

WILLAPA TIDINGS

Newsletter of the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge • Vol. 2, No. 1 • Fall 2001

New Fish Ladders Replace Old Tidegates

The Refuge is now installing two fish ladders on the Refuge, one on the Lewis Unit and the other at Porter Point. Both will open access to small streams so that cutthroat trout and salmon can again reach their former spawning beds.

After much discussion and consternation over removing dams to save salmon, attention is now being directed to far more common obstacles—culverts and tidegates. The tidegates can be found at the end of culverts along the many earthen dikes placed to hold back saltwater on the coastal bays and estuaries of the Northwest. Other culverts provide drainage for small streams under roads and railway beds.

Most culverts were installed many years ago with little concern for fish, at a time when salmon were an abundant and seemingly self-sustaining resource.

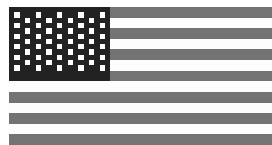
The culverts are either concrete or metal pipes, replacing the silt-covered bottom of a stream bed. They are narrow, sometimes forcing water through at an unnatural velocity, or conversely, placed so high that for long periods they hold too little water. Neither is a good situation for fish movement.

The new fish ladders will allow fish passage as water spills over baffles which will provide pools at varying levels.

The pools of slower water will allow the fish to rest, if needed, before continuing upstream. The ladders are also designed to prevent saltwater from entering into the freshwater ponds. The shallow freshwater ponds of the Lewis and Porter Point units have been maintained to provide duck habitat. Upon completion of the ladders, the ponds and upland streams should also become ideal trout and salmon habitat.



The new fish ladder under construction at the Lewis Unit in August was a forest of rebar flanked by plywood forms. The ladders were estimated to take about four months to put in.



Our local problems pale in comparison to the recent terrorist attacks in New York and Washington and the bombing in Afghanistan. Our sympathy and thoughts go out to all who have suffered and particularly to our members and readers whose lives have been touched personally by these unfortunate events.

The original culvert on the freshwater side at the Lewis Unit, like most such structures, has been fish-unfriendly. The other end of the culvert has the tidegate which opens when the tide is low so that fresh water can move out and closes automatically when the tide rises to prevent salt water from entering the freshwater pond.

Groups Meet Over Spartina and Other Willapa Bay Issues

Representatives from research institutes, local companies, and government agencies met September 16 and 17 to discuss problems in Willapa Bay, particularly those brought on by the rapid spread of spartina. Washington State University, Olympic Natural Resource Center-University of Washington, Coastal Resource Alliance, Willapa Bay-Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association, and Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge sponsored the "Willapa Bay—Time is Running Out" event for local, state, and federal officials.

Presenters addressed oyster and cranberry production as well as explosive growth of spartina and burrowing shrimp, water pollution, loss of wetlands, and restrictions on chemical herbicides and pesticides in the bay, all matters of serious concern for Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

Continued on page 3

Annual Meeting & Picnic Draws Pelican, Owls, & Members

The Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge held its first annual all-members meeting on September 8 at Refuge Headquarters. A beautiful end-of-summer day allowed those attending to enjoy getting to know one another better. Children especially enjoyed the chance to climb trees, check out the stream and explore its muddy banks.

The event started with a sumptuous potluck dinner followed by a short business meeting, a talk by Refuge project leader Charlie Stenvall, and a presentation by Sharnelle Fee about the work of the Wildlife Rehab Center of the North Coast.

During the business meeting, Friends president Rudy Schuver reviewed some of the goals and accomplishments of the first year. Among the accomplishments:

- The education program for six fourth-grade classrooms in the area successfully introduced over 150 children to the Refuge and wildlife of the area.

- The quarterly newsletter has received many favorable comments. Mailed to members, to residents of nearby communities, to local, state, and national

legislators, to other national wildlife refuges, and to conservation organizations, it continues to be the best recruiting tool for increasing membership.

- Membership continues to grow with 93 members at present, fast approaching the original goal of 100 members by the end of 2001.

For the 2001-2002 academic year, the education program will be expanded to include two fourth-grade classes in South Bend. Increased enrollment at Hilltop Elementary School may require one additional class there.

Volunteers who would like to have hands-on experience on the Refuge should have more opportunities this year. An outdoor planner will join the Refuge staff this fall to help develop a public use plan. The plan will determine which areas of the Refuge will be open to the public, which areas will be preserved as wildlife sanctuaries, and what activities will be allowed in the open areas. Once the plan is complete, Refuge staff will identify potential volunteer projects.

Continued on page 4



Members elected a new board of directors at the annual gathering on September 8.

Calendar of Activities October—November—December

Friends Activities

To participate in any of these activities, just call the Friends at 360-665-6859.

- Resume 4th grade education program
- Monitor shorebird migration
- Maintain trails and campgrounds
- Assist at goose check station
- Clean out and disinfect nest boxes
- Plant trees at headquarters
- Board of directors meeting Nov. 15,
PUD Building, 95th & Sandridge Road,
Long Beach, 7:00 PM

Refuge Staff Activities

The Refuge staff will be pursuing these projects:

- Mow spartina meadows
- Rototill spartina
- Complete fish ladders
- Relocate cutthroat trout
- Mow Riekkola unit and place blinds
- Plant trees at headquarters
- Enhance nutrients in all streams
- Place incubators on all streams

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To request an address change, to contribute items of interest (including photos), or to write articles for publication, please contact Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

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FRIENDS OF WILLAPA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

A nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge was established in July 2000 to provide support and assistance to Refuge programs and to enhance awareness and appreciation of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rudy Schuver, *President*
Ocean Park, Washington

Winona Schuver, *Secretary*
Ocean Park, Washington

Larry Scott, *Vice President*
Volunteer Committee
Astoria, Oregon

Bette Arne, *Treasurer*
Education Committee
Ocean Park, Washington

Melissa Herrold
Fund-Raising Committee
Ilwaco, Washington

Lee Lowenson
Seaview, Washington

Alan Richards
Naselle, Washington

Peter Weidman
Astoria, Oregon

Janet Weidman
Astoria, Oregon

Spartina Outpaces Control Efforts

Continued from page 1

Neither the US House nor the US Senate 2002 Appropriations Bill for the Department of Interior included funds to increase the use of proven spartina control methods now available—chemical treatment, mowing, and root eradication.

The Refuge continues mowing during the growing season to stop seed development and continues rototilling during winter months to check the spread of spartina through its root systems, but the mowing and rototilling haven't been able to keep up with the spreading infestation, which is estimated to increase between twenty and thirty percent each year. The 9th Circuit Court's temporary restriction on the use of the aquatic herbicide Rodeo, which has been effective against small clones and seedlings scattered over wide areas of the bay, has further complicated the situation. Now even the limited funds and equipment for spraying cannot be used.

Dick and Brian Sheldon of Northern Oyster Company conducted a six-hour tour of Willapa Bay to give attendees a closer look at the spreading spartina infestation as well as other problems in the bay.

Control of spartina will require all property owners—private, state and federal—to work in concert. A partial or piecemeal attack is unlikely to succeed. Current treatments are expensive. Dick Sheldon estimated that the cost of eradicating spartina may be ten times higher than the value of the land, an onerous burden for private landowners.

President's Letter

The spreading infestation of spartina in Willapa Bay continues to be a major problem. Resources to fight spartina are limited and, given recent events on the national scene, are likely to remain so. Without additional funds for 2002, the staff at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge will have only a limited increase in capability. A new amphibious rototiller is due for delivery in October. It should be more efficient than the current rototiller, which is a converted mower, so the Refuge should be able to rototill more acreage this winter than last winter.

More than the Refuge is involved; in fact, all of Willapa Bay is rapidly being infested. Some of the best minds at state universities and research stations are seeking a solution. No magic fix has yet appeared. It is only prudent that present proven methods of mowing, rototilling and spraying (as soon as "Rodeo" is again authorized for use) be maintained at the maximum level possible until a better method of treatment is devised.

Many private landowners and local, state, and federal agencies are working to combat the spartina; however, despite their

best efforts, the spartina continues to spread. It seems that it would be beneficial to have one agency in charge with the authority to direct and coordinate efforts across ownership and political boundaries. Spartina, if unchecked, will have a far reaching economic impact that will eventually affect every business and individual in this area. We should not pass up any opportunity to apprise our elected officials of this problem.

In a rare bit of irony, I note that recently scientists have been baffled by a die-off of salt marsh (a.k.a. spartina, or smooth cordgrass) on Louisiana's Gulf Coast, where spartina is a native plant. The salt marshes have value in the area because they serve as a buffer to prevent saltwater from reaching intermediate and fresh water marshes further inland. While the problem involves some 250,000 acres, 17,000 acres of marsh have lost all of their vegetation and have reverted to mud flats. Some three million dollars in federal emergency funds has been allocated to study possible causes of Louisiana's spartina problems; we should remember that "the wheel that squeaks the loudest is the one that gets the grease."

—Rudy Schuver, President



Spartina roots vigorously on the tidal flats of Willapa Bay.



- New Membership
 Renewal

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Make checks payable to: Friends of Willapa NWR

Send to: Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge
 PO Box 627
 Ocean Park, WA 98640

All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 E-mail: _____

Amount enclosed:

- \$10 Individual Membership
 \$15 Family Membership
 \$50 Patron Membership
 \$100 Benefactor Membership
 \$500 or over Advocate Membership

Volunteer Interests

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Projects and Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail and Campground Maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Shorebird and Waterfowl Monitoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat Restoration | <input type="checkbox"/> Fish and Amphibian Monitoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Recruitment | | |

New Board Elected, Group Praised at Annual Meeting

Continued from page 2

The Friends have also submitted a grant proposal to the US Fish and Wildlife Foundation to fund a program to strengthen the organization. Our goal this year is to increase awareness of the Refuge both locally and outside the area. We will try to reach adults of nearby communities, visitors who frequent the Refuge, and local businesses and civic organizations. We will tell the Refuge story, its problems and accomplishments, and reasons why the Refuge needs widespread public support. The membership goal for the year is to add another 100 new members. We hope that every member can get a new member to join.

Members received "Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge" logo patches at the annual meeting as part of the effort to increase awareness of the Refuge. Members can sew the patches on shirt sleeves, shirt fronts, hats, or anywhere that might attract attention.

Members elected the board of directors for the year 2002 at the annual meeting. The

new directors will begin their terms at the January board meeting, and will at that time elect new officers. The directors approved by unanimous vote:

- Bette Arne, Ocean Park
- Charles Blight, Ocean Park
- Melissa Herrold, Ilwaco
- Joanne Jambor, South Bend
- Rudy Schuver, Ocean Park
- Winona Schuver, Ocean Park
- Larry Scott, Astoria
- Charles Whittey, Long Beach
- Suzy Whittey, Long Beach

Charlie Stenvall, project leader for Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, spoke briefly about the Friends group's education projects and about the 90-ton cranes visible from Highway 101 as they work on the Refuge's salmon restoration projects on the Lewis and Porter Point units. He praised the Friends group for its role in the activities of the Refuge.

In the last segment of the annual meeting Sharnelle Fee, Director of the Wildlife Rehab Center of the North Coast in Olney, Oregon, presented explanations,

pictures, and stories about the Rehab Center's activities.

Sharnelle brought two northern saw-whet owls and a juvenile brown pelican named "Netarts" to talk about. The birds had been injured, but although now healed they are not able to return to the wild. The pelican and owls looked on as Sharnelle presented story after story of wildlife affected for the worse by interaction with our technology.

She told of protected red-tailed hawks found shot, gulls with fishhooks in their bills, owls poisoned by eating poisoned mice, Caspian terns purposefully driven over by vehicles, and countless numbers of wildlife accidentally struck by cars. "Our program is about respecting life," Sharnelle said. She concluded her talk with suggestions for avoiding inadvertently harming wildlife, such as forgoing the use of toxic chemicals in the backyard.

Membership Notes

We welcome the following new members of Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge who have joined since the last newsletter:

Benefactor Membership

Dave Kruger

Patron Membership

Jason Silva & Sonja Alsofi

Family Memberships

William (Bucky) Barnett, Byron & Margie Cochrane, Henry & Ruby Cone, Randy & Amy Dennis, Pamela & Robert Garlett, Dean & Diane Schwickerath, Bill Siverly & Jutta Donath

Individual Memberships

Kirsten Brennan, Amy Greenhut, Judy McIntyre, Gretchen Stevenson



Children found plenty to do along Headquarters Stream during the annual gathering.

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Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 627
Ocean Park, WA 98640

