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# News Release



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## Service Responds to Local Concerns over Air Tanker Loss

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, working closely with its partners and its regional and national offices, has found a funding source for the Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) to remain in the Tri-Cities area during 2008.

This is in response to concerns expressed by cooperators, neighbors, and local communities over the recent loss of the SEAT funding for the Tri-Cities area. Although that funding source is no longer available, alternative sources have been identified to ensure funding this year and possibly in future years as well.

“We recognize that availability of the SEAT in the Tri-Cities area has provided great support to firefighters and that the loss of this resource may impact and cause grave concern among high fire danger communities this coming year,” said Carolyn Bohan, Assistant Pacific Regional Director of Refuges. “Protecting human lives remains our single overriding priority. Firefighter and public safety always come first.”

Prioritizing firefighting resources is a dynamic and ongoing process, driven by continual changes in wildland fire and community protection needs. The Service will continue to provide maximum possible firefighting resources to the Tri-Cities and other communities at risk throughout the nation. The agency will also continue to focus on reducing hazardous fuels and minimizing invasive plants in these areas to help prevent wildlife fires and protect our local communities.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).