

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking comment on draft environmental documents for Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge and Hanford Reach National Monument Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge.

These documents were prepared as a result of the Fund for Animals lawsuit against the Service on March 14, 2003, alleging noncompliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in opening 37 refuges to hunting during the 1997-98 through 2002-03 seasons. On August 31, 2006, the U.S. District Court Judge granted the plaintiff's motion for summary judgment, agreeing that the Service did not adequately consider the cumulative impacts of opening these refuges to hunting. The Service's October 5, 2006 brief asked the court not to enjoin the hunt programs while the Service addressed the NEPA deficiencies in the original 37 hunting packages. In addition, the Service informed the court that by May 30, 2007, it would also correct possible NEPA deficiencies for refuges opened to hunting since the lawsuit was filed.

A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is available for a 30 day public review. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared the Draft (EA) to provide information and analysis regarding the Refuge waterfowl hunts on the Wallace Island Unit. An addendum to the Environmental Assessment of Elk Control on the refuge is also available for review. Public comments are due by May 9, 2007.

A Draft Sport Hunting Opening Package for Hanford Reach National Monument Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge for the existing hunt on the Wahluke Unit is available for a 30 day public review. Public comments are due by May 8, 2007.

Link to Julia Butler Hansen for the Columbian Whitetail Deer  
<http://www.fws.gov/willapa/JuliaButlerHansen/Index.html>

Link to Hanford Reach National Monument Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge  
<http://www.fws.gov/hanfordreach/>