

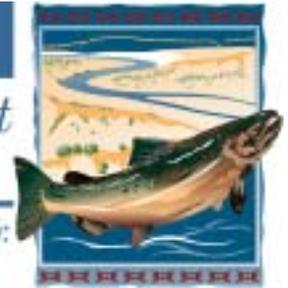


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Hanford Reach National Monument

Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge

... protecting the last of the free-flowing Columbia River.



Elk Summit at Hanford brings Partners Together

The management of the Yakima/Rattlesnake Hills elk herd took a new venue in April as a number of government agencies and special interest groups met in Prosser, Washington, for a two day workshop. Co-sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Elk Summit was initiated by responses from landowners adjacent to the Monument that the 500 head herd is causing undue depredation losses to their crops. Over the last four years, the USFWS has trapped and relocated 186 elk and the WDFW has lengthened the hunting season on adjacent lands to reduce the herd from more than 900 animals, but damage claims to crops have continued to increase to over \$250,000 annually. The extended hunts also brought an influx of hunters, overwhelming local ranchers with requests to hunt their lands, incidences of trespass, damage to fields and fences, and a generally unsafe hunting experience.



The Summit brought together USFWS, WDFW, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Energy, Native Americans, county government, landowners, local hunters, and the Audubon Society. Skillfully facilitated by consultant Onnie Byers of the World Conservation Union's Conservation Breeding Group, the partners worked through a process which identified the major issues and brought to light methods that could be employed to mitigate the problems.



Accomplishments that came from the summit include:

- more productive lines of communication between all parties involved
- an agreement between agencies for a cooperative effort to produce informational materials for distribution to hunters that explain the hunting situation in the area and indicate those lands that are open to public hunting and private lands requiring written permission
- initiation of efforts to reduce herd size to the state's target of less than 350 animals

The landowners expressed support of the partners in their efforts to address their concerns and requested that they be kept informed of the progress. USFWS will produce a letter that will go out regularly, updating all parties of the progress being made to manage the Yakima/Rattlesnake Hills elk herd.