U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Explore Sevilleta

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge

Explore Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge

Unit A: Cornerstone Marsh
Southwest Willow Fly Catcher habitat
Unit B: Marshland in development Rio Grande/Rio Salado

Although much of the vast acreage of Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge manifests a "hands off" management approach, Units A and B, which are open to the public, demonstrate areas of "hands on" landscape manipulation to enhance riparian habitat and compensate for marsh loss along the Rio Grande basin. These areas provide important habitat for a large variety of birds, insects, reptiles and mammals such as beaver (look for tracks in the mud or their characteristic teeth markings on trees and stumps), raccoon, porcupine, coyote, bobcat, fox, ground squirrel, cottontail, jackrabbit, deer and elk.

Unit A, The Cornerstone Marsh

accessed immediately across the RR tracks turning right along the west side of the irrigation ditch. The marsh is flooded from November to February during which time you may see several species of shorebirds and waterfowl including heron, migrating ducks, geese and sandhill cranes.Year round you may encounter wildlife and a profusion of smaller songbirds, as well as roadrunner, quail, pheasant and raptors including the kestrel, red-tailed and harrier hawks. Also take note of turtles, frogs, dragonflies and other insects, all of importance to this ecosystem.

After exploring the marsh, backtrack to cross the ditch and drive south along it's eastern bank between the ditch and Rio Grande. There you will see areas of active landscape management where invasive, non-native, salt cedar is being cleared and native willow and cottonwood are being planted to restore the natural Bosque/ riparian habitat. You can easily take short walks west to the Rio Grande in this area.

Protected Area : a bit further south on the dirt road, this restricted area provides sanctuary for the endangered Southwestern Willow Fly Catcher.

Southwest Willow Flycatcher

You may have the rare opportunity to see this tiny bird or, more likely, to hear it's call - a liquid "Whit " or sneezy "Fitzbew ". Most nesting areas include fewer than five breeding pairs. The Southwestern Willow Fly Catcher's natural habitat for nesting and foraging for insects is the willow and cottonwood but, of necessity, it has temporarily adapted to salt cedar. The bird is in residence from May to September after which it migrates to Mexico and Central America.

Unit B

continuing south, this area of landscape enhancement- in- progress will provide additional marshland replicating the historical, natural meandering of the Rio Grande. This area, under development to increase habitat for the Southwestern Willow Fly Catcher, will also enhance habitat for all riparian wildlife.

Rio Grande/ Rio Salado

(end of road) Park and hike east along the Rio Salado to the Rio Grande (about 1 mile round trip) where you may encounter swallows or see their mud nests in the cliffs on the east side of the river. Along the rivers, get a sense of the wild Bosque - a tall canopy of Cottonwoods with an under-story of willow, salt bush, and other shrubs interacting to provide a dynamic riparian habitat. Here, as always, be on the lookout for the many varieties of birds, reptiles, and mammals that make their home in this ecosystem.

** As with all National Wildlife Refuges, these areas are dedicated to environmental education and wildlife-dependent recreation including wildlife observation, photography and seasonal hunting. Picnicking is not allowed. **

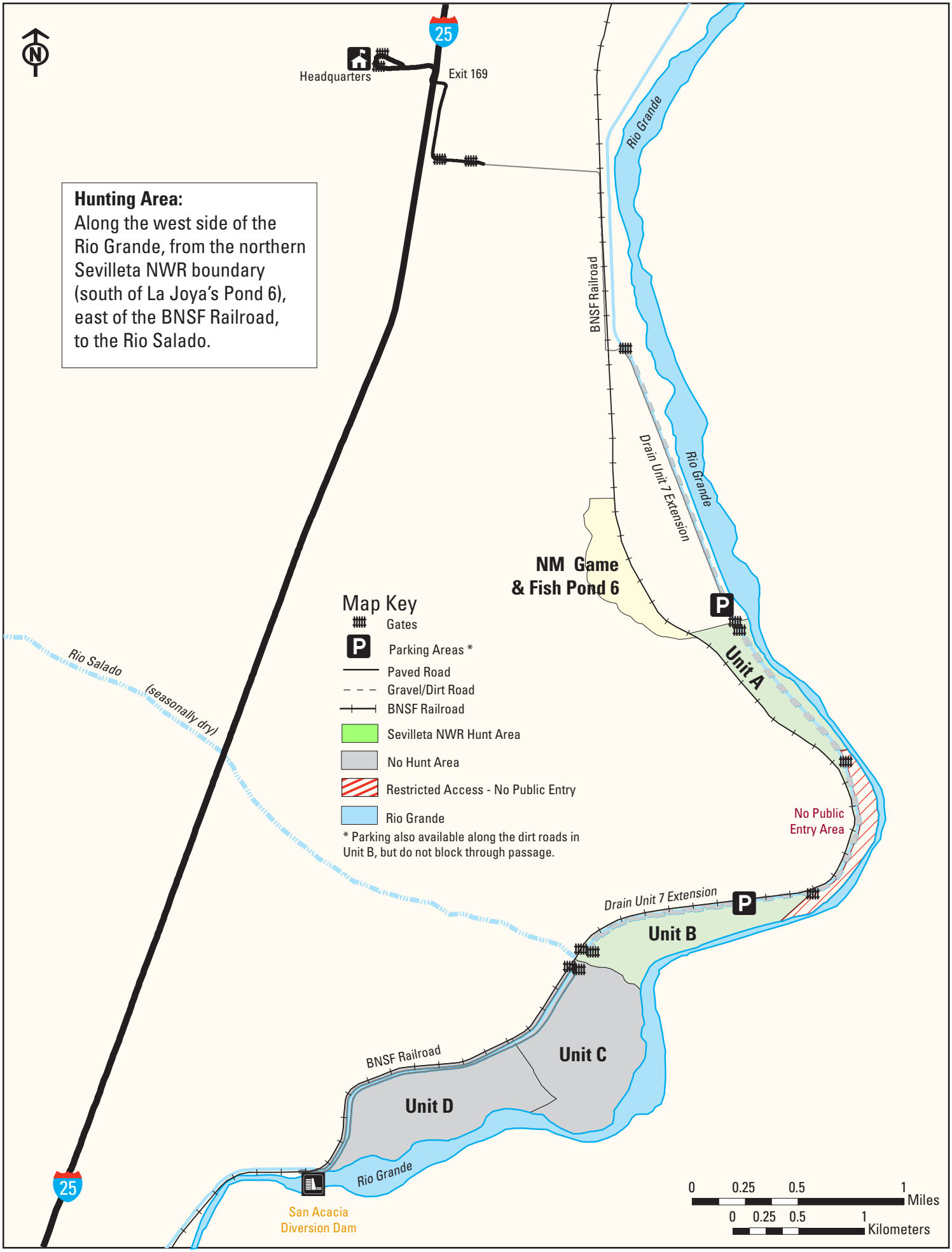
Marsh at Sevilleta NWR.
Photograph by Sandra Noll

DIRECTIONS: Traversing the I-25 underpass, turn right on the paved road paralleling I-25. (Set odometer to 00). In about 1/4 mile the road turns east and becomes dirt. (Cross cattleguards at 0.4 and 0.6 mi.). Continue eastward on dirt road passing the La Joya waterfowl signs. Turn right when you reach the water ditch (1.2 mi.) and head south along the ditch. Turn left (2.3 mi.) and cross the RR tracks where you will see another water ditch. You may drive on either side of the ditch, but for access to Unit A, turn south before the ditch and stay on it's west side. You will see parking (4 mi.) from which you can walk westward on a path past the water control structure into Unit A: Cornerstone Marsh. Take care crossing the RR tracks. After exploring the marsh, backtrack to cross the water ditch and drive south along its eastern bank to access additional open areas.

For further information

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 1248
Socorro, NM 87801
505/864-4021
505/864-7761

July 2007


Hunting Area:
Along the west side of the Rio Grande, from the northern Sevilleta NWR boundary (south of La Joya's Pond 6), east of the BNSF Railroad, to the Rio Salado.
Headquarters
Exit 169
25
Rio Grande
BNSF Railroad
Drain Unit 7 Extension
Rio Grande
NM Game & Fish Pond 6
Map Key
Gates
Parking Areas *
Paved Road
Gravel/Dirt Road
BNSF Railroad
Sevilleta NWR Hunt Area
No Hunt Area
Restricted Access - No Public Entry
Rio Grande
* Parking also available along the dirt roads in Unit B, but do not block through passage.
Rio Salado
(seasonally dry)
Unit A
No Public Entry Area
Drain Unit 7 Extension
Unit B
Unit C
BNSF Railroad
Unit D
Rio Grande
San Acacia Diversion Dam
25
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
0 0.25 0.5 1 Kilometers