



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
National Elk Refuge

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 4, 2009 09-04

PO Box 510  
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Steve Kallin  
307.733.9212, ext. 223

## **NATIONAL ELK REFUGE TO HOST SCOPING MEETING ON PROPOSED IRRIGATION EXPANSION**

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today a scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, March 12, 2009 to hear initial comments from the public on a proposed expanded irrigation project. The public open house will be held from 4:00 to 7:00 PM in the Town Council Chambers, located in the Town Hall building at 150 E. Pearl Street in Jackson. National Elk Refuge staff will outline plans and request input for potential expansion of the approved number of irrigated acres through additional temporary sideroll sprinklers and the installation of an underground pipeline. A schedule for completing this planning effort will also be shared.

The irrigation expansion is part of a comprehensive plan to annually produce more high-quality standing forage to delay supplemental feeding and reduce concentrations of elk and bison as well as more efficiently use water. Most cultivated fields on the refuge are flood irrigated, using the same ditch systems created by original homesteaders. The flood irrigation process involves diverting water from sources such as Flat, Cache, and Nowlin creeks and conveying it through open irrigation ditches. The water is then directed onto fields by using permanent water control structures or temporary dams. Flood irrigation, however, is much more inefficient than other methods, in part due to the porous nature of soils on the refuge. Though a larger acreage of land would be irrigated under the new proposed irrigation plan, water usage may decrease because of the efficiency of the new water delivery methods. Currently, only an estimated 10 to 15% of the water that is being diverted reaches its destination.

Persons unable to attend the public scoping meeting can submit comments by March 19 by email to [nationalelkrefuge@fws.gov](mailto:nationalelkrefuge@fws.gov), with "Irrigation" written on the subject line, or send mailed comments to Refuge Manager, National Elk Refuge, Attention: Irrigation, PO Box 510, 675 East Broadway, Jackson, WY 83001.