect natural and cultural resources, especially those on top of Rattlesnake Mountain
- Consider establishing an interpretive wayside area along the highway. In addition to providing a safe place for people to observe the elk herd, this would create an excellent opportunity to interpret the elk herd, and other topics such as the ecological importance of ALE, seasonal wildflower displays and wildlife use of ALE, cultural resources, and current research.

3. Rattlesnake Springs

This area is important both biologically and culturally. The existing building has been sporadically used for research, however this use does not seem to be recent. Environmental educational use has occurred at this site.

Recommendations

- Assess both the existing and potential environmental education use at this site as well as the need and demand.
- Explore other environmental education sites within the Monument as alternatives to this site
- Explore use of a mobile EE facility (lab and classroom) as a substitute for the existing structure(s)
- Determine level of need for and identify safety issues regarding the existing building. Consider removing it if warranted.

E. Saddle Mountain NWR Unit

This area is currently closed to the public. The original reason for this closure was related to DOE safety concerns. As cleanup progresses, it is anticipated that this restriction will be lifted

within the next 10 years. With more than 60 years of restricted public access, potential impacts from opening the area to public use need to be carefully assessed.

One benefit of opening this area for public use would be providing recreation opportunities to Mattawa, Desert Aire, and other small communities located north of the Monument.

The former schoolhouse site for the town of Wahluke is located on the Saddle Mountain Unit. Following government takeover of the Hanford Site in 1943, residents of the former community of Wahluke relocated to the north, eventually establishing the town of Mattawa. The Mattawa School District receives a Special Use Permit from the Service to hold an annual event at the historic schoolhouse location to teach youth about the sacrifices made by their predecessors for the national war effort.

The Saddle Mountain Lakes present a visually tempting destination from Highway 24. Known recurring trespass has been a management concern for years, with the majority of violators seeking to fish in the lakes. The lakes consist of agricultural run-off waters and contain herbicides and pesticides, including DDT and derivatives; fish consumption might present a human health hazard.

Recommendations

- Further examination is needed regarding existing public uses in this area. This can be done during development of the visitor services plan.

F. Recreational Opportunities on Adjacent Lands

In considering services to visitors on the Monument, it became clear during the review that visitor use would need to be addressed beyond the Service's current management boundaries. Because of the large expanse of the area, the multiple access routes to the Monument that cross land managed by other agencies and the public, and the wealth of natural and cultural resources, a holistic approach to serving visitors will benefit visitors, agencies, and other landowners as well.

1. DOE Land

Historical Resources

The DOE's plans to clean up portions of the south side of the river corridor, as noted in the document *Hanford 2012 Accelerating Cleanup and Shrinking the Site*, could open areas to visitor use on the Hanford Site. If visitors are allowed along the river corridor, historical facilities and sites could then be open to provide interpretation of these resources.

This potential for visitor use could impact interpretation that will be developed for the Monument. For example, it would be clearer and more meaningful to interpret history at a specific site or facility, rather than from afar, such as the White Bluffs area or overlook on the Monument side of the river.

Several sites that are integral to interpreting the Monument's history are located on DOE lands adjacent to Monument boundaries. These include the B Reactor, White Bluffs Bank, Bruggemann's fruit warehouse, Hanford High School, and others.

Recommendations

- In developing a visitor use plan and/or an interpretive plan for the Monument, take a slow, conservative approach to developing recreational and public access, especially to historical resources. Such an approach would best serve visitors and help minimize or eliminate duplication of effort and information. One way this could be accomplished is by phasing development.
- Consider developing an historical auto tour that brings visitors to various sites and facilities on the Hanford Site. Considering the public's current high level of interest in historical information, events, and places, this would likely be very popular.
- Consider seeking designation of the historic area as an historic district.

A. The B Reactor at the Hanford Site

The nuclear age began here at the Hanford Site, and grew to have a profound affect not only to this area, but also to society both nationally and internationally. The B Reactor was the first commercial-scale working plutonium reactor where material for the first atomic bomb (Trinity Test) was produced. Built in response to actions of World War II, the B Reactor is one of eight other reactors now remaining, and provides an excellent opportunity to interpret the historical, cultural and social context of this era. The B Reactor site is on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as on the Historic American Engineering Record.

Recommendations

- Work with DOE and the local community to find an appropriate party (parties) to protect and interpret these valuable historic resources—not only the B Reactor, but the larger historic district that includes the B Reactor. Explore the possibility of NPS management of the site; that agency has recently been given management authority for a former Cold War nuclear missile silo in South Dakota (the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site), where one piece of the Cold War story will be told. The Service can work with others to interpret this resource on Monument lands and provide assistance in managing fish and wildlife resources at the site.

B. White Bluffs Town Site and Boat Launch

Situated in a shady riparian area alongside the Hanford Reach, this was once the site of the second town of White Bluffs. The original one was on the eastside of the river. Descendants of the families of White Bluffs and Hanford have an annual reunion, and have requested a monument be placed on one of the existing concrete pads at the site to commemorate the people who sacrificed their land for Hanford.

This area has an existing boat launch however it is not open for use.

Recommendations

- If developing an historic auto tour route is discussed, consider:
 - including and interpreting this site
 - options for commemorating those who gave up their land
- If the need for camping is determined and cannot be met at other sites, consider the potential to provide camping at this site. Consider what impacts it may have on the “Heart of the Monument” concept.

2. Vernita Bridge Area Managed by WDFW

This site is located at the junction of State Highways 24 and 243. State Highway 24 is a key point of entry to the Monument from visitors coming from the north and west.

Current primary public uses at this site include boat launching, overnight camping, and bank fishing. Overnight use is prohibited under the DOE permit to the WDFW for site management; however, this restriction has not been enforced for decades. Public use facilities consist of minimal entrance signing and a partially graveled access road; there are no restrooms and no potable water. Restrooms and water exist directly across the river at the DOT Vernita rest stop.

Monitoring and management of public use at the site has been minimal. Lack of visitor facilities, especially during peak use seasons, has resulted in human waste, sanitation concerns, impacts to cultural and natural resources, and social crowding. In the short term, the DOE and WDFW are considering reducing the size of the allowable use area, providing temporary sanitation facilities, and increasing law enforcement patrols. The State has offered to transfer the existing rest stop to the Service.

The WDFW, DOE and Benton County had been working on developing a six-lane paved boat launch near the Vernita Bridge to resolve resource impacts and crowding issues at the undeveloped launching area north of the Bridge. With the Monument designation and need for comprehensive management planning, the boat launch project is “on hold,” but not forgotten by many supporters of the project.

The existing ferry site downstream of Vernita Bridge has been studied (including site and engineering plans) as a potential boat launch and included in a DOE Draft EA which has not yet been released to public.

The entire area, including both sides of the river, is the site of a Wanapum village and is culturally important to the Wanapum People. The Yakama Tribe and the Wanapum People have recently raised concerns regarding the current management situation.

Recommendations

- Strongly consider potential to invest in the rest stop area as a northwestern gateway to the Monument by providing a multi-agency welcome/visitor contact station, and basic facilities. The level and type of basic facilities needs to be determined in relation to demand and current supply in the area.
- As mentioned in the recommendations for the River Corridor, develop a public access plan in partnership with other state and federal agencies. Address river access from Priest Rapids Dam to Richland. As part of the planning process:
 - Gather all documentation regarding DOE boat launch proposal.
 - Explore opportunities on both private and public lands both on and off the Monument, especially along the river upstream to the Priest Rapids Dam.
 - Address access, such as hardened boat launching facilities, as well as needs for facilities associated with river use, such as parking lots, restrooms, and camping.
 - Evaluate impacts to both natural and cultural resources as well as human values of the area along the river corridor associated with current and future increased recreational use.
 - Identify opportunities to consolidate uses and facilities to the extent possible to minimize the footprint of potential development.
 - Explore the opportunities offered by the WDOT redevelopment/expansion plan for the existing rest stop at Vernita Bridge
 - Where applicable, explore the feasibility of concessionaire(s) running campground(s)
 - Explore options to address access inconsistencies (areas officially opened vs. those that are closed, regulations enforced/not enforced)
 - Identify information needed by the public using each of these sites that can be used to develop consistent information/orientation signage for sites along the river corridor. Determine which languages will need to be used to reach all current users.

3. Ringold Fish Hatchery and Campground Managed by WDFW

The Bureau of Reclamation owns the land at this site, and leases it to the State; the WDFW currently manages the site. The State has development plans to expand warm water fishery ponds.

Because it is located adjacent to the southernmost end of the Monument's Wahluke Unit, it is the main access and contact area on the southeast end of the Reach. There is an overnight camping/parking area; use is limited to 15 days, but is not regularly enforced. No vehicle use permits are required. At peak season, camping at the Hatchery soars to between 200-300 users. There is a primitive boat launch at the site; people also use the canal to launch boats.

Across the river, the Hanford Dune Fields above the high-water mark are closed to the public. However, the area continues to be used illegally.

Recommendations

- Strongly consider the potential to invest in the area as a southeastern gateway to the Monument by developing a multi-agency visitor kiosk at the hatchery that would support a main visitor contact station on the Monument (see discussion in Section C, Southern Entrance to Wahluke Unit via Ringold Road). Also strongly consider providing formal hardened camping and boat launching facilities and user fees. Enhancing those that exist at the Ringold Fish Hatchery can create some of these hardened facilities. Explore the following as part of the gateway concept at this site:
 - Facilities for volunteers to stay while acting as camp hosts
 - Interpretation of the nearby dunes
 - Keeping a boat at this launch (for law enforcement and maintenance purposes)
 - Explore partnership with WDFW to develop hatchery area for camping
 - Fee demo program for camping and boat use
 - Potential for Highway Trust Funds (the site is BOR land)
 - Explore the potential for a water trail the includes this site
 - Potential for IAC boat launch grants or FERC mitigation funds for boat launch
 - Potential gateway funding from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant

4. Adjacent Land Managed by BLM

The BLM manages a checkerboard of lands adjacent to the north and west of Saddle Mountain. During the development of a recreation plan in 1997, public scoping revealed that the public did not want hardened visitor facilities because they did not want the area to become a party area.

Internationally known as a petrified wood collection area, these lands receive heavy use from rock collectors. Other public uses allowed on BLM land includes riding OHVs; separate zones were established for motorized and non-motorized vehicle use. Hang gliding use occurs on Saddle Mountain, primarily on the BLM side, but also spills over onto the Monument depending on the wind and weather conditions. There are no fly zones in the 10-mile radius of the Plutonium Finishing Plant and Energy Northwest's operating power producing reactors.

The BLM has a law enforcement agreement with the County on the Yakima River. The sheriff enforces regulations and, in exchange, the BLM provides money for facilities and improvements.

Recommendations

- Get traffic counter data from the BLM recreation planner to help determine visitation numbers so FWS staff can get a picture of the numbers of visitors to the area
- Explore the BLM's wildflower viewing program for similar program potential within the Monument
- Consider need to manage over-flights, as well as the need for outreach to flight/micro-light operators

Appendix

Following is a list of individuals who attended the Visitor Services Review:

Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Office Members

Jean Harrison, Division Chief, Visitor Services and Communications (VSC)
Matt How, Visual Information Specialist, VSC
Kelly Donahue, Landscape Architect, VSC
Steve Moore, Chief, Division of Refuge Operations Support
Chuck Houghton, Chief, Division of Refuge Planning
Scott Aiken, Native American Liaison
Joe Hostler, Assistant Native American Liaison trainee
Glenn Frederick, PNW Planning Team
Mike Marxen, PNW Planning Team
Miki Fujitsubo, CA/NV Refuge Planning
Mari Jilbert, Landcape Architect, Engineering

Team Members

Cheryl Simpson, Visitor Services Chief, FWS, Region 2
John Gahr, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Mid Columbia NWR
Janet Schmidt, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Stillwater NWR
Keith Dunbar, NPS
LaVerne Grussing, BLM
Ken Vines, Siskiyou National Forest
Tom Ferns, DOE
Dave Brown, Federal Highways Administration
Rich Steele, FAC Member
Adam Fyall, Benton County Commissioner's Office
Karen Wieda, FAC Member
Michelle Gerber, FAC Member
Sergio Capozzi, EDAW
Jeff Tayer, WDFW, FAC Member
Derek VanMarter, Triangle Associates

Monument Staff

Greg Hughes, Refuge Manager
Paula Call, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Dan Haas, Natural Resource Planner
Carleen Gonder, Refuge Officer
Jenna Gaston, Cultural Resource Manager
Robert Little, Engineering and Equipment Operator
Dave Smith, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist
Heidi Newsome, Wildlife Biologist

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