

Public Involvement Summary

San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex: Alamosa, Monte Vista, and Baca National Wildlife Refuges

January 2011

Beginning the Plan

Over the next 4 years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will be developing a combined comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental impact statement (EIS) for the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex (refuge complex), which includes Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge, Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, and Baca National Wildlife Refuge. The CCP is a 15-year plan that will provide long-range guidance and management direction for all refuge complex programs, including habitat conservation and wildlife-dependent recreation, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and environmental education. As part of the planning process, we are looking to study the potential for a landscape-level, strategic habitat initiative that would provide guidance for acquiring additional conservation easements in the San Luis Valley.

This Public Involvement Summary outlines the public involvement process for the proposed CCP and EIS. It specifies when and how you can provide input on these documents. Our overall goal is to reach a final decision on the selection of a preferred management alternative to implement under the CCP based on the analysis in the EIS; an exchange of ideas between the public and the Service is an important part of achieving this goal.

The San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex is a unique and ecologically important component of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Alamosa and Monte Vista refuges were established primarily to support the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The purpose of Baca National Wildlife Refuge is to restore, enhance, and maintain wetland, upland, riparian, and other habitats for native wildlife, plants, and fish in the San Luis Valley.

We look forward to your input on how the refuge complex can ensure that habitat is conserved and restored while also serving visitors and the neighboring communities. We will be providing planning updates and hosting public meetings throughout the planning process. Additionally, we will accept comments shared with us through face-to-face meetings, telephone conversations, email, mail, and fax transmissions.

Please join us at upcoming meetings in spring 2011 or feel free to visit us at any of the refuges.

Sincerely,



Mike Blenden
Project Leader



USFWS

Options for managing the increasing populations of elk in the valley will be discussed during the planning process.

Informing the Public

The public involvement process for the CCP and EIS for the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex will take into account numerous interests. It will involve a range of activities for keeping the public informed about the status of the CCP and EIS to ensure meaningful public input. These activities include (1) holding public meetings and workshops, (2) updating the public and stakeholders on CCP and EIS development, (3) briefing the congressional delegation and other county and community leaders and stakeholder groups, and (4) providing the public with many opportunities to comment.

The Service will use the following outreach methods to stay in touch with the public:

- *Planning Updates and Announcements*
Throughout the CCP development process, planning updates will be published and distributed to the public. The updates will report on CCP and EIS development, announce all opportunities for public

involvement, and document workshop results. The updates will be mailed to names and organizations on the project mailing list; distributed at presentations and workshops; and made accessible through community information networks, main branch libraries, and online.

- *Media Coverage*
Announcements and reports presented in local newspapers and on television and radio stations will notify the public about opportunities for involvement and our progress in developing the CCP and EIS.
- *Website*
The public may visit the project website at www.fws.gov/alamosa to obtain information about the planning process and to download planning documents as they become available.

Gathering Public Input

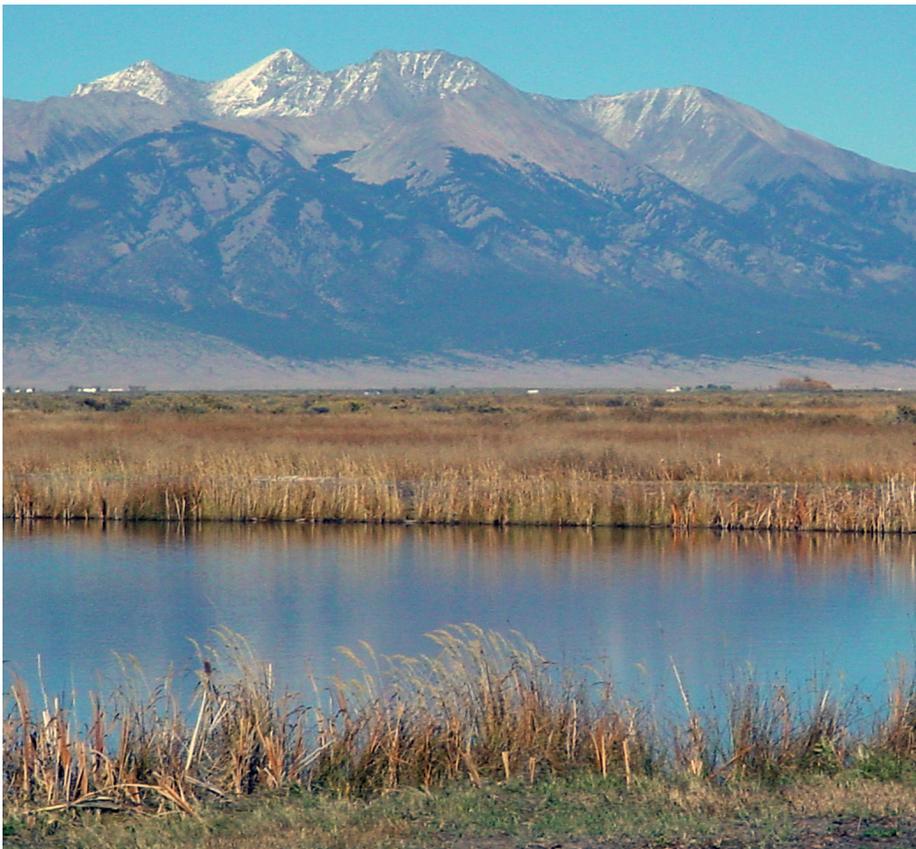
Public involvement will include both idea generation and consideration of those ideas during the development of the CCP and EIS.

- *Public Meetings and Workshops*
The public will be encouraged to participate in a series of meetings or workshops held at strategic phases of CCP development, including public scoping, alternatives development, and draft plan review. The focus of these forums will be to generate ideas the Service could consider when developing the CCP, educate the public on refuge issues and the planning process, and gather public input. It is anticipated that meetings will be held in the communities of Alamosa, Monte Vista, and Crestone, but these locations could change if necessary. The exact format of the forums has not been determined but will be announced prior to the meetings or workshops.
- *Presentations and Briefings*
In order to keep the public and stakeholder groups informed about the CCP process, presentations and briefings will be conducted throughout the planning process.

Analyzing Public Input

The Service will review and consider all comments made at workshops and other public meetings as well as comments received by telephone, email, fax, and the U.S. mail. Comments on the draft CCP and EIS (anticipated to be published in summer 2013) should be specific and should address the adequacy of the CCP, the merits of the alternatives, and the analysis of impacts in the EIS. The final decision concerning selection of the preferred alternative and implementation of the CCP will be made by the Service's regional director for the Mountain-Prairie Region (Lakewood, Colorado).

Please be aware that all comments, including personal identifying information, will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that your entire comment and personal identifying information, including your address, phone number, and email address, could be publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge is one of three refuges found in the San Luis Valley. 14,345-foot Mt. Blanca serves as a backdrop for the refuge.

Public Involvement Process and Schedule

The CCP process will span 4 years and involve five stages: (1) preplanning; (2) public involvement and scoping; (3) development and analysis of alternatives; (4) development of the draft CCP and EIS; and (5) production of the final CCP and EIS and the Record of Decision. Many opportunities will be available for public involvement. Throughout the CCP process, the planning team will focus on the following:

- informing the public
- gathering public input
- identifying public concerns
- responding to and incorporating the public's feedback in the formulation of alternatives and analysis of issues

Stakeholders

The stakeholder groups that have expressed an interest in the CCP process include the following:

- *State and Federal Agencies*
State agencies, congressional representatives, and federal agencies
- *Communities, Organizations, and Interest Groups*
Environmental and conservation groups, community and neighborhood groups, and neighboring landowners
- *Native American Tribes*
- *Public at Large*
Anyone who wishes to be involved
- *County and Local Governments*
County and local governments directly represent the local communities and will be kept apprised of the significant issues and concerns raised during the planning process. Counties adjacent to the refuges as well as more distant counties may be involved.

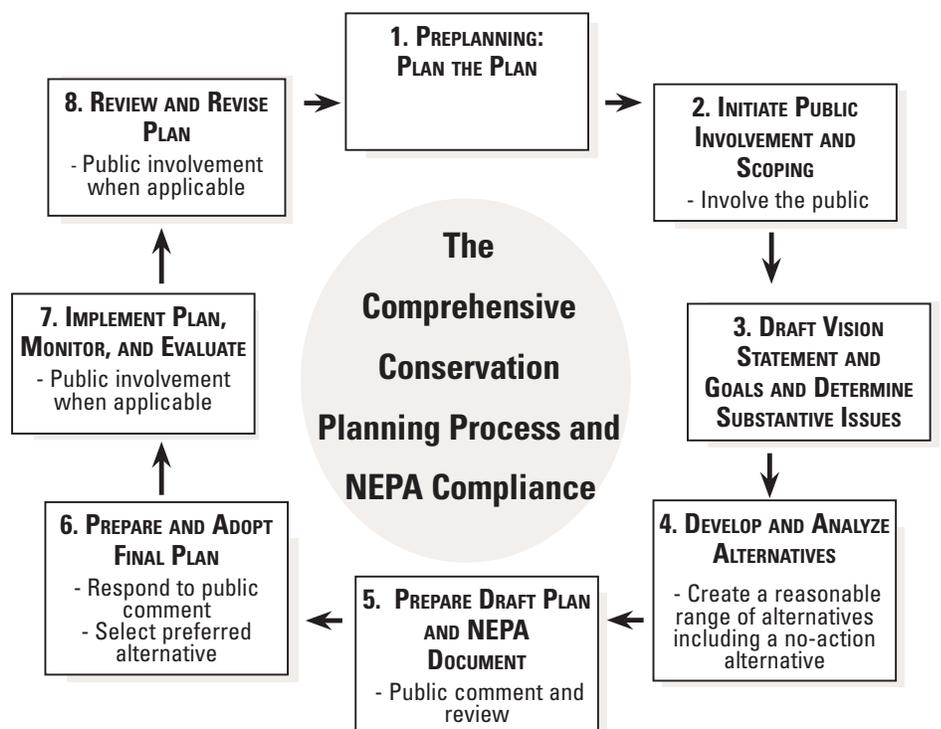
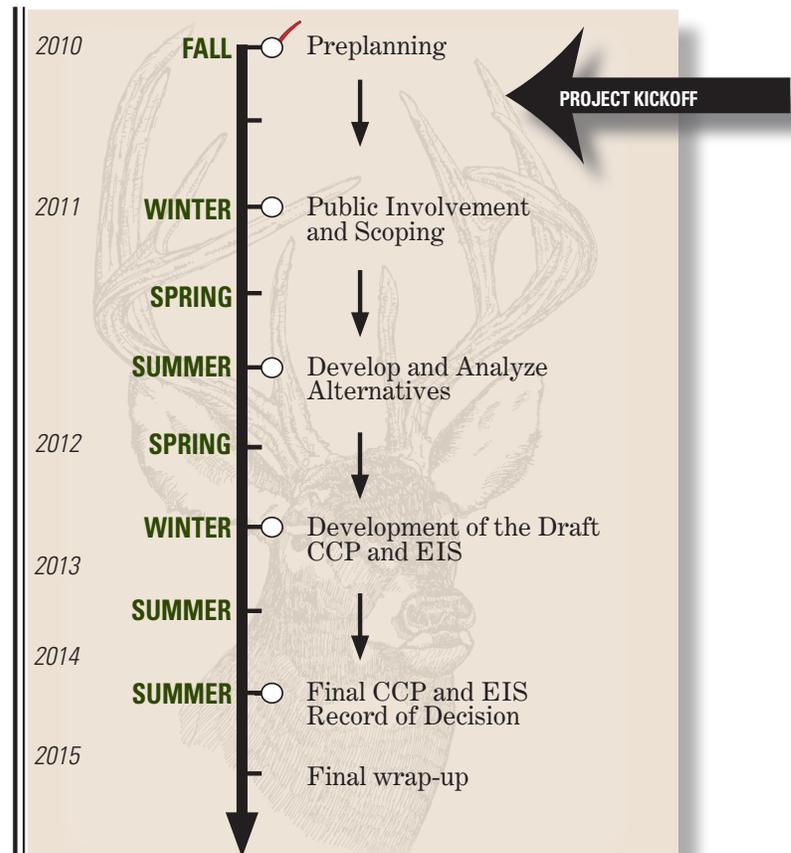
—County Governments

Alamosa, Costilla, Conejos, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache

—Local Communities

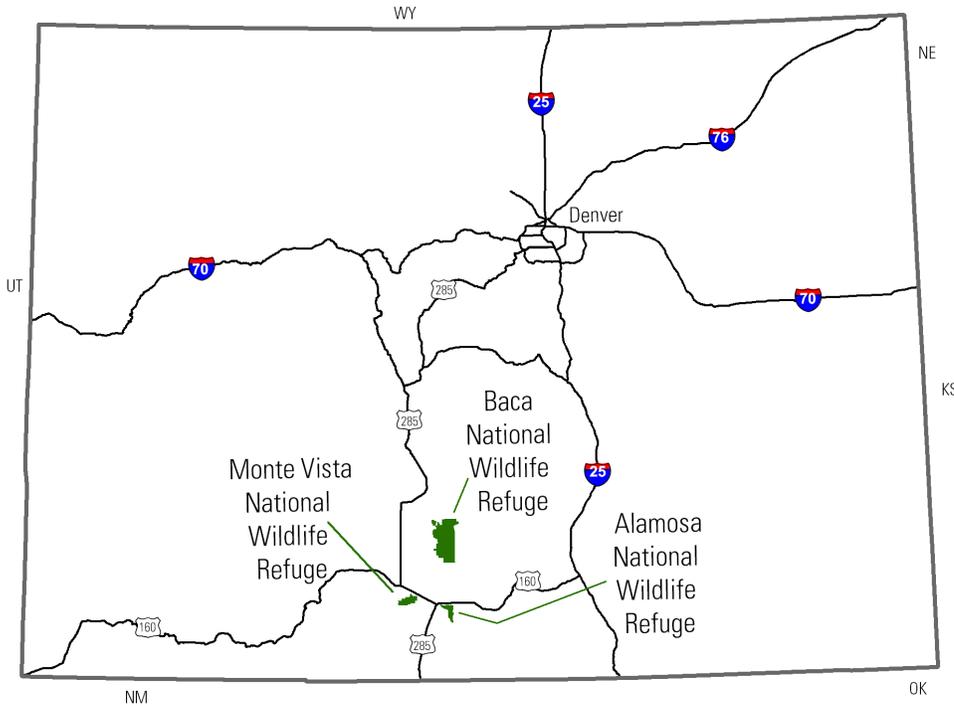
Alamosa, Crestone, Monte Vista, Mosca, and Saguache.

PROJECT TIMELINE



The Service is guided in developing CCPs by policy established in 2000, which can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/602fw1.html>.
NEPA=National Environmental Policy Act of 1976

San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex Colorado



Contact Information

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Comprehensive Conservation Plan
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For project information, to get on the mailing list, or to send us an email:
www.fws.gov/alamosa/planning

For information about the refuges:
www.fws.gov/Alamosa
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The American avocet is one of many birds that breed on the refuges in the San Luis Valley.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

