



Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

Celebrating 100 Years of America's Wildlife Refuge System

Centennial Time Capsule buried at Willapa National Wildlife in conjunction with nationwide celebration of the Refuge System's 100th birthday

Naselle, WA – March 17, 2003 – Commemorating the 100th birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System, staff and volunteers from Willapa National Wildlife Refuge buried a time capsule at Refuge Headquarters today. The celebration at Willapa was mirrored throughout the country at hundreds of wildlife refuges this week as part of the Centennial Year of the Refuge system, officially created on March 14, 1903 by then-president Theodore Roosevelt. "It all started with a five-acre island in Florida. Roosevelt learned that pelicans there were being slaughtered to extinction to meet demand for their feathers in fashionable hats at the time. He ordered the protection of that island as well as another fifty wildlife refuges during his term," notes Art Shine, Recreation Planner for Willapa Wildlife Refuge. Art continues, "Had this not happened in 1903, we wouldn't have what we have today here at Willapa." The National Wildlife Refuge system is now the world's largest network of wildlife lands, totaling more than 94 million acres and over 540 refuges. "Our Willapa Refuge is of medium size," adds Shine, "with approximately 14,000 acres in and around Willapa Bay, but includes some of the richest habitats and variety of wildlife found in any refuge nationally."

Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader for the Willapa Wildlife Refuge Complex, remarked on the priorities of the Refuge locally for the next 100 years. "Our focus here at Willapa for the next century will encompass three initiatives:

- our continued fight against spartina and other invasives,
- the continued restoration of salmon habitat, and
- the management of our forest areas to create additional environments supporting the rich bio-diversity found today only in our old-growth parcels

Joining Refuge staff for the ceremonial burial of the time capsule were representatives of the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, a non-profit organization dedicated to support and enhancement of Refuge programs. The Willapa Friends is one of over 220 volunteer groups nationwide who partner with local refuge staff to support specific Refuge programs. Bev Arnoldy, President of

the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, spoke about the importance of the Willapa Refuge both regionally and nationally. "Not only is Willapa National Wildlife refuge geographically at the center of Pacific County, it philosophically is at the center of national focus on preservation for the next 100 years of the Refuge system. The local programs we support for invasives control of spartina, protection of the endangered snowy plover and other species, and quality public access to refuge lands are all recognized nationally as exemplary in the overall mission of the Refuge system. The Friends of Willapa invites everyone to join us in continued enhancement of this very special place."

A partial list of time capsule contents buried at Willapa includes:

- USFWS uniform shirt
- USFWS uniform patch
- Willapa NWR Complex work list for 2003
- group photograph of refuge staff
- photograph of Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior
- photographs of various work projects (spartina work, fish ladders under construction, Bear River restoration, salmon recovery efforts, teaching environmental education and leading interpretive walks)
- Willapa Refuge brochure
- Centennial "Blue Goose" pen
- Copy of the Chinook Observer
- Letters written by 4th graders of Mike Robinson's Ilwaco class, describing their feelings about the Willapa Refuge and the Friends of Willapa (see photo enclosed)
- Friends of Willapa Refuge brochure and promotional materials
- various photographs of the Friends of Willapa in action (teaching environment education in the schools and in the field, manning an information booth at public events, providing outreach, leading interpretative hiking to the ancient Cedar Grove on Long Island, leading walks at Teal Slough)

A pot-luck luncheon followed the capsule ceremony. On hand to witness the event were representatives from our congressional representatives, including Dena Horton from Congressman Brian Baird's office, Mindi Lindquist from Senator Patty Murray's office, and Liz Luce from Senator Maria Cantwell's office. Also joining the festivities were students from the Public Art Department at the University of Washington who were present to display their designs for an interpretative trail planned at refuge headquarters where salmon habitat was recently restored.

Nationally, events celebrating the Centennial birthday included the release of a new 37-cent stamp by the United States Postal Service (digital image enclosed).

About Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

Willapa Bay is the defining geography for the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, which comprises over 14,000 acres of upland forest, tidelands, beach dunes, freshwater marshes, diked grasslands, and other wetland habitat.

Aquatic habitats and grasslands on the Refuge support migratory populations of nearly 300 bird species including the black brant, trumpeter swans, Canada geese, scaup, canvasback, bufflehead, scoters, and American wigeon. The Refuge also hosts some of the largest concentrations of shorebirds on the Pacific Coast, including the endangered western snowy plover and marbled murrelet. Black bear, black-tailed deer, Roosevelt elk, bats, bobcats, and grouse can be found in the forests and upland habitats. The cool, wet climate of Willapa Bay makes the area a "hotspot" of amphibian and fish diversity, and Refuge habitats support over half of the 24 native amphibians that occur in the state and provide spawning grounds for chinook, coho, and chum salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout.

Short History of the National Wildlife Refuge System¹

In March of 1903, then-President Theodore Roosevelt established tiny Pelican Island, off the east coast of Florida, as the nation's first federal bird reserve with little fanfare,. At the time, herons, egrets, spoonbills and pelicans were being slaughtered indiscriminately because their feathers were in high demand as fashion accessories. An otherwise obscure thicket of mangroves, the five-acre Pelican Island became a sanctuary and a national symbol for conservationists. Theodore Roosevelt went on to establish 51 more federal bird reserves and four national game preserves, and they became the forerunner of our modern National Wildlife Refuge System. Today, that system is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The system is the only network of federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation.

Today, more than 250 endangered plants and animals live on National Wildlife Refuges – including the gentle manatee in Florida, the American Bald Eagle, and various colorful, exotic birds on the Hawaiian islands. National Wildlife Refuges provide unparalleled outdoor activities – including fishing, hunting, environmental education, wildlife observation and photography – making them special, peaceful places for all Americans to connect with nature. Encompassing 93 million acres, the Refuge System boasts more units than the National Forest System and more acres than the National Park System. The Refuge system celebrates 100 years of conservation success in 2003, its Centennial Year.

¹ Adapted from <http://news.fws.gov/newsreleases/r9/1EE1372C-5E7B-4D9E-9027725B92B7E317.html>, by Besty Lordan of the US Fish & Wildlife Service

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