

Public Involvement Summary

Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge

UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge

October 2007

Beginning the Plan

Over the next 4 years, we will be developing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) and environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), including the UL Bend NWR. The CCP is a 15-year plan that will provide long-range guidance and management direction for all of the refuge's programs including habitat conservation and wildlife-dependent recreation such as hunting and wildlife observation.

This "Public Involvement Summary" outlines the public involvement process and specifies how and when you can provide input on the future management direction of the refuge. Our overall goal is to reach a final decision for the CCP/EIS, in part, through the exchange of ideas between the public and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

Our refuge is a unique and ecologically important component of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Charles M. Russell NWR was established in 1936 as the Fort Peck Game Range for the

purpose of sustaining large numbers of sharp-tailed grouse, pronghorn, and other wildlife. In 1963 it was designated as the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Range, and in 1976 the "Range" became a "Refuge." It is managed by the Service for wildlife conservation above all else.

Charles M. Russell NWR is the largest national wildlife refuge in Montana, covering 1,100,000 acres. The refuge includes native prairies, forested coulees, river bottoms, and badlands. Wildlife on the refuge is as diverse as the topography. Visitors can see bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, pronghorn, prairie dogs, and over 236 species of birds.

The Service looks forward to your input on how the refuge can ensure habitat conservation and restoration while also serving its visitors and neighboring community. We will be providing planning updates and hosting public meetings throughout the planning process. Additionally, we will accept comments shared with us through conversations, email, mail, and fax.

Please join us at an upcoming meeting or feel free to come pay us a visit at the refuge.

Sincerely,



Barron Crawford
Project Leader

BE INVOLVED IN THE CCP PROCESS

- ✓ Sign up to be on the mailing list
- ✓ Visit the planning website for information
- ✓ Attend meetings/workshops
- ✓ Tell us what you think
- ✓ Look for announcements in the media



Bighorn sheep in the Missouri River Breaks at Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. Wildlife conservation is the principal mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



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The refuge spans 125 miles along the Missouri River including the Fort Peck Dam.

Informing the Public

The public involvement process for the development of a CCP/EIS for Charles M. Russell NWR and UL Bend NWR is inclusive of numerous interests and will involve a range of activities for keeping the public informed about the process and ensuring meaningful public input. These activities include (1) holding public meetings and workshops, (2) updating the public and stakeholders on plan developments, (3) briefing the congressional delegation and other county and community leaders or stakeholder groups, and (4) providing the public with many opportunities for comment.

The following are resources the Service will use to stay in touch with the public:

- *Planning Updates and Announcements*
Throughout the process, planning updates will be published and distributed to the public. The updates will report on the CCP/

EIS process, announce all opportunities for public involvement, and document workshop results. They will be mailed to the project’s mailing list; distributed at presentations and workshops; and made accessible through community information networks, main branch libraries, and online.

- *Media Coverage*
Announcements and reports in local newspapers and on television and radio stations will notify the public about opportunities for involvement and the progress of the CCP.
- *Website*
The public may access the project online at <http://www.fws.gov/cmnr/> planning for information on the planning process and to download planning documents as they become available.

Gathering Public Input

Public involvement will involve both idea generation and idea review.

- *Public Meetings or Workshops*
The public will be encouraged to participate in a series of meetings or workshops held at strategic phases of the plan development including public scoping, alternative plans, and draft plan review. The focus of these forums will be to generate ideas, gather input on refuge planning issues, and educate the public on refuge issues and the planning process. It is anticipated that meetings will be held in the communities of Lewistown, Glasgow, Jordan, Malta, Bozeman, and Great Falls, but this could be revised as needed. The exact format is yet to be determined but will be announced prior to any meeting.
- *Presentations and Briefings*
In order to keep the public and stakeholder groups posted on the CCP process, presentations and briefings will be conducted throughout the planning process.



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Meetings and workshops will enable citizens to share ideas and concerns.

Analyzing Public Input

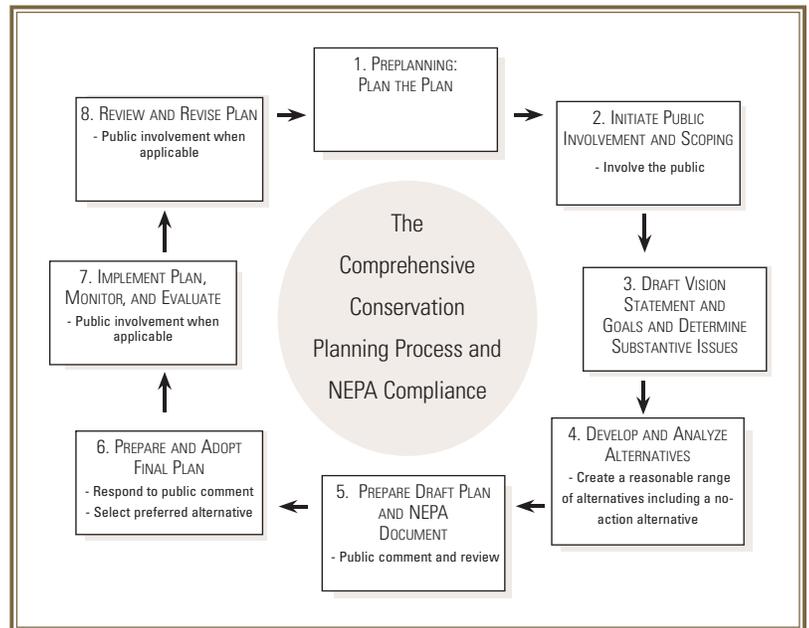
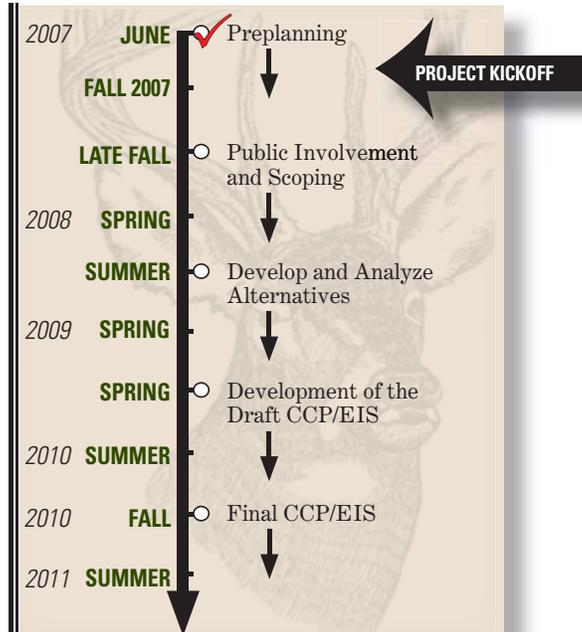
The Service will review and consider all comments gathered at workshops, other public meetings, and those comments received electronically and via mail. Comments on the draft CCP/EIS (anticipated to be published in late 2009 or early 2010) should be specific and should address the adequacy of the plan, the analysis of the impacts, and the merits of the alternatives disclosed. The final decision will be made by the Service’s regional director of the Mountain-Prairie Region (Lakewood, Colorado).

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/EIS; and (5) production of the final CCP/EIS. All stages will include opportunities for public involvement. Throughout the CCP project, the production and 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*

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



Abundant wildflowers and a historic structure on the Charles M. Russell NWR. Protection of resources, including cultural resources, will be addressed in the CCP/EIS.

Stakeholders List

The stakeholder groups that have expressed an interest in the comprehensive conservation planning 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 get 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 in the planning process. Counties adjacent to the refuge as well as more distant counties may be involved.

—*County Governments*

Fergus, Petroleum, Phillips, Valley, Garfield, and McCone counties.

—*Local Communities*

Lewistown, Glasgow, Malta, Jordan, Billings, Great Falls, Bozeman, Circle, Miles City, Winnett, and Roy.

Contact

Charles M. Russell NWR
Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Attn: Laurie Shannon,
Planning Team Leader
P.O. Box 25486
Denver, CO 80225-0486
Tel: 303/236 4792
Fax: 303/236 4317

To get on the project mailing list:
Email: Laurie_Shannon@fws.gov
Website: <http://www.fws.gov/cmrr/planning>

For information about the refuge:
Website: <http://www.fws.gov/cmrr>
Tel: 406/538 8706

Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, Montana



Charles M. Russell NWR CCP
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Refuge Planning
P.O. Box 25486
Denver, CO 80225-0486

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



