



# Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Spring 2009 – Planning Update

## Thank you for participating!

We appreciate your interest in the management of Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

When we released the original EA last year, we were pleased with the quality and quantity of both verbal and written public comments received during the five-month public comment period.

Thanks to this excellent feedback, we've revised the original EA and will issue a new one soon. The revised EA will hopefully be available for review by the summer.

Gathering the concerns, issues, and management ideas of individuals, organizations and other interested parties is a fundamental step in developing an effective management and restoration plan for the grasslands of Bitter Creek NWR.

## Please contact us!

Please contact us if you have any questions or need additional information. Also, we would be happy to meet with your group or organization to discuss this project.

Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex Office  
P.O. Box 5839  
Ventura, CA 93005  
(805) 644-5185

Bitter Creek  
National Wildlife Refuge  
P.O. Box 370  
Maricopa, CA 93252  
(661) 343-3332

[www.fws.gov/hoppermountain](http://www.fws.gov/hoppermountain)

## Grassland Habitat Management and Restoration Plan Environmental Assessment and Compatibility Determination

I'd like to update you on the status of the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge Grassland Habitat Management and Restoration Plan Environmental Assessment (EA).

The EA underwent public review and comment from May 1 to September 30, 2008. This review included a public meeting in Frazier Park, Calif., on September 30. Based on your public input and additional internal assessments, we are currently revising the EA and will reissue the document for a new public review and comment period hopefully by summer.

### *Anticipated Changes in the new EA:*

**FIRE**—Originally, prescribed fire was listed as a potential management tool that could be used, pending necessary permits. During the public review period, we received many comments regarding the inclusion of fire in the management alternatives. We listened carefully to those concerns and have removed prescribed fire from the revised EA.

**GRAZING**—Like the original EA, the new EA will prominently include

science-based, managed grazing, as allowed by Federal law and National Wildlife Refuge System policy. Grazing would be one of a number of valuable habitat management tools. The new EA evaluates livestock grazing options to be employed on the Refuge.

We also anticipate changing seasonal grazing to prescription grazing. Grazing units would be established within the Refuge. Using the best available science, the duration and intensity of grazing in each unit would be determined annually through a specific grazing plan/assessment.

We appreciate your interest in Bitter Creek NWR. We've listened to your comments and welcome your continued involvement as we work to complete the EA.

Marc Weitzel  
Refuge Complex Project Leader

## About Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge

- **Established** in 1985, on 14,094 acres of land that was slated for subdivision into mini-ranchettes.
- **Located** in the foothills of the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, approximately 80 miles north of Los Angeles. The Refuge encompasses parts of Kern, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties.
- **Refuge Purposes:** 1) Further recovery of the California condor by providing safe roosting and foraging habitat; 2) Protect and restore refuge grasslands; 3) Contribute to the restoration of natural species diversity; and 4) Restore the integrity and environmental health of watersheds to improve water quality for wildlife.
- **Threatened and Endangered Species:** California condor; blunt-nosed leopard lizard; San Joaquin kit fox; giant kangaroo rat.

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service  
Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
P.O. Box 5839  
Ventura, California 93005  
*Address correction requested*



### **NEXT STEPS:**

1. **Issue Revised EA:** The EA is meant to provide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with overall habitat management goals for the Refuge grasslands. Specific details of implementation and day-to-day operations will be developed in appropriate operational plans (e.g., specific grazing plans) once the EA is finalized.
2. **Public Comment Period:** Once the EA is issued, there will be a public review and comment period (expected to last 60-days). As part of the review and comment period, the USFWS will host two public meetings, one to explain the planning document and another to receive oral and written comments on the plan.
3. **Review Public Comments:** Evaluate comments from individuals, organizations, and agencies.
4. **Finalize EA:** Adopt management alternative.
5. **Develop ESA Section 7 Documentation:** Evaluate potential effects on threatened and endangered species as required under the Endangered Species Act.
6. **Develop specific plans:** Create plans to carry out selected EA management alternative.

*Please visit the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex website for updates and information on the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge Grassland Habitat Management and Restoration Plan, Environmental Assessment and Compatibility Determination:*

**[www.fws.gov/hoppermountain](http://www.fws.gov/hoppermountain)**