



Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge ***Cooperative Agriculture Program***

Alamosa Cattle Grazing Site Permit **Application Package** **(2024-2028)**

Attention Agricultural Operators:

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking to permit selected agricultural operator(s) for a Cooperative Agricultural Program at the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge (Alamosa NWR). The refuge is located in southcentral Colorado, near the east extent of the San Luis Valley. Under this permit agreement, selected operator(s) will fulfill prescriptions for specific intensities of cattle grazing for a period of up to 5 years (2024-2028). The acres available for grazing will vary annually based on habitat and environmental conditions, and management needs. The Alamosa NWR is proposing to graze up to approximately 1600 acres each year for a period of up to 5 years (2024-2028). Cooperator(s) will be selected through an open, transparent, and competitive process where applicants will be scored and ranked based on a combination of competitive bids, reference checks, flexibilities, ability to provide in-kind services, and relevant experience.

Background

The Service's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Refuge Complex provides resource management objectives for each refuge. It outlines that the refuges provide resting, feeding, and breeding habitats for native fish, wildlife, and migratory bird species. Additionally, it identifies the permitting of prescribed grazing as a management tool as an appropriate, compatible, and necessary use to meet the CCP objectives. So, through the Cooperative Agricultural Program, both the selected applicants and the Service complete and sign both a Special Use Permit and a Cooperative Agricultural Agreement to permit grazing on refuge lands accordingly.

Proposed Cooperative Agriculture Agreement

Interested applicants should read all requirements and flexibilities outlined in this package and complete the application as thoroughly as possible. Selected operators will work under a Cooperative Agriculture Agreement (CAA) as a "Cooperator" with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service). Under this agreement, selected Cooperators will fulfill prescriptions for specific intensities of cattle grazing on the Refuge Complex for a period of up to 5 years (2024-2028).

* Bids will be accepted based on cattle equivalent of Animal Unit Month (AUM) of which, a Mature Cow is 1 Animal Unit (AU) = \$20.00/AUM. The minimum bid accepted is \$20.00/AUM. This grazing fee is based on average grazing fee rates published by USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) for Colorado for 2024. Grazing fees in years 2024-2028 will be adjusted accordingly based on NASS published average rates.

Cooperator(s) will be selected through an open, transparent, and competitive process where applicants will be scored and ranked based on a combination of a competitive bids, reference checks, flexibilities, ability to provide in-kind services, and relevant experience.

Applications **must be received by 3:00 p.m. on Friday, April 26, 2024.** (Postmarked by Friday, April 26, 2024, if mailed)

Hand delivers or Mail to:

SLVNWRC – Dean Lee
Attn: 2024-2028 Alamosa Cattle Grazing
7824 El Rancho Lane
Alamosa, CO 81101

OR

Email to:

Dean_Lee@fws.gov with subject line “2024-2028 Alamosa Cattle Grazing”

For more information, please reach out to Dean Lee at 1-719-589-4021 ext. 1008 or by email at Dean_Lee@fws.gov.

* The following is information pertaining to cattle grazing permits on the Alamosa Refuge. Please familiarize yourself with this information when preparing your bid. The information contains the requirements and flexibilities that the Service will be considering when evaluating your bid package.

Alamosa Refuge – Alamosa Cattle Grazing Site

Program Description

The Refuge is proposing to use cattle grazing on the Alamosa Cattle Grazing Site located on the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. This site consists of approximately 1600 acres of dry and wet meadows and upland habitats located on Alamosa NWR. It must be understood that not all prescribed acres listed in this permit will be grazed each year or throughout the entire grazing season. Additional units may be added to the permit to meet management needs and will be documented under Annual Operation Plans (AOP). The grazing period will be from April through November annually during the period 2024-2028.

Program Goals

Areas to be grazed are irrigated meadows, grasslands, and brush dominated uplands. Cattle grazing is an important tool for managing these habitats. Because of the periodic nature of irrigation and the rapidly changing environmental conditions that are contributing to vulnerabilities of these habitats, prescribed cattle grazing has become even more of an important tool. It can be used to emulate natural processes, such as wildfires, to remove decadent vegetation, expose soils to sunlight, increase soil organic matter, and help native plants outcompete invasive plant species.

Specific vegetation goals will vary within each unit with an overall goal to increase the cover and diversity of native vegetation to improve wildlife habitat. A prescription of cattle grazing with a herd(s) of approximately 100-200 animals from April through November will be used to target both decadent vegetation removal and invasive plant impacts. This type of maintenance grazing prescription will allow native plants to outcompete invasive plants and provide for higher quality wildlife habitat.

Weekly monitoring of vegetation health and impacts will inform the permittee and refuge staff as to when herd rotation will need to occur, ensuring over-grazing will not happen.

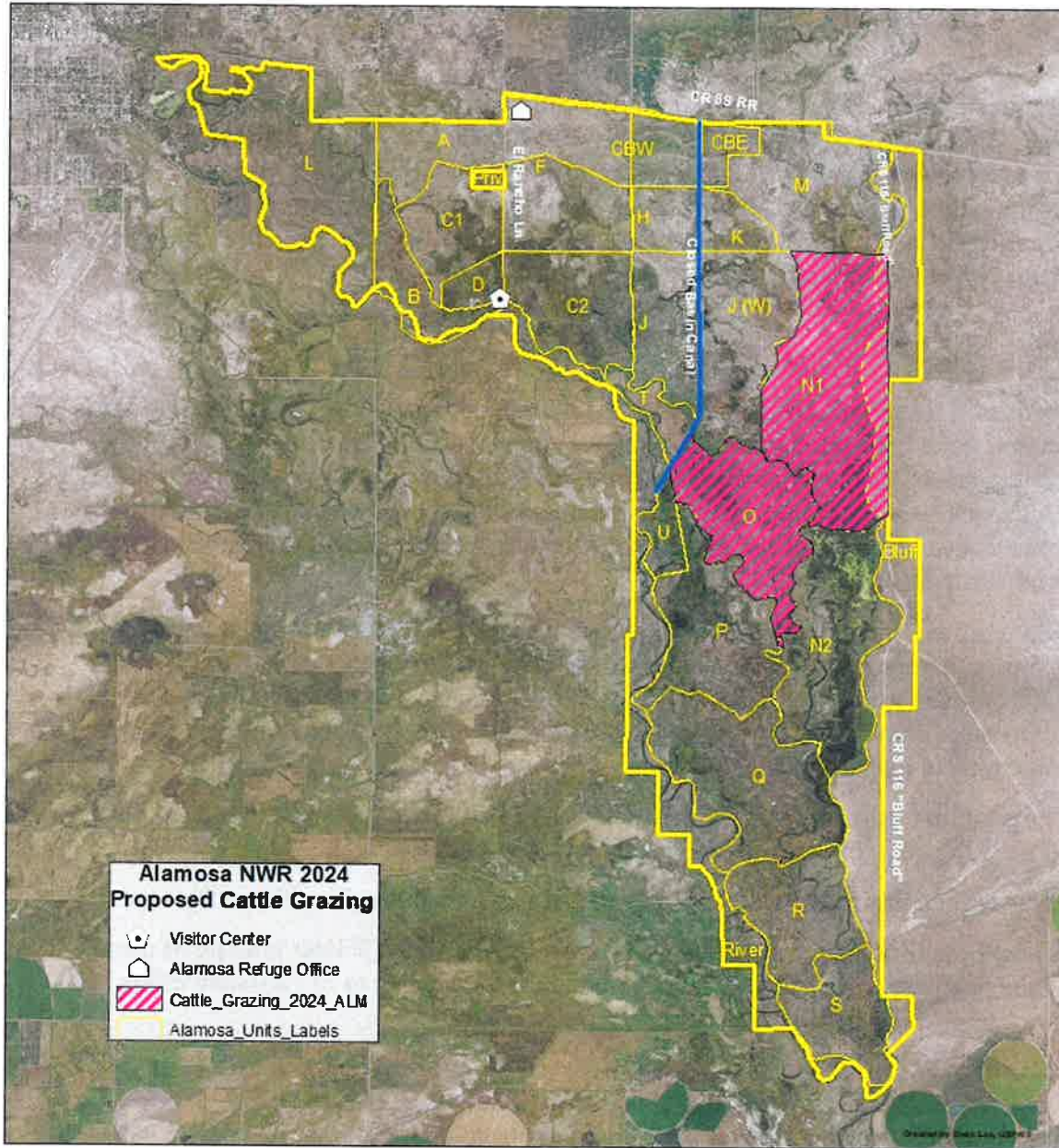
Paddocking of larger units will be utilized to help facilitate uniform results throughout the unit.

This permit will also allow for additional grazing units to be prescribed for Fall/Winter grazing of areas outside of the maintenance grazing prescription, to help facilitate the enhancement of various wildlife habitats. These areas are usually well defined and temporary.

Success of this program is dependent on close cooperation between the cooperator and refuge staff. Regular evaluation of vegetation and animal conditions will be required of the cooperator. Refuge personnel will work closely with the cooperator providing regular observations and prescribing adjustments to scheduling and cattle movement. Cooperators must remain nimble and be prepared to utilize several techniques including electric fencing with frequent moves, virtual fencing, strategic placement of nutrient supplements, etc.... to ensure that grazing prescriptions are fulfilled as intended for habitat purposes.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Alamosa N.W.R.

**Proposed 2024
Cattle Grazing**



SPECIAL CONDITIONS

- The grazing permit will be issued to support healthy wildlife habitat and invasive plant species control efforts on the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge using varying numbers and intensities of cattle over a 5-year period (2024-2028).
- Cooperator will document all cattle move dates among the overall areas grazed. This documentation will then be given to the Refuge Manager at the end of the grazing season along with the dates and descriptions of any problems that occurred and were reported to the Refuge Manager.
- The Cooperator certifies that all livestock grazing under this permit comply with State Livestock Health Laws.
- If watering problems develop, the refuge staff must be contacted. Releasing water from impoundments or other water control structures by the permittee will not be allowed.
- Actual grazing is not guaranteed during each year of the permit. Grazing needs are based entirely on habitat conditions. If habitat conditions do not warrant a grazing need for a particular year, it will not be prescribed. In addition, Refuge Manager retains the right to discontinue prescribed grazing practices in the event that compatibility or any other issue/concern arises or if desirable effects are obtained prior to proposed end date.
- Dates may vary within approved range and within approved AUM's based on impacts cattle are having on subject habitats.
- The cooperator must abide by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and not deny any person the right to receive any service or benefit because of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin.
- Cooperator is expected to act in a manner that is respectful of refuge habitats, wildlife, and property, and is subject to all laws pertaining to the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- All persons working on the refuge as a result of an issued permit are required to have a copy of the permit on their person/vehicle while on the refuge. Failure to do so may result in criminal penalties for trespass.
- Cooperator is not to be considered agent of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is not to represent the Service in any matters. All matters arisen or encountered should be promptly brought to the attention of Refuge Management at (719) 589-4021.

- Cooperator shall perform all work required under an issued permit in accordance with the highest standards of their profession or craft and to the satisfaction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and work in accordance with all laws and regulations and shall obtain all/any necessary permits or licenses required.
- The work performed under an issued permit shall be performed entirely at the cooperators risk. The cooperator shall indemnify and hold the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service harmless for any and all liability and/or loss arising in any way out of the performance of this permit.

Eligible Deductions for selected Cooperators include:

- * Fence Building, Removal, and Maintenance (Electric, Permanent, and Virtual)
- * Fall/Spring Forage Quality
- * Water Hauling
- * In-Kind Services

Ownership

- All cattle must be owned by cooperator and must have been in San Luis Valley at least 1 year or newborn in San Luis Valley. No sub-leasing or non-cooperator owned cattle are allowed.
- All animals must be identifiable as belonging to cooperator, and cooperator must provide Refuge Manager with any brand and location information, along with ear tag colors/information.

Access and Travel Management

- A description of vehicles to be used on Refuge property should be identified prior to their use. This list should be kept current with Refuge Manager for dissemination to Refuge employees and Law enforcement personnel.
- All vehicle travel is restricted to developed roads and two-track roads, and only within prescribed grazing units. Any ATV use and/or needed vehicle use deviations must be pre-approved by Refuge Manager in writing prior to any action taken.
- All equipment for grazing, including ATVs and UTVs, must be clean and free of invasive species plant material including seeds and must be inspected by refuge personnel prior to entering the Refuge.

Accountability

- Cooperator will document all cattle move dates within the overall area to be grazed. This documentation will then be given to the Refuge Manager at the end of the grazing season along with the dates and descriptions of any problems that occurred that may or may not have already been reported to the Refuge Manager. A summary of all results generated from the work permitted shall also be provided upon completion and summation.
- Cooperator is required to visit grazing units (3) times weekly throughout the performance period and account for all cattle and properly functioning fences. Cooperator must provide Refuge Manager with a record of all visitations upon completion of grazing period.
- All cattle must be accounted for (dead or alive) as they enter and exit each management unit. Special attention should be given to accounting for cattle as they are trailed between the management units. If cattle are unaccounted for, efforts should be made to locate them as quickly as possible. Stray or left behind cattle must be gathered within 24 hours of recognition.
- Injured or sick cattle will not be left behind but will be moved and/or dispatched and removed from refuge.
- All dead cattle must be removed promptly from the refuge.
- Cooperator is required to re-visit each management unit upon completion of grazing period and remove temporary fencing or handling supplies used.
- Cooperator shall leave gates locked or unlocked as found.
- Possession of firearms is strictly prohibited on the Refuge.
- Fires are strictly prohibited in any areas of the Refuge.
- The Service may cancel this permit at any time upon two weeks written notice.
- Cooperator shall not re-assign or transfer this contract or subcontract for the work to be performed without the prior written consent of the Refuge Manager

Salting/Supplemental Practices

- Supplemental feeding on refuge land is prohibited without the advance approval, in writing, from Refuge Manager.
- Salting will be allowed and can be used to improve distribution of cattle into areas of light use and lessen impacts on areas of high use. However, any proposed action must be pre-approved by Refuge Manager prior to implementation.

-Approved salt blocks will be moved daily to prevent over impact on any given area within the management unit.

-Salt will be placed no closer than **300 feet** from any road, water source, riparian corridor, or active wetland.

-All salt will be removed from each management unit when cattle are moved out of the management unit.

Working Dogs

-Working dogs will be allowed if under the cooperators control and must be non-threatening to people and non-threatening wildlife (i.e., prairie dogs, rabbits etc....) or they will not be allowed.

Animal Damage Management

-Random killing of non-threatening predators will not be tolerated and will result in the immediate termination of a permit.

-Predator control will be limited to coyotes and feral dogs that are **actively** threatening cattle and Refuge Management must be notified prior to taking any action.

-Any approved animal damage management activities will be conducted according to State Law and Federal Regulations

- Dust bags, oilers, or other insecticide treatment or sprays may not be used on the refuge. Treated ear tags may be used.

-Cooperator will make every effort to prohibit or minimize interactions between cattle and wild ungulates (antelope, deer, and elk). Hazing of elk, deer, and antelope will be allowed in the immediate vicinity of the cattle herd.

Monitoring

- Cooperator is responsible for monitoring cattle numbers and adhering to all management unit entry and exit dates.

- Cooperator will participate in management unit inspections with Refuge Manager throughout the management season. However, informal unit inspections by cooperator are encouraged and may occur at any time.

-The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be responsible for carrying out effectiveness monitoring on this management action. Cooperator is encouraged to participate and can receive the results of any monitoring upon request.

**Bid Package - Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge – Alamosa Cattle Grazing Site
 2024-2028 Prescribed Cattle Grazing Permit Bid Package
 Attachment D – Sample Grazing Schedule**

(Sample) Grazing Schedule

AUM's = AU x Days/30.5

Pasture No.	Date In	Date Out	Days	AU's	AUM's
#1	5/18/23	5/29/23	11	228	82
#2	5/30/23	7/13/23	44	237	341
#3	7/14/23	7/15/23	1	237	8
#4	7/15/23	8/6/23	22	235	170
#5	8/7/23	8/21/23	14	229	105
#6	8/22/23	9/18/23	27	229	203
#7	9/19/23	10/12/23	23	229	173
#8	10/13/23	10/24/23	11	229	83
Total:			153		1164

Class of animal Factor

Cow = 1.0 AU's

Cow/calf pair = 1.2

Yearling (9-18 months) 0.70

Weaner calf 0.50

Bull 1.50

Mature sheep or goat 0.20

Ewe w/lamb or nanny w/kid 0.30

Horse or mule 1.20

Bison 1.00

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF FORM 3-1383-C FOR APPLICATIONS FOR COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES ON THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

Please read the following carefully before filling out the application:

- Form 3-1383 - Commercial Special Use Permit (CSUP) is used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to permit cooperative agricultural practices on National Wildlife Refuges, as well as for formalizing Cooperative Agricultural Agreements on Refuges. ***This form will be filled out by the Refuge Manager.***
- Form 3-1383-C - Commercial Special Use Permit Application (3-1383-C) (Attached) - must be completed for consideration and be submitted as part of the application package. However, at the time of the application, applicant does not need to complete all sections of the application but does need to ensure that they provide sufficient information in their proposed operations for the Service to review the application based on the objective criteria listed in the bid package. ***This form is to be filled out by the Applicant(s).***
 - * Write N/A in any sections that do not appear to be relevant.
 - * Both the “Plan of Operations” (section 18) and the “Logistics and Transportation Section” (sections 24a through 30) only need to be completed if/after an applicant has been selected as the Cooperator.
- * Form 3-1384 - Supplemental Application Information and Bid Sheet (Attached) - should be submitted with the Form 3-1383-C as part of the application package. ***This form is to be filled out by the Applicant(s).***

- In addition to providing the Service detailed information about your proposed grazing practices on the refuge, you must also describe how your proposed activity, based on your background, knowledge, and experience, meets the objective criteria by which the Service will evaluate your application.