

NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
MOUNTAIN-PRAIRIE REGION
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM
SAN LUIS VALLEY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX
9383 El Rancho Lane
Alamosa, Colorado 81101**

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For Immediate Release

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**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Prepare Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the
San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex**

Open Houses Will Be Held In March to Gather Public Input

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold a series of public open houses at various locations in Colorado to solicit public input for the development of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The Refuge Complex includes Baca National Wildlife Refuge, Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, and Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. The Service encourages everyone with an interest in these significant public resources to participate in this process and help create the vision for future management of the refuges.

Meeting dates, times, and locations are:

- March 29, 2011, 6:30-8:30p.m., Alamosa County Building, 8900 Independence Way, Room 108, Alamosa, Colorado
- March 30, 2011, 6:30-8:30p.m., Monte Vista COOP Community Room, 1901 E. Highway 160, Monte Vista, Colorado
- March 31, 2011, 6:30-8:30p.m., Moffat School District Cafeteria 501 Garfield Avenue, Moffat, Colorado

The Service prepares comprehensive conservation plans (CCP) for national wildlife refuges to help fulfill the mission of the Refuge System and manage for the purposes of each refuge. These plans address conservation of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats, and describe opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation that are compatible with refuge purposes. In addition, each plan has detailed objectives and strategies that the Service will carry out to achieve the goals.

The San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex is composed of three national wildlife refuges: Monte Vista, Alamosa, and Baca. These refuges are located in the San Luis Valley, a high mountain basin located in Rio Grande, Alamosa, and Saguache Counties, Colorado.

Totaling about 106,000 acres, a wide variety of habitats are found across the three refuges, including wet meadows, playa wetlands, riparian areas within the flood plain of the Rio Grande, desert shrublands and grasslands, and croplands.

The refuges are an important stopover for numerous migratory birds. The refuges provide important habitat for nesting, migrating, and wintering birds, including grebes, herons, ibis, ducks, geese, hawks, eagles, falcons, shorebirds, owls, songbirds, and others. Nearly 20,000 sandhill cranes spend several weeks in the San Luis Valley during the spring and fall migrations, feeding and resting to replace critical fat reserves. Additionally many species of mammals also use the refuges, including elk, deer, coyote, porcupine, and other small mammals.

The National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) Improvement Act of 1997 requires that all refuges be managed in accordance with an approved CCP which, when implemented, will achieve refuge purposes; help fulfill the Refuge System mission; maintain and, where appropriate, restore the ecological integrity of each refuge and the Refuge System; help achieve the goals of the Wilderness Preservation System; and meet other mandates. The CCP will guide management decisions and set forth goals, objectives, and strategies to accomplish these tasks. The Service hopes to finalize the plan by 2014.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service is both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for its scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on the Service's work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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