

A Preliminary Vision for an Urban National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update #2 July 2011

The Price's Dairy property offers the last large undeveloped urban land along the Rio Grande. Don J. Usner

Thank You for Participating!

I'd like to open by thanking those of you who participated in the first round of public meetings and comments earlier this year. Your contributions helped shape this proposal into a meaningful plan for establishing the first urban refuge in the Southwestern United States.

I'm excited to start this next phase and to provide draft documents for your review. Please take some time to visit our website and review the draft Environmental Assessment, Land Protection Plan, and Conceptual Management Plan. We will be accepting comments until Monday, August 15, 2011.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Jeannie Wagner-Greven

Thank you
Jeannie Wagner-Greven, Chief
Division of Planning

Public Hearings

- Wednesday, July 27
6:00 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.
Mountain View
Community Center
201 Prosperity Avenue, SE
Albuquerque, NM
- Thursday, July 28
7:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m.
Raymond G. Sanchez
Community Center
9800 4th Street, NW
Albuquerque, NM

For any comments, concerns, or to request a hard-copy or CD of the documents, contact:

Jeannie Wagner-Greven
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
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All photographs, Trust for Public Land

The Mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people

This is the second in a series of updates about the feasibility of creating an urban national wildlife refuge at the Price's Dairy property. The purpose of this update is to provide information about documents available for public review and to solicit input from all interested parties.

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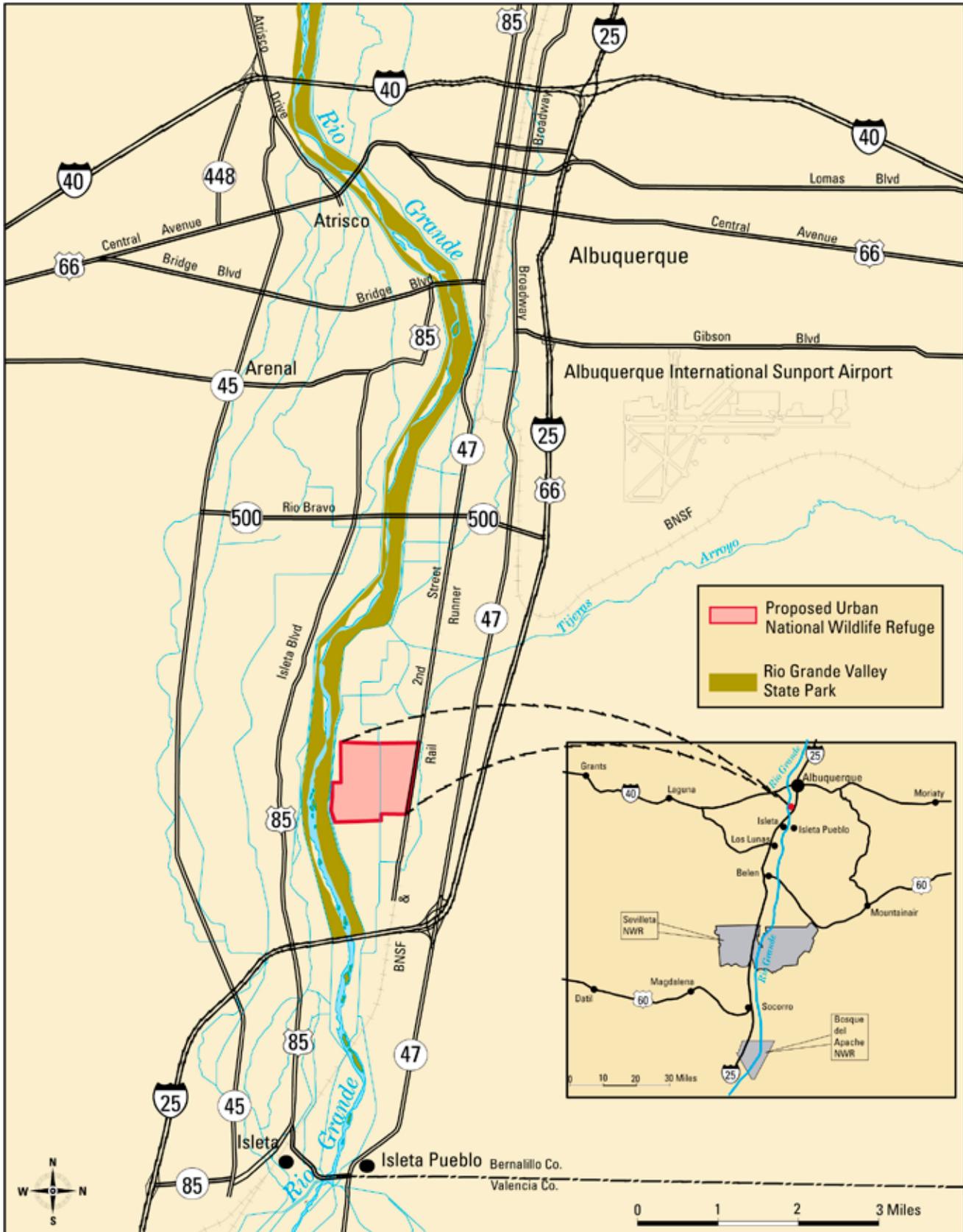


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Exhibit Map

Proposed Urban National Wildlife Refuge

Bernalillo County, New Mexico



Comments Being Solicited on Draft Documents

After receiving initial comments from members of the public, interested government agencies, organizations, and elected officials, the Fish and Wildlife Service and Bernalillo County studied the proposed Refuge in more detail and prepared draft documents that outline alternatives to establishing the refuge and potential management of a refuge in this location. These documents are now available for public review and include:

Draft Environmental Assessment

An environmental assessment (EA) is required by the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. An environmental assessment identifies a Preferred Action as well as alternative actions that were evaluated but not selected to pursue further. In this case, the Preferred Action is to establish a 570-acre urban national wildlife refuge. NEPA requires that federal agencies consider any environmental impacts of a Preferred Action and any alternatives.

Draft Land Protection Plan

A land protection plan (LPP) explains our interests and intentions to owners of land near the refuge, to state agencies in New Mexico, to our conservation partners, local communities and the public. It is very similar to an Environmental Assessment but does not consider environmental impacts in as much detail as does an EA. The LPP also includes cost estimates for protecting the proposed urban refuge lands.

Draft Conceptual Management Plan

This document provides an overview of how the land will be managed until a detailed long-term Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the refuge is complete. As a conceptual plan, it does not provide extensive detail related to management or show exactly where public use facilities would be located. However, this plan should answer those questions commonly posed by the public during the planning and public involvement process for consideration of establishing this new refuge.

The documents are available at www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/index.htm

Comments on the documents can be e-mailed to:

urbanrefugeABQ@fws.gov,
or mailed to

Jeannie Wagner-Greven,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103

Public testimony will also be heard at both of the scheduled public hearings.

Steps of the Planning Process

What should we consider?

Identify the Issues (Scoping)



How can we act on the issues?

Develop Alternatives



How well will each alternative work?

Analyze Alternatives



Which would work best?

Select an Alternative

We are here →



Public review and comment

Distribute Draft Plan



Any revisions to make?

Publish Final Plan



Final decision made public

Publish Decision Document



Implement Plan and revise as needed

Estimated Project Timeline

Preliminary Project Proposal approved by Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service	December 3, 2010
Public Scoping for Land Protection Plan/Environmental Assessment/Conceptual Management Plan.....	January 19, 2010 – March 28, 2011
Prepare draft Land Protection Plan/draft Environmental Assessment/draft Conceptual Management Plan.....	January 2011 – June 2011
Draft documents available for in-house/cooperating agency review.	June 20, 2011
Draft documents available for 30-day public review and comment period including public meetings.	July 15, 2011
Public review and comment period ends, begin revisions for final documents.	August 15, 2011
Final documents available for in-house/cooperating agency review.....	September 15, 2011
Final documents available for Regional Director approval and submission to Washington Office review.	October 15, 2011
Anticipated Director’s approval of new refuge. Acquisition of Price’s Dairy can proceed pending availability of funding.....	November 30, 2011

Question and Answer

Q. What is an urban national wildlife refuge?

A. An urban refuge exists in a metropolitan area to protect wildlife and their habitats, while providing the public wildlife-oriented recreation, education, and interpretation opportunities.

Q. Why here, why now?

A. The site provides an opportunity to restore and create native riparian habitat on the largest undeveloped agricultural tract along the Rio Grande bosque in the Albuquerque metro area. The tract is for sale now. This would be a long term investment to benefit generations in the future.

Q. How much will it cost?

A. An appraisal will be conducted using federal standards to determine the fair market value of the property.

Q. Where will the funds come from to buy the tract?

Funds would come from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (offshore oil royalties), Bernalillo County, and other possible partners. This is a multi-partner collaboration because no one entity can do this alone.

Q. How will Bernalillo County participate as a partner?

The Bernalillo County Commission approved \$5 million to support the establishment of the refuge, if it is approved, and the County Open Space program will collaborate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on environmental educational programming to benefit the public.

Q. What will the public be able to do on the refuge?

A. The vision is to provide a place where students, families, and the general public can learn about nature, enjoy a natural open space and see wildlife, and access the Rio Grande bosque. Various uses would be considered based on their compatibility with refuge system and open space missions, technical feasibility, safety to the public, costs, and other pertinent considerations.

Q. Is there a concern about the site’s proximity to the Albuquerque airport?

A. The Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to manage the area to restore and create native riparian habitats that will encourage use by smaller birds. Some geese and cranes may still use the site, but their numbers are anticipated to be less because the vast expanses of cropland they prefer to feed on will not be available.

Please Share Any Comments:

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

“...to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans”

(National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Public Law 105-57).

Proposed Location

570-acre riverfront farm, located five miles south of downtown Albuquerque on the Rio Grande.

Significance

- Educational Opportunities for Urban Youth.
- Partnership Opportunities with Educational Institutions and Resource Agencies.
- Trail Connection to Bosque and Rio Grande.
- Enhanced Public Recreation Opportunities.

- Preservation of Open Space in metro-Albuquerque.
- Demonstration Area for Restored Riparian Habitat.
- Demonstration Area for Significance of Agriculture in Ecosystem.
- Water Use for On-site Restoration and Rio Grande Environmental Flows

Visit www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/index.htm for complete documents.

Comments due August 15, 2011



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