

Preliminary Issues Workbook

Public Use and Access Subcommittee

Rich Steele, Chair
Mike Estes
Harold Heacock
Mike Lilga
Aaron Miles
Deb Moore
Gene Schreckhise
Kris Watkins
Karen Wieda

Hanford Reach National Monument Federal Planning Advisory Committee

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Preliminary Issue: Public Use and Access

The purpose of this Workbook is to begin to identify issues that are related to the Public Use and Access to the Hanford Reach National Monument. It is also to serve as a guide for the collection of information from interested groups and individuals as part of the development of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the long-term management of the Monument

The Monument is generally comprised of three areas: 1) the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) Reserve, 2) the Wahluke Slope, and 3) the Columbia River corridor. Public access and use opportunities have been, and continue to be different for each area. As you read through and respond to this Workbook, please be sure to separately consider and make recommendations for the management of each of these three distinct areas.

Public Access Background

Historically, public access to Monument lands has been limited since the predecessor agencies of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) started procuring what is now the Hanford Site beginning in 1943. For example, since the 1940s, ALE and parts of the Wahluke Slope have been closed to access by the general public, being used primarily for research, education, and as a buffer zone to the Hanford Site. Beginning in late 1960s lands on the north side of the River were managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) as part of the McNary National Wildlife Refuge. In 1971 the management of part of the area now known as the Wahluke Wildlife Area was turned over to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), The other part became the Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge, managed by the Service. The Hanford Reach of the Columbia River was open to public use in the 1970s. The WDFW reestablished historical public access points along the River. They also developed additional access points to the River and upland areas of the Wahluke Slope. Presently, most of the access areas that were in use in 1999 when management of the Wahluke Unit was transferred to Service are still maintained. These accesses are considered semi-primitive, with facilities consisting of gravel and dirt roads, small parking areas, primitive boat ramps, and minimal signing.

Many people believe that it is important to maintain and protect existing public access to the Monument lands and River and, where appropriate, to provide more access. Some believe that it is very important that there be a balance between the need for public access and the need to preserve important Native American sacred places within the Monument and to provide them access to these places. Some believe that providing public access to areas with historical significance is important because history belongs to people. Others believe that access should be carefully controlled.

Concern has been expressed regarding the effects of human access to fragile resources. Some people feel there is a need to balance public access with resource protection, thus avoiding resource degradation from overuse. There are differing, yet equally intense viewpoints on what it means to provide for reasonable public access while still ensuring the protection of all the monument's significant resources. One concern is that consideration must be given to the potential impacts to adjacent lands from public access management on the Monument.

Public Use Background

The Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 mandates the Service to manage its wildlife refuges based on six priority wildlife-dependent uses: 1) hunting, 2) fishing, 3) wildlife observation, 4) photography, 5) environmental education, and 6) interpretation. Some level of each currently occurs on the Monument. According to Service policy, each refuge is closed to any use until it is formally opened through the compatibility determination process. An interim compatibility determination to include the six priority uses above was completed for the Wahluke Unit upon its inclusion into the Service refuge system.

The Act directs refuge managers to terminate immediately or phase out as expeditiously as practicable, existing uses determined to be not compatible with Wildlife Refuge purposes. Non-wildlife-dependent uses have occurred for years on the Wahluke Unit. Examples include hiking, target shooting, bicycling, dog walking, sunbathing, water skiing, picnicking, and paragliding.

Applicable language from Presidential Proclamation 7319, June 9, 2000 states that “For the purpose of protecting the objects identified above, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Energy shall prohibit all motorized and mechanized vehicle use off road, except for emergency or other federally authorized purposes, including remediation purposes.”

Applicable language from the Background Paper accompanying the Proclamation states that “Much of the monument has been off limits to recreation and public access. However, wildlife dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, environmental education, wildlife observation, interpretation and photography) does occur on the Wahluke Wildlife Recreation Unit on the Wahluke Slope. Such recreation would generally not be affected except where (1) the land managing agency, through processes required by existing law, identifies places where such uses ought to be restricted or prohibited as necessary to protect the federal land and resources, including the objects protected by the monument designation, and the circumstances call for swift protective action. Such uses remain subject to applicable laws and regulations, and therefore remain subject to regulation and limitation under such provisions for reasons other than establishment of the monument.”

Many people want to maintain traditional public uses, particularly fishing, hunting, and boating. Interpretation, education, and research are frequently mentioned as desirable public uses. Some want flexibility from the strict interpretation of Refuge policy, with the thought that the Monument status implies a relatively greater accommodation of public uses. The need to capitalize upon the Monument for tourism and local economic benefits is important to some.

Many people believe there is a need to balance human uses with protection of the Monument’s diverse natural and cultural resources. We must address the question “how do we love it without destroying it?” There are differing, yet equally intense viewpoints on what it means to provide for reasonable public uses and economic tourism benefits while still ensuring the protection of all the Monument’s significant resources. Many are concerned about the long-term public access to the Monument and want to be assured that they will be involved in all decision-making processes regarding the management of the Monument.

Issues Statements

Private property abuts the Monument to the west, north, and east. There is the potential for harm to the Monument's resources by unregulated access from the adjoining private property. Conversely, there is a possibility of damage to private property if Monument users trespass onto private lands.

Unauthorized access within the Monument could harm natural resources. Examples of unauthorized access include entering protected areas, straying from designated roads and trails, camping outside of designated areas, or accessing culturally sensitive areas.

Currently allowed recreational opportunities may not meet the desires or needs of some visitors. In addition, existing access points may not be suitable for allowed uses. Some uses may require more and/or improved access, while others may need less. More access and allowed activities will bring more people which could result in more impacts on the resources. Less access and allowed activities may serve to protect resources; however, it may be viewed as simply excluding people from using the Monument.

An important issue is the extent and intensity of Tribal use of the Monument lands. While Tribal rights to use the Monument are well established, over harvesting of the wildlife resources or other potential uses could do harm.

The possible loss of existing traditional recreational opportunities is a concern to some. Restriction of hunting areas for game is one possible example. Restriction of hiking, horseback riding, and bicycling to designated trails could be another.

Currently, ALE and some areas of the Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge are off limits to visitors. Some have expressed interest in accessing these areas for various recreational purposes. Allowing public access to Rattlesnake Mountain, for example, would allow visitors to experience breathtaking views, observe changes in plant life with elevation and other ecological changes, and possibly access the telescope. On the other hand, more people means increasing pressure and the possibility of harm to the ecosystem, such as by spreading noxious weeds.

Monument lands have long been used for both applied and basic research and short- and long-term monitoring purposes. Parts of the Monument have been designated as a Federal Research Natural Area and later as a National Environmental Research Park. Some people believe that research should be allowed to continue; not only for basic scientific purposes but also to provide much needed information that will be used to better manage the Monument. Others feel that some controls need to be put on research activities to minimize potential harm and ensure that experiments are compatible with resource protection goals. The scientific community feels it should be involved in any decision-making process designed to regulate access to the Monument for research purposes.

Several historical sites lie adjacent to, but not within, the Monument. These sites include the Hanford and White Bluffs townsites and the B Reactor. How should these sites be managed?

Some wildlife experts believe that the growing elk population is damaging ALE as well as adjacent private lands. Some believe that the herd size needs to be reduced. Elk are currently managed by capturing and transporting them off site and by hunting on private lands. Others believe that ALE should be opened to hunting to control the herd and provide income to the state and county.

Existing and Potential Future Uses on the Hanford Reach National Monument

Recreational Uses

Hunting	Fishing	Dog training
Boating (all kinds)	Bike riding	Paragliding/hang gliding
Horseback riding	Hiking	Photography
Wildlife observation	Picnicking	Camping
Camping	Target shooting	Sun bathing
Falconry	Fossil looking	Jet ski use
Sightseeing	Dog walking	Water skiing
Ultralites		

Commercial Recreation Uses (Activities where there are paying customers)

Hunting guides	Fishing guides	Tour boats
Outfitters (rafting etc)	Fishing derby	Tour groups
Vendors	Sightseeing flights	

Commercial

Agriculture	Power transmission corridors
Irrigation	Communication towers (public and private)
Telescope	Photographers

Educational Uses (K-Lifetime)

School groups	Tours	Interpretation (trails, signs)
Outdoor classrooms	Live video cameras	Telescope (AASTA)
Teacher education	Living/oral history	Interpretive centers
Outdoor school (day or overnight)		
Youth groups (scouting, 4H)		
Volunteer/docent education		

Research Uses

- On going monitoring (wildlife, plants, geologic, etc)
- Basic research
- Applied research

Cultural/Historical

- Plant gathering
- Animal harvest (fish and game)
- Vision quests
- Gather sites
- Burial sites
- Cultural sites
- Historical sites (i.e. White Bluffs area, Snively Ranch, etc)

Existing Access Points to Monument

Four preliminary groupings were established.

- Vehicle access – roads
- Boat access – river
- Non-motorized access
- Air access

For each group the members listed current access.

Vehicle Access - Roads

- Ringold Road
- State Highway SR24
 - White Bluffs Landing Road
 - Saddle Mountain roads (3 existing)
 - Midway Road

Boat Access – River

- White Bluffs
- Ringold
- Vernita
- Old Hanford Ferry Crossing
- Riverlands
- Richland
- Self Landing (Pasco side of the river across from Richland)

Boat Ramp Surface

- Concrete
- River cobble
- River cobble
- river cobble
- Gravel, river cobble
- Four lane, concrete
- Gravel

Non Motorized Access

- Private property
- Roads
- River
- Irrigation ditches
- Trails

Air Access

- Float planes
- Hot-air balloon
- Gliders
- Sightseeing flights

Recreational Use and Access (Version 1)

There are many existing and potential recreational uses of the Hanford Reach National Monument. We need your input on the types of activities that may occur somewhere on the Monument and your thoughts about access needs. Indicate whether or not you think access and opportunities for each activity are OK the way they are, need improvement or expansion, or should be decreased or prohibited. Tell us if access for each activity should be controlled to reduce potential impacts to the Monument. Examples of controlled access could include designated parking areas, limited number of access points, access by permit only, rules to restrict users to designated trails, or making selected areas off limits to certain uses.

Use the comment section (and the back of this sheet if needed) to give us more information, such as where these activities should or should not occur (i.e., ALE, Wahluke Slope, river corridor), specifics on the kind of access you would like to see, any controls on access you would like to see implemented, and any other thoughts or input you think will help the USFWS make informed management decisions.

Check all boxes that apply and give details in the comment section:

Recreational Use and Access	Rate the importance of this activity	Existing use/access is OK	Improve existing use/access	Increase use/access	Decrease use/access	Prohibit use/access	Control use/access to reduce unacceptable impacts
Hunting	H M L						
Boating (all kinds)	H M L						
Horseback Riding	H M L						
Wildlife Observation	H M L						
Camping	H M L						
Sightseeing	H M L						
Fishing	H M L						
Bike Riding	H M L						
Hiking	H M L						
Photography	H M L						
Others (fill in below)	H M L						
	H M L						
	H M L						
	H M L						

Other potential uses that you may want to comment on include: falconry, picnicking, target shooting, fossil looking, dog training, paragliding/hang gliding, sun bathing, and jet ski use.

Comments:

Recreational Use and Access (Version 2)

There are many existing and potential recreational uses of the Hanford Reach National Monument. We need your input on the types of activities that may occur somewhere on the Monument and your thoughts about access needs. Indicate whether or not you think access and opportunities for each activity are OK the way they are, need improvement or expansion, or should be decreased or prohibited. Tell us if access for each activity should be controlled to reduce potential impacts to the Monument. Examples of controlled access could include designated parking areas, limited number of access points, access by permit only, rules to restrict users to designated trails, or making selected areas off limits to certain uses.

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A = Arid Lands Ecology Reserve W = Wahluke Slope R = River Corridor

Check all boxes that apply and give details in the comment section:

Recreational Use and Access	Rate the importance of this activity	Existing use/access is OK			Improve existing use/access			Increase use/access			Decrease use/access			Prohibit use/access			Control use/access to reduce unacceptable impacts			
		A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R	
Hunting	H M L																			
Boating (all kinds)	H M L																			
Horseback Riding	H M L																			
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Others (fill in below)	H M L																			
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Comments:

Educational Use and Access (Version 1)

The Monument has been used for a variety of education-related purposes, such as teacher education, K-20 student-group field trips, and community education. Some people believe that there are many more education opportunities that could be taken advantage of including outdoor classrooms, interpretation through signage, and having one or more interpretive centers.

We need your input on the types of educational activities that may occur on the Monument and your thoughts about access needs. Indicate if you think that the use and/or access for each activity is OK the way it is, needs improvement or expansion, or should be decreased or prohibited. Tell us whether or not access for each activity should be controlled to reduce potential impacts to the Monument. Examples of controlled access could include designated parking areas, limited numbers of school groups, specific times of the year that areas might be closed for educational purposes, and closed areas that are biologically or culturally sensitive.

Use the comment section (and back of this sheet if needed) to give us more information, such as where these activities should or should not occur, specifics on the kind of access you would like to see, any controls on access you would like to see implemented, and any other thoughts or input you think will help us make management decisions.

Check all boxes that apply and give details in the comment section:

Educational Use/Activity	Rate the importance of this activity	Existing use/access is OK	Improve existing use/access	Increase use/access	Decrease use/access	Prohibit use/access	Control use/access to reduce unacceptable impacts
Interpretive Trails	H M L						
Outdoor Classrooms	H M L						
Outdoor School (day or overnight)	H M L						
Teacher Education	H M L						
Tours (examples – wildflower, birding, geology)	H M L						
Others (fill in below)	H M L						
	H M L						
	H M L						

Comments:

Educational Use and Access (Version 2)

The Monument has been used for a variety of education-related purposes, such as teacher education, K-20 student-group field trips, and community education. Some people believe that there are many more education opportunities that could be taken advantage of including outdoor classrooms, interpretation through signage, and having one or more interpretive centers.

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Educational Use/Activity	Rate the importance of this activity H M L	Existing use/access is OK			Improve existing use/access			Increase use/access			Decrease use/access			Prohibit use/access			Control use/access to reduce unacceptable impacts		
		A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R
Interpretive Trails	H M L																		
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Others (fill in below)	H M L																		
	H M L																		
	H M L																		

Comments:

Activity Participation

Which of the following activities have you participated in or would participate in if given the opportunity? Where should these activities occur?

A = Arid Lands Ecology Reserve W = Wahluke Slope R = River Corridor

Activity	How often do you participate? (days/year)			Would you participate if you had the opportunity? (Y/N)			Should this activity occur in these areas? (Y/N)		
	A	W	R	A	W	R	A	W	R
Recreational									
Hunting									
Boating (all kinds)									
Horseback Riding									
Wildlife Observation									
Camping									
Sightseeing									
Fishing									
Bike Riding									
Hiking									
Photography									
Recreational Commercial									
Boat Tours									
Fishing Derby's									
Guide Services									
Sightseeing Flights									
Vendors									
Educational									
Interpretive Trails									
Outdoor Classrooms									
Outdoor School (day or overnight)									
Teacher Education									
Tours (birding geology, historical)									
Research									
Applied Research									
Basic Research									
Cultural									
Animal Harvesting									
Vision Quests									
Plant Harvesting									

Other potential uses that you may want to comment on include: falconry, picnicking, target shooting, fossil looking, dog training, paragliding/hang gliding, sun bathing, and jet ski use.

Comments: