

refuge within a refuge, and the two refuges are managed as one unit and referred to as Charles M. Russell NWR. Refuge habitat includes native prairie, forested coulees, river bottoms, and badlands. Wildlife is as diverse as the topography and includes Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, sharp-tailed grouse, greater sage-grouse, Sprague's pipit, black-footed ferrets, prairie dogs, and more than 236 species of birds.

In accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1506.6(b)) requirements, this notice announces the availability of the ROD for the final CCP and final EIS for Charles M. Russell NWR and UL Bend NWR. We completed a thorough analysis of the environmental, social, and economic considerations associated with our actions. The ROD documents our selection of alternative D, the preferred alternative.

The CCP will guide us in managing and administering Charles M. Russell NWR and UL Bend NWR for the next 15 years. Alternative D, as we described in the final EIS/ROD, is the foundation for the CCP.

**Background**

*The CCP Process*

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C.

668dd-668ee) (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose for developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year plan for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and our policies. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Administration Act.

**CCP Alternatives and Selected Alternative**

Our final CCP and final EIS (77 FR 26781; May 7, 2012) addressed several issues. To address these, we developed and evaluated the following alternatives: Alternative A—No Action, Alternative B—Wildlife Population Emphasis, Alternative C—Public Use and Economic Use Emphasis, and Alternative D—Ecological Processes Emphasis.

After consideration of 24,600 comments that we received on the draft CCP and draft EIS and several minor comments we received following the release of the final CCP and final EIS, we have selected alternative D—Ecological Processes Emphasis. It is the

alternative that best meets the purposes of the refuges; the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System; the vision and management goals set for the refuge; and also adheres to Service policies and guidelines. It considers the interests and perspectives of many agencies, organization, tribes, and the public. Additionally, it is the environmentally preferred alternative.

Under alternative D and in cooperation with our partners, we would use natural, dynamic, ecological processes, and management activities in a balanced, responsible manner to restore and maintain the biological diversity, biological integrity, and environmental health of the Refuge. Once natural processes are restored, a more passive approach (less human assistance) would be favored. There would be quality wildlife-dependent public uses and experiences. Economic uses would be limited when they are injurious to ecological processes.

**Public Availability of Documents**

In addition to the using any of the methods listed under **ADDRESSES**, you can view or obtain a copy of the final CCP and final EIS at any of the following public libraries:

Library	Address	Phone No.
Garfield County .....	228 E. Main, Jordan MT 59337 .....	406-557-2297
Glasgow .....	408 3rd Avenue, Glasgow MT 59230 .....	406-228-2731
Great Falls .....	301 2nd Avenue, Great Falls MT 59401 .....	406-453-0349
Lewistown .....	701 W. Main, Lewistown MT 59457 .....	406-538-5212
McCone County .....	1101 C Avenue, Circle, MT 59215 .....	406-485-2350
Petroleum County .....	205 S. Broadway, Winnett, MT 59087 .....	406-429-2451
Phillips County .....	10 S. 4th Street E., Malta, MT 59538 .....	406-542-2407
Montana State University-Billings .....	1500 University Drive, Billings, MT 59101 .....	406-657-2011
Montana State University-Bozeman .....	Roland R. Renne Library, Centennial Mall, Bozeman, MT 59717 .....	406-994-3171
Montana State University-Havre .....	Northern Vande Bogart Library, Cowan Drive, Havre, MT 59501 .....	406-265-3706
University of Montana .....	Mansfield Library, 32 Campus Drive, Missoula, MT 59812 .....	406-243-6860
Colorado State University .....	Morgan Library, 501 University Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80523 .....	970-491-1841

Dated: July 27, 2012.

**Noreen E. Walsh,**

*Acting Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

**[FWS-R6-R-2012-N231; FF06R06000-FXRS1265066CCP0-123]**

**Establishment of Sangre de Cristo Conservation Area, Colorado and New Mexico**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** This notice advises the public that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has established the Sangre de

Cristo Conservation Area as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Service established the Sangre de Cristo Conservation Area on September 14, 2012, with the donation by Mr. Louis Bacon of an approximately 77,000-acre conservation easement on the Trinchera Ranch in Costilla County, Colorado.

**ADDRESSES:** A map depicting the approved boundary and other information regarding the Conservation Area is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Mike Dixon, Planning Team Leader,

Division of Refuge Planning, USFWS, P.O. Box 25486, DFC, Denver, CO 80225. <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/>.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Service has established the Sangre de Cristo Conservation Area in south-central Colorado and far northern New Mexico, including portions of Costilla County, Colorado, and Taos County, New Mexico. The Service will conserve wildlife resources in the conservation area, primarily through the purchase of perpetual easements from willing sellers. These easements will connect and expand existing lands under conservation protection to the north and south of the conservation area.

The area's history of largely low-intensity agriculture is one of the key components to ensuring habitat integrity and wildlife resource protection. Based on anticipated levels of landowner participation, objectives for the conservation area are to protect 250,000 acres of habitat for Federal trust species. The conservation area is a landscape-scale effort to conserve populations of priority species in an approximately 1-million-acre region in the central Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the largest completely privately owned region of the southern Rocky Mountains. The prioritization for land protection will incorporate the elements of strategic habitat conservation (SHC) to ensure effective conservation. SHC entails strategic biological planning and conservation design, integrated conservation delivery, monitoring, and research at ecoregional scales.

This conservation area allows the Service to purchase conservation easements using the acquisition authority of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a–j) and the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 (16 U.S.C. 715–715d, 715e, 715f–r). The Federal money used to acquire conservation easements is from the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601–4 through 11; funds received under this act are derived primarily from oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf, motorboat fuel taxes, and the sale of surplus Federal property), and the sale of Federal Duck Stamps [Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (16 U.S.C. 718–718j), 48 Stat. 452]. Additional funding to acquire lands, water, or interests for fish and wildlife conservation purposes could be identified by Congress or donated by nonprofit organizations. The purchase of easements from willing sellers will be subject to available money.

The Service has involved the public, agencies, partners, and legislators throughout the planning process for the easement program. At the beginning of the planning process, the Service initiated public involvement for the proposal to protect habitats through acquisition of conservation easements for management as part of the Refuge System. The Service spent time discussing the proposed project with landowners; conservation organizations; Federal, State, and county governments; tribes; and other interested groups and individuals. Scoping meetings were held on March 29, 30, and 31, 2011, in Alamosa, Monte Vista, and Moffatt, respectively. These meetings were announced in local and regional media.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321), the Service prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that evaluated two alternatives and their potential impacts on the project area. The Service released the draft environmental assessment (EA) and LPP on May 9, 2012, for a 30-day public review period. The draft documents were made available to Federal elected officials and agencies, State elected officials and agencies, 17 Native American tribes with aboriginal or tribal interests, local media, and other members of the public that were identified during the scoping process.

In addition, the Service held three public meetings on May 14, 15, and 16, 2012, at Alamosa, San Luis, and Moffatt, CO, respectively. These meetings were announced in advance in local and regional media. Approximately 50 landowners, citizens, and elected representatives attended the meetings. The Service received 14 letters from agencies, organizations, and members of the public. After all comments were received, they were reviewed, added to the administrative record, and, if substantial, incorporated into the environmental assessment (EA).

Based on the documentation contained in the environmental assessment (EA), a Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on August 1, 2012, for the establishment of the Sangre de Cristo Conservation Area.

Dated: November 5, 2012.

**Noreen E. Walsh,**

*Acting, Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### U.S. Geological Survey

#### Announcement of National Geospatial Advisory Committee Meeting

**AGENCY:** U.S. Geological Survey, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) will meet on December 3, 2012, from 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST. The meeting will be held via web conference and teleconference.

The NGAC, which is composed of representatives from governmental, private sector, non-profit, and academic organizations, has been established to advise the Chair of the Federal Geographic Data Committee on management of Federal geospatial programs, the development of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure, and the implementation of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A–16. Topics to be addressed at the meeting include:

- Leadership Dialogue
- National Address Database
- Geospatial Priorities
- NGAC Subcommittee Activities
- FGDC Update

Members of the public who wish to attend the meeting must register in advance. Please register by contacting Arista Maher at the Federal Geographic Data Committee (703–648–6283, [amaher@fgdc.gov](mailto:amaher@fgdc.gov)). Meeting registrations are due by November 28, 2012. Meeting information (web conference and teleconference instructions) will be provided to registrants prior to the meeting. While the meeting will be open to the public, attendance may be limited due to web conference and teleconference capacity.

The meeting will include an opportunity for public comment. Attendees wishing to provide public comment should register by November 28. Please register by contacting Arista Maher at the Federal Geographic Data Committee (703–648–6283, [amaher@fgdc.gov](mailto:amaher@fgdc.gov)). Comments may also be submitted to the NGAC in writing.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on December 3, 2012, from 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** John Mahoney, U.S. Geological Survey (206–220–4621).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Meetings of the National Geospatial Advisory Committee are open to the public. Additional information about the NGAC and the meeting are available at [www.fgdc.gov/ngac](http://www.fgdc.gov/ngac).

