



News Release

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For Release: Immediate

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Public Meetings Held Regarding Rio Mora Conservation Partnership Opportunity. *Proposal includes establishment of new National Wildlife Refuge in Northern New Mexico.*

Watrous, NM – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is launching a multi-phase public involvement process to study the feasibility of a partnership approach to address landscape-scale land conservation efforts in north-central New Mexico. This effort will seek to identify opportunities for the Service to work with landowners throughout the Rio Mora watershed in part of Mora, San Miguel, and Colfax counties; to conserve, restore and protect the tremendous land, wildlife and cultural resources found in the area. The entirely voluntary partnership would be anchored by the establishment of a new national wildlife refuge on the 4,500-acre Wind River Ranch, near Watrous, NM. The ranch headquarters area was formerly known as El Larrazolo.

During this first phase, commonly referred to as “scoping”, the Service will solicit input from the public, various organizations, and other agencies to gain an early understanding of issues, concerns and opportunities that need to be considered through the rest of the planning process. The information gathered during scoping provides the basis for considering the viability of the proposed action as well as different approaches that may be taken.

As part of scoping, the agency is hosting two meetings to discuss the idea with members of the public. The public meetings will be held from 5:30 -7:30 on Monday, July 25 in Mora, at the Mora High School Lecture Hall; and on Tuesday, July 26 in Las Vegas, at the Donnelly Library, Leveo V. Sanchez Lecture Hall (G-35) at New Mexico Highlands University; 900 University Avenue.

“The area provides outstanding habitat for migratory birds, and other important natural resources. A conservation partnership and national wildlife refuge in this area would help maintain these resources for the benefit of present and future generations,” said Steve Kettler, lead planner for the effort.

Those unable to attend may provide input by contacting the Service at 505-248-7403, or via email at fw2_rw_lasvegas@fws.gov. Information about the proposal and a comment card are available by visiting www.fws.gov/southwest. Comments will be accepted until September 19, 2011.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the world's premier system of public lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife and plants. Since President Theodore Roosevelt designated Florida's Pelican Island as the first wildlife refuge in 1903, the System has grown to more than 150 million acres, 553 national wildlife refuges and other units of the Refuge System, plus 38 wetland management districts. There are currently

seven National Wildlife Refuges in New Mexico including the Bosque del Apache and Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuges.

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. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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