



FRIENDS of NEVADA WILDERNESS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Sheldon Rendezvous volunteer stewardship project a success for the Sheldon Refuge.

This last weekend, June 19-21, more than 60 volunteers teamed up with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to improve habitat for pronghorn antelope and other wildlife on the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge in northern Nevada.

In eight separate work projects, volunteers removed about 10 miles of unnecessary barbed-wire fence that threatened wildlife. Volunteers also placed signs along 15 miles of newly constructed boundary. In addition, volunteers repaired an enclosure fence at Murdock Spring, which will help plants and water quality recover for the benefit of wildlife.

Volunteers traveled from as far away as Seattle and Southern California—and many parts in between—to help with the projects. Many volunteers represented the Sheldon Network, a diverse alliance of sportsmen, wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists to support the US Fish & Wildlife Service in managing the Sheldon Refuge. Participants ranged in age from 3 to 83.

While the adults worked pulling fence, the kids pulled invasive weeds at the campground and took a hike into nearby Kinney Creek Gorge learning about the wildlife and rich history of the refuge.

"I am excited to see so many people, from so many organizations at Sheldon Refuge - to volunteer help on projects that improve habitat for pronghorn antelope and sage grouse, to learn and share the natural history of the high desert, to better understand the complex management issues that natural resources, value the role the refuge plays in conservation of the sagebrush ecosystem, and to have fun," says Paul Steblein, project manager for Sheldon/Hart Refuges.

"I had a great time; just what I needed," said Alan Frierson, who traveled from Medford, Ore. to participate in the event. "It was great hiking in beautiful country, and now I know how to take a barbed-wire fence apart. I'm already planning to come back next year."

"This was wonderful; the people, the place, the cause, the work, everything," said Russ Draper from Beaverton, Ore. "This is a really diverse group of people, and they're all here to think beyond themselves in a shared understanding of what nature needs out here. They're bringing energy to the cause, and they're getting important work done on the ground. It's inspiring."

Friends of Nevada Wilderness coordinated this first annual Sheldon Rendezvous—recruiting and organizing volunteers and a BBQ feast, complete with Dutch-oven pineapple upside-down cake.

Sheldon Rendezvous participants also honored Jim Yoakum, a leading expert on pronghorn. Jim celebrated his 83rd birthday there among friends who shared his love for the Sheldon Refuge. Yoakum has been involved with the Refuge since his first visit in 1954.

The Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge sits in northwestern Nevada on the Oregon border. The Refuge comprises 572,876 acres of high volcanic tables, with grass, sage, wildflowers, small lakes and archaeological wonders. Designated in the 1930s, the Refuge is one of the last remaining large healthy tracts of sagebrush steppe ecosystem and is managed primarily to provide habitat for pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, sage grouse and other wildlife.

The Sheldon also offers incredible opportunities for wide-open solitude, remote beauty and primitive and unconfined recreation.

To sign-up as a volunteer and get more details about future volunteer projects, contact Pat Bruce or Sheena Britschgi from Friends of Nevada Wilderness at (775) 324-7667.

**For more information about Friends' Wilderness Stewardship program, log onto:
www.nevadawilderness.org**

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