



Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

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Press Release:

New Refuge Manager Joins Staff at Willapa NWR

Willapa Refuge gains experienced manager relocating from Toppenish

Naselle, WA – Thursday, March 11, 2003 – David Gonzales joins the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge staff as Refuge Manager. Gonzales moves westward from his previous posting as Refuge Manager for the Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge in east-central Washington, filling the Refuge Manager position vacated by Terri Butler upon her promotion to Deputy Project Leader for the Willapa Refuge Complex. Both Gonzales and Butler report to Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader for the three-refuge Willapa Complex. “With the addition of Dave and the promotion of Terri, we’re staffed with a unique combination of experience and energy to pursue long-range programs here at Willapa,” said Stenvall in announcing the appointments.

At Willapa, Gonzales’ responsibilities will include program management and supervision of on-the-ground operations on the nearly 16,000 acre refuge, encompassing ongoing programs for spartina eradication, habitat restoration, wildlife management, endangered and threatened species recovery, and public use. His Willapa responsibilities will leverage his prior experience in the Fish and Wildlife Service, including postings at San Francisco Bay, Hanford Reach, and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuges in addition to his work at Toppenish. All told, Gonzales brings nearly ten years’ experience in Refuge public relations, firefighting, volunteer coordination, wildlife monitoring, endangered species recovery, invasives species management, and staff supervision.

Gonzales holds bachelor of science degrees from New Mexico State University in Wildlife and Fisheries Science. While in college, he participated in student internship programs sponsored by the Fish and Wildlife system at Klamath Basin and San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuges. “My student internship experiences at the San Francisco Bay Refuge introduced me to the urgent challenges faced by threatened species, including the Western Snowy Plover that we’re working to save here at Willapa,” noted Gonzales. “I’m especially excited about coming to Willapa to join the ongoing support programs for Plover habitat here. And San Francisco also introduced me to spartina and its direct

threat to shorebird habitat. I'm looking forward to contributing to the eradication efforts already underway here."

Gonzales' enthusiasm will be put to the test immediately. His first responsibilities include preparing for the upcoming summertime assault on spartina, where dozens of staff and a small armada of boats and amphibious equipment will be choreographed in a tide-driven schedule of precision treatments for cordgrass eradication. "Operationally, this is a complex coordination of resources that must be carefully scheduled to maximize the acreage we cover in the time allotted," commented Gonzales.

An avid outdoorsman, Dave and his dog ("Jackson") will make their home on Refuge-owned property in a forested area frequented by one of the Refuges' elk herds. "It's certainly a little startling to walk out the door in the morning and find yourself interrupting some elks' breakfast!" laughs Dave. "This experience certainly underscores for me the richness of habitat here at Willapa and the importance of our Refuge to hundreds of species of birds, mammals, amphibians, and fish."

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About Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

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

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

Willapa is one of over 500 national wildlife refuges in the United States operated by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only national network of public lands in the world set aside specifically for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. Encompassing 93 million acres, the Refuge System boasts more units than the National Forest System and more acres than the National Park System. The Refuge system celebrates 100 years of conservation success in 2003, its Centennial Year.

About the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

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