

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, MOUNTAIN-PRAIRIE REGION
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM
CHARLES M. RUSSELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX
P.O. Box 110, Airport Road
Lewistown, MT 59457**

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For Immediate Release

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**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE RELEASES THE DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE
CONSERVATION PLAN FOR
CHARLES M. RUSSELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced its publication of the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge for a 60-day public review and comment period. The Service will hold a series of public meetings during September and October, 2010 at various locations in Montana to solicit input on the draft plan for the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge. UL Bend lies within Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, and the two units are managed jointly as one refuge.

The Service has developed four draft alternatives, including a proposed action, based on the Service's mission and purpose and the comments received during scoping which began in early 2008.

Meeting dates, times, and locations are:

- Billings, September 28, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Billings Hotel and Convention Center, 1223 Mullaney Lane
- Bozeman, September 29, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Holiday Inn, 5 East Baxter Lane
- Great Falls, September 30, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Best Western Heritage Inn, 1700 Fox Farm Road
- Lewistown, October 12, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Yogo Inn, 211 East Main Street
- Jordan, October 13, 2:00-4:00 p.m., VFW Post, 11 South Main Street
- Glasgow, October 14, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Cottonwood Inn, 45 1st Avenue North
- Malta, October 14, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Malta High School, 12 S 9th Street West

There are many ways for the public to provide comments on the Draft CCP and EIS including written letters, emails, or by attending one of the public meetings. The Service encourages the public to provide feedback on the contents of the plan. Each meeting will include a brief overview of key issues that are being addressed. Following this, those who wish to offer public comment may do so. Staff will be available to answer questions.

Written comments should be submitted by November 16, 2010 to Laurie Shannon, Planning Team Leader, P.O. Box 25486, Denver, CO 80225-0486. Emails can be submitted to cmrplanning@fws.gov. For more information about the plan, visit: <http://www.fws.gov/cmr/planning> or call: (303) 236-4317 or (406) 538-8706.

Charles M. Russell NWR was first established in 1936 as the Ft. Peck Game Range for the purpose of sustaining large numbers of sharp-tailed grouse, pronghorn, and other wildlife. In 1963, the Range was designated as Charles M. Russell Range. In 1976 the “Range” became a refuge and the Service was granted full management authority. The refuge is now administered as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world’s premier network of lands and waters managed for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats. It encompasses 1.1 million acres of land and water in north-central Montana and is the largest national wildlife refuge in Montana.

UL Bend NWR was established in 1969. Significant portions of this refuge are protected as wilderness under the National Wilderness Preservation System.

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 2012.

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.

