

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge
Press Release

National Wildlife Refuge Association Tours Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

September 1, 2004
Long Beach, WA

Michael Woodbridge, lobbyist for the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), toured Willapa NWR on Monday, August 23rd with Willapa Complex Project Leader, Charlie Stenvall and Friends of Willapa NWR President, Bev Arnoldy.

NWRA is a national non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., focused on working to improve local refuges and the Refuge System as a whole. The NWRA's mission is to protect, enhance and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), lands and waters set aside by the American people to conserve our country's diverse wildlife heritage. With a network of over 240 Friends groups in place, the NWRA is working to build these disparate groups into a coordinated entity working both locally and nationally on behalf of the Refuge System. In particular, Michael is the "eyes and ears" for the NWRA and the Friends organizations on items of interest to us on Capitol Hill. "We are fortunate to have someone from Capitol Hill here to learn about our efforts and challenges," notes Bev, "it really confirms that our hard work is being recognized."

Michael thoroughly enjoyed his tour of our area and Willapa NWR. He commented, "This Friends group has developed a wonderful partnership with the Refuge. The hard work, dedication and pure love for Willapa Bay by all the Friends group members here really shows. Many back in D.C. would be delighted to see the progress this particular Refuge has made. Clearly a combination of both the Friends volunteers and Refuge management has made a significant difference in the number of successes this Refuge has achieved. This Friends group is truly one of the leaders and represents the best of what collaboration between Friends and Refuges can accomplish."

An open house reception on August 23rd, gave Friends members a wonderful opportunity to meet Michael in person and to learn more about the NWRA. Friends member, Ann Chiller, commented "It is great to see so many interested in the Friends group. I am especially looking forward to working with the 4th grade program this next school year."

The NWRA has sponsored several conferences and workshops in the past couple of years. Friends of Willapa NWR members attended the 2nd Annual Friends Conference in Washington D.C. at the end of January 2003. This year, Friends members attended the Region 1 conference in Portland (co-sponsored by the regional office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife) at the end of January. In early March, Friends members flew to Washington, D.C., to attend the NWRA-sponsored "Advocacy Bootcamp" weekend workshop and to visit the offices of Senator Cantwell, Senator Murray, Congressman Baird, and Congressman Dicks. In May, Bev Arnoldy attended the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Conservation in Action Summit," a week-long workshop to help define the needs for the Refuge System for the next fifteen years. Twenty-three of the 250 attendees to this workshop were Friends members from all over the U.S.

About Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

Willapa Bay is the largest estuary in the northwest United States region outside Puget Sound, covering approximately 88,000 acres at high tide with over 100 miles of shoreline. The Bay is the defining geography for the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, which comprises nearly 14,000 acres of upland forest, tidelands, beach dunes, freshwater marshes, diked grasslands, and other wetland habitat. Aquatic habitats and grasslands on the Refuge support migratory populations of literally hundreds of bird species such as black brant, trumpeter swans, Canada geese, scaup, canvasback, bufflehead, scoters, and American wigeon. The Refuge also hosts some of the largest concentrations of shorebirds on the Pacific Coast and provides habitat for the threatened western snowy plover and a threatened seabird, the marbled murrelet. Black bear, black-tailed deer, Roosevelt elk, bats, bobcats, and grouse can be found in the forests and upland habitats. The cool, wet climate of Willapa Bay makes the area a "hotspot" of amphibian and fish diversity, where Refuge habitats support over half of the 24 native amphibians that occur in the state and provide spawning grounds for chinook, coho, and chum salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout. Willapa is one of over 500 national wildlife refuges in the United States operated by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only national network of public lands in the world set aside specifically for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. Encompassing 93 million acres, the Refuge System boasts more units than the National Forest System and more acres than the National Park System. The Refuge system celebrated 100 years of conservation success in 2003, its Centennial year.

Media Contacts:

Shelly Pollock

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

p: 360.665.5388

e: shelly@ourbeach.org

P.O. Box 1480

Ocean Park, WA 98640

<http://www.willapabay.org/~fwnwr>

