

Land Protection Planning

San Luis Valley Conservation Area

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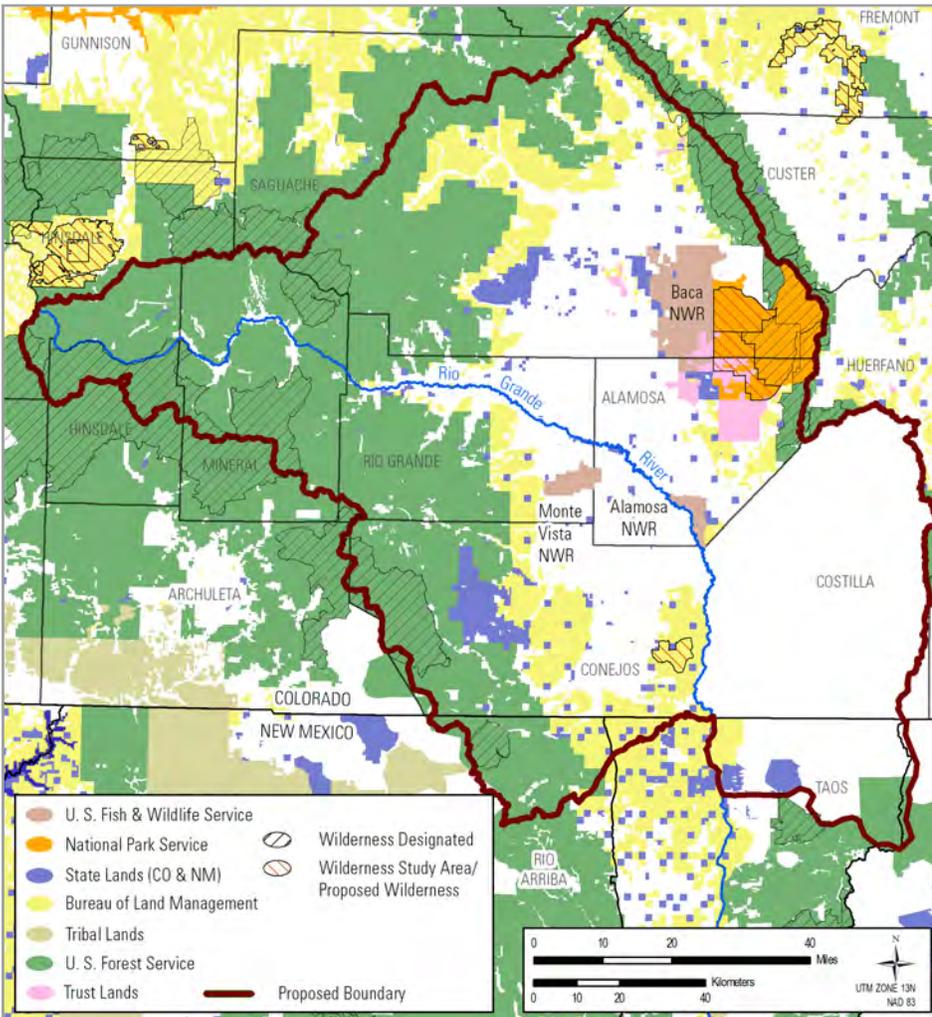


Wetland and riparian areas play an important role in the San Luis Valley Conservation Area.

The San Luis Valley Conservation Area (SLVCA) is a landscape-scale project designed to conserve wildlife habitat in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. The project area contains a rich diversity of mi-

gratory birds and threatened and endangered species as well as species of concern. This high desert and montane region boasts more than 1,300 species of vascular plants; 95 percent of the Rocky Mountain population of

greater sandhill cranes; waterfowl; and priority species such as the southwestern willow flycatcher and the white-faced ibis. The Draft Environmental Assessment/Land Protection Plan (EA/LPP) for the SLVCA is now available.



The San Luis Valley Conservation Area lies within the Rio Grande watershed.

Project Overview

The San Luis Valley hosts conservation initiatives by numerous government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The SLVCA will complement these efforts by targeting specific imperiled species whose habitats are currently underrepresented in the region. The project area includes the headwaters of the Rio Grande River, encompassing approximately 5.2 million acres in Saguache, Hinsdale, Mineral, Rio Grande, Alamosa, Costilla, and Conejos counties in south-central Colorado and Rio Arriba and Taos counties in northern New Mexico.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to acquire land interests from willing sellers to protect habitat for federal trust species and to connect existing conservation lands, which is crucial for allowing wildlife and plants to adapt to climate change. Overall, the Service proposes to conserve up to 530,000 unprotected acres, primarily through conservation easements, though a limited amount of fee title purchases could be considered where appropriate.

Along with Alamosa, Baca, and Monte Vista National Wildlife Ref-

uges, the SLVCA will form a fourth unit of the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Funding for the SLVCA will primarily come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federal program which provides money for land protection. Prioritization of land for acquisition will be based upon the habitat needs of eight focal species: Canada lynx, Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Wilson's phalarope, American Bittern, Gunnison sage-grouse, willow flycatcher, sage thrasher, and Lewis' woodpecker.

Next Steps

The Service seeks input on this draft EA/LPP, which will be available for public comment on May 9, 2012 at the website below. Does the SLVCA capture your conservation vision for the valley? We will use your input to revise the EA/LPP prior to the release of a decision document. We encourage you to submit your ideas, concerns, or support to us through emails, letters, or phone calls via the contacts listed below. Comments on the draft will be accepted until June 8, 2012.

We will present this project at three public meetings and provide an opportunity to express comments:

Alamosa County Conference Room
8900 Independence Way, Rm. 108
Alamosa, CO. May 14, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Costilla County Commissioner Mtg. Rm.
352 Main St.
San Luis, CO. May 15, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Moffat High School Gym
501 Garfield St.
Moffat, CO. May 16, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Contacts

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Refuge Complex
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Website: www.fws.gov/alamosa/planning

Mike Dixon, Planning Team Leader

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P.O. Box 25486, DFC
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303/236 8132 (phone)

Email comments to:
SLVrefugesplanning@fws.gov

2012 Project Timeline



San Luis Valley Conservation Area
P.O. Box 25486
Denver, CO 80225-0486

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

