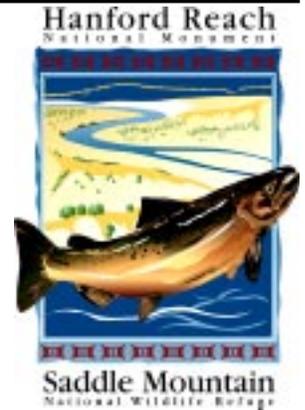




# Vernita Bridge Unit

Fact Sheet • August 2002



FWS photo: William Radke

**Unit Size**  
800 acres

## History and Administration

Since 1943 the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has held title to the lands that make up this and all units that became part of the Hanford Reach National Monument in 2000. The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has managed this unit for public access under a use permit from DOE since 1971. Currently this is the only Monument unit managed primarily by WDFW.



FWS photo: Pete Schmidt

## Address/Phone

Hanford Reach NM  
3250 Port of Benton Blvd.  
Richland, WA 99352  
509-371-1801  
509-375-0196 fax

## Location

This is a narrow unit between the Columbia River and State Highway 24, just northwest of Vernita Bridge.

## Habitats

The river cobble in this area makes the vegetation sparse. Bunchgrasses that grow well in sandy soils do well in the area. Sand dropseed and Indian ricegrass combine in a patchwork across the site. Gray rabbitbrush forms the dominant overstory shrub layer. Riparian areas support both native cottonwoods and introduced mulberry trees which provide shade and structure to the river shore areas.

## Rare Plants

State sensitive species, shining flatsedge, is relatively common along the river shore, as is Robinson's onion which is presently on the State's watchlist.

## Wildlife

Riparian trees in the area attract migrant songbirds. Red-winged and Brewer's blackbirds, Bullock's orioles, and yellow-rumped warblers are some of the more commonly seen species. Occasionally great blue herons, or black-crowned night herons are spotted hunting in the shallow areas along the river edge. Cliff swallows use the Vernita Bridge structure as a nesting site, and forage over the water. Killdeer often attempt to nest in the gravelly river cobble, their distinct call can be heard throughout the area during spring months.

## Fish

In addition to important salmonid runs, other fish found in the Hanford Reach include: reddsides, shiners, carp, largescale suckers, northern pikeminnow, and peamouth. Several bass species are known to migrate as much as 200 miles from the Yakima River to spawn in the Reach. Mountain whitefish and smallmouth bass are common and support a recreational fishery.



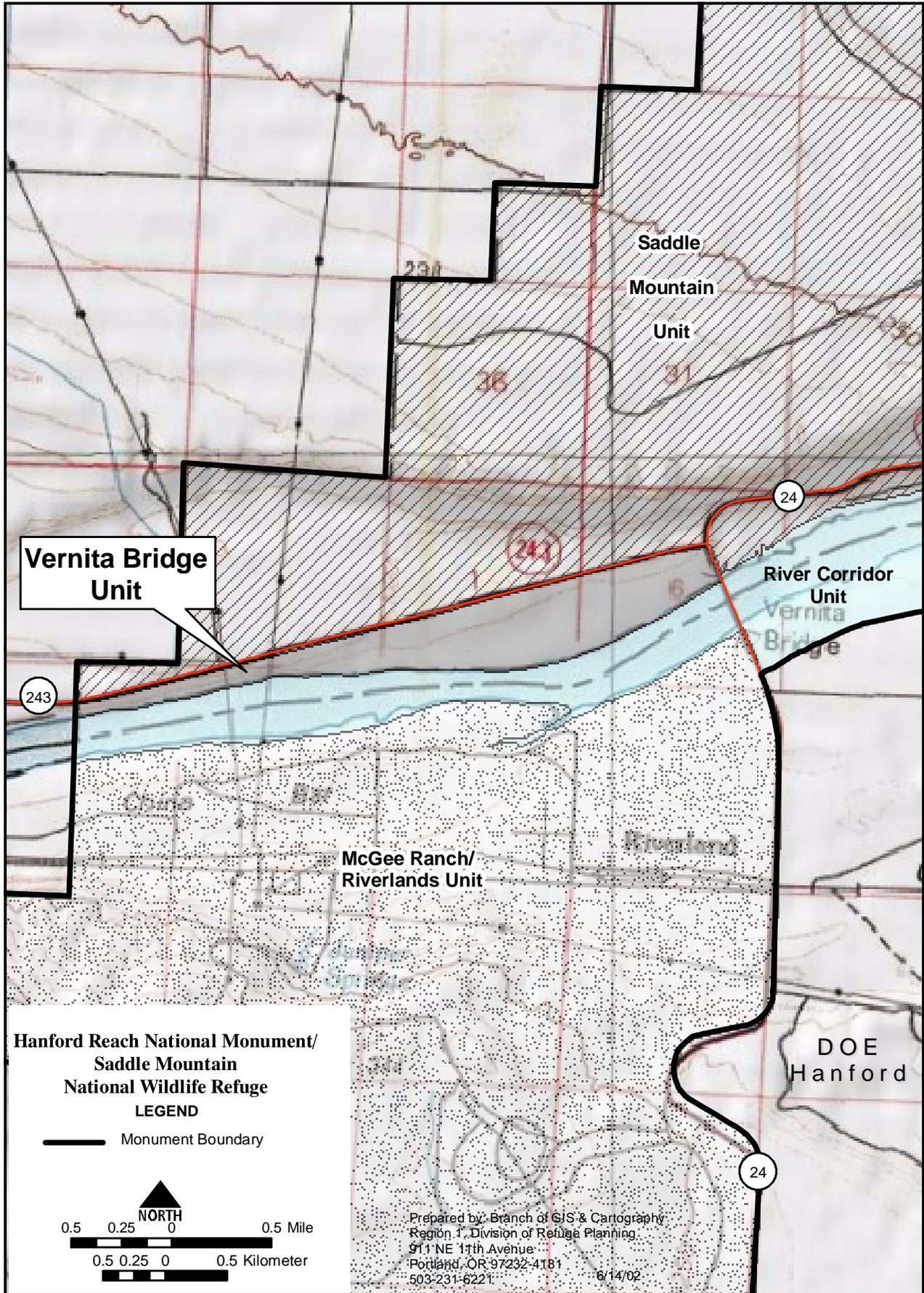
FWS photo: David Goeke

## Public Uses

The 800-acre unit is open to the public year round. The primary uses are river access, boat launching, and bank fishing. No restrooms or potable water exist on the unit.

## Cultural Resources

This area has been a traditional use area and fishing locale for native people for thousands of years and is still used today by local and regional fishers. There is evidence of Chinese placer mining and post 1900 homesteads in this unit. The historical community of Arrowsmith was just north of the present highway bridge and a ferry crossing was just downstream of it. The Vernita Bridge was not built until the late 1960's.



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