



PUBLIC NOTICE

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Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) <http://southwest.fws.gov>

Public invited to comment on Topock Marsh Water Infrastructure Improvement Project on Havasu NWR

Date: November 17, 2009

Contact: Andrew Hautzinger (505) 248-7946 or Kelly K. Mensah 505-248-6599

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) opens public comment on water delivery options for the Topock Marsh at Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on the three options being considered has been prepared. Comments on the Draft EA are being solicited. This comment period gives all interested parties an opportunity to provide input by identifying concerns, potential impacts, and possible alternatives for Topock Marsh irrigation.

The comment period runs through December 17, 2009.

Situated between Needles, CA and Lake Havasu City, AZ on 30 miles of the Colorado River, Havasu NWR was originally established in 1941 to preserve habitat to wildlife and protect riparian resources. An irrigation system for Topock Marsh, the largest body of water in the lower Colorado River managed primarily for environmental purposes, was constructed in the 1960's and is now considered outdated and dilapidated. The Service has determined that building a new water inlet channel is necessary for the Havasu NWR to effectively fulfill its mission as "*refuge and breeding area for migratory birds and other wildlife...*". Three options for marsh irrigation are being considered in the Draft EA.

Topock Marsh is currently irrigated through earthen-bottomed water canals; this leads to sub-optimal management of water do to high rate of water lost during the transmission stage. Additional problems include a degrading water delivery structure, and changes in the depth of the water table and flow pattern of the river, for which the original canals were not built. The three options for Marsh management being considered by the Service are:

- No action.
- Refurbishment and modernization of the existing canals.
- Construction of a new, 2.6 mile downriver canal.

Comments to be entered into the record must be submitted in writing to carol_berry@fws.gov or to: Havasu Wildlife Refuge, 317 Mesquite Avenue, Needles, Ca 92363.

A copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment is available at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/arizona/havasu/>

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