

## REGULATIONS PROTECT VISITORS AND RESOURCES

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Pets must be leashed, except for the use of retrievers during waterfowl hunting.

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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Lower Columbia River Refuge  
Lang Plaza  
1309 NE 134th Street  
Vancouver, Washington 98665  
Phone: (206) 696-7796



**Department of Interior**  
**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

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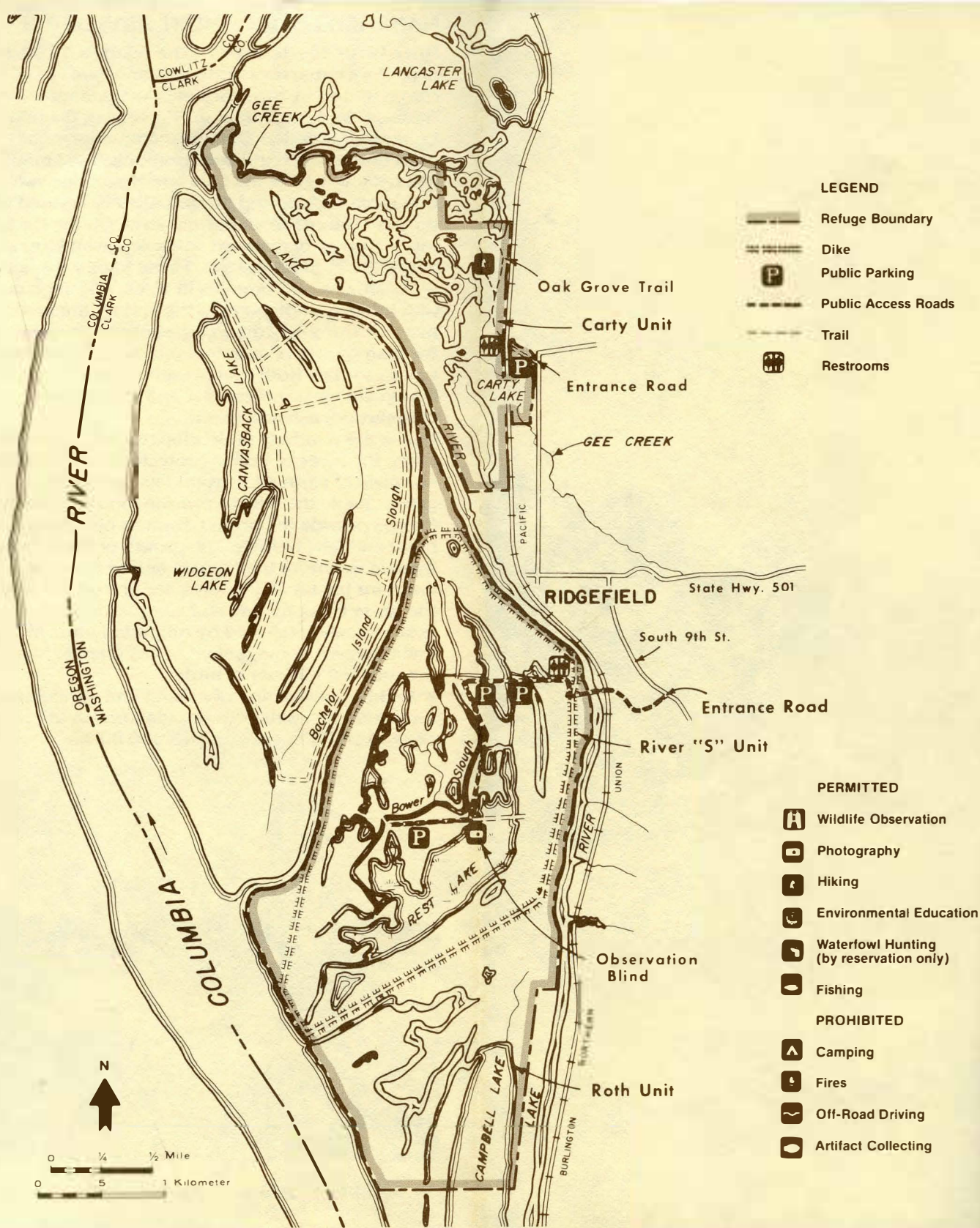
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# Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Washington

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## A PARADISE FOR WATERFOWL

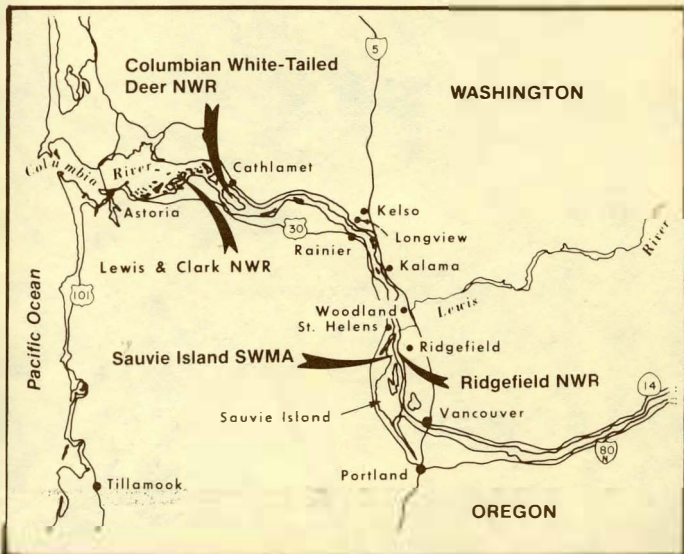
**Ideal winter climate and environment** — The mild, rainy winter climate of the lower Columbia River valley is an ideal environment for migrating waterfowl. Nesting far away in such places as the Copper River Delta on the southeastern Alaska coast, ducks, geese and swans migrate down the Pacific Coast to escape the Alaskan winter. On the lower Columbia River they find resting and feeding areas among the myriad sloughs, ponds and shallow lakes bordering its edges.

**Abundant wildlife** — Winter is the season of greatest wildlife activity, with 200,000 waterfowl wintering between Portland and the mouth of the Columbia River. The most abundant species are American wigeon, mallard, pintail, green-winged teal and Northern shoveler ducks, the dusky and lesser races of Canada geese, and whistling swans.

**Long history** — The mild climate and abundant wildlife made the Ridgefield area attractive for human occupation long before recorded history.

Archaeological evidence suggests that by at least 2,000 years ago, native Americans were living along the banks of the Columbia in villages of considerable size. When explorers Lewis and Clark visited the Ridgefield area on their homeward journey in March 1806, they found the prosperous village of Quathlapotl, containing 14 large wooden houses and some 900 inhabitants.

**Lands protected** — In addition to Ridgefield, the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge near Astoria, Oregon, the Columbian White-tailed Deer National Wildlife Refuge near Cathlamet, Washington, and the state-owned Sauvie Island Wildlife Management Area near Portland (see map) also protect and manage habitat to provide feeding and resting areas for wintering waterfowl.



## WHY WAS THE REFUGE ESTABLISHED?

**Waterfowl endure hardships** — Migratory waterfowl must endure the good and bad years of winter resting grounds and summer nesting areas. When either winter or summer habitat is disrupted the other becomes all the more important.

Along the lower Columbia River, diking and draining of the floodplain wetlands are shrinking the environment desired by waterbirds. Man-made developments have continually taken more and more land away from wildlife. This is reason enough for establishing a National Wildlife Refuge.

**Nature's crisis adds urgency** — The crisis came in early spring of 1964 when southern Alaska was rocked by a violent earthquake. Repeated shock waves lifted the Copper River Delta six feet. In just a few minutes the complex ecosystem that had sustained nesting waterfowl for centuries was badly disrupted.

Nature had added urgency to the need for wetland preservation along the lower Columbia River, and the long sought Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1965 to protect some of this vital wintering area. Protection of the wintering area would give the birds at least half a chance at survival while they established new nesting areas.

**Many other wildlife species present** — Stately sandhill cranes, shorebirds and a great variety of songbirds stop on the refuge during spring and fall migrations. A few waterfowl, some shorebirds and songbirds remain on the refuge to nest, while year round residents include such species as the great blue heron and the red-tailed hawk. The refuge bird list indicates 182 species have been seen on the area. Black-tailed deer are the largest mammal on the refuge. Other mammals occasionally seen on the refuge include coyote, fox, raccoon, skunk, beaver, otter and brush rabbit. Nutria, a rodent native to South America and introduced into the Columbia River drainage in the 1930s, are abundant. Their burrowing activities in dikes and ditch banks make them a pest.

**Mallards, pintails and whistling swans congregate on Rest Lake.**







## VISITING THE REFUGE

**Hours** — Ridgefield is open to the public daily between dawn and dusk.

These activities are permitted on the refuge:

**Wildlife observation and photography** — These are the most popular activities on the refuge. A wildlife observation blind overlooks Rest Lake on the River 'S' Unit. Although no formal trails exist, one may walk on top of the River 'S' dike, along Bower Slough, or cross over the dike to Campbell Lake for views of wildlife away from the roads.

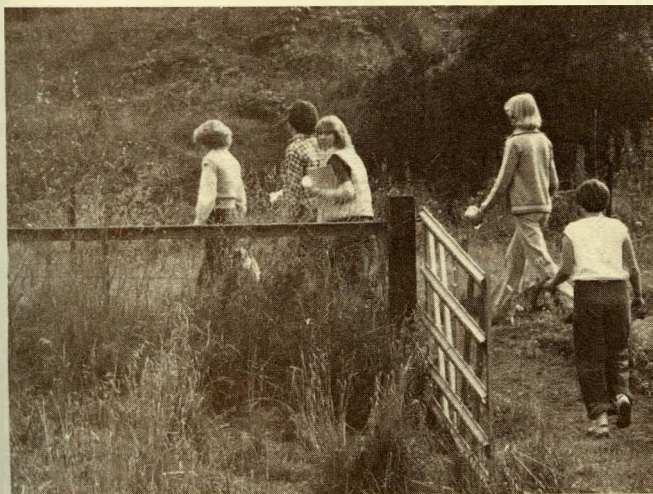
The ¾ mile long Oak Grove Trail traverses the marsh and woodland of the Carty Unit. A special trail guide leaflet is available. The visitor may also hike along the Carty Unit management road to the mouth of Gee Creek.

**Environmental education** — Teachers and youth group leaders are encouraged to bring their groups to the refuge for educational activities. The refuge staff will offer assistance in preparing for visits, and teacher/ leader workshops in environmental education methods are occasionally offered. Groups planning to visit the refuge are requested to make advance reservations.

**Waterfowl hunting** — A portion of the River 'S' Unit is open to waterfowl hunting on an advance reservation basis during the regular state season. Contact the refuge for special regulations and reservation applications.

**Fishing** — Refuge waters are open to fishing from March 1 to September 30 in accordance with state regulations. Frogging is not permitted. Contact the refuge for current state regulations.

**School groups are frequent visitors.**



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