



News Release

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Comments Solicited on Refuge Farm Program

Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in eastern New Mexico is currently reviewing farming activities that take place on the Refuge. As part of this process the public is being invited to provide early comments on potential issues or concerns that should be considered.

On many refuges throughout the nation, farming programs provide benefits for both resident and migrating animals. For example, farming programs provide supplemental forage for resident and migratory wildlife, manage undesirable and/or invasive vegetation, restore native habitats and aid in the recovery of threatened or endangered species, and in some cases provide a safe resting spot for migrating waterfowl and help to keep them off private farm fields. Farming programs also provide increased wildlife observation, photography, and environmental education opportunities.

Bitter Lake manages up to 500 farmable acres through a cooperative farming program on the Refuge. Primarily, corn and other grains are planted each year to provide important protein and carbohydrate feed for wintering cranes and waterfowl. Alfalfa is used in the crop rotation to provide additional feed and to improve soil health while ensuring the economic viability of the farming program for a cooperative farmer. Genetically modified crops are currently not permitted on Bitter Lake.

This comment period is known as 'Scoping' under the National Environmental Policy Act. During scoping the Refuge is looking for general comments on the farming program. These comments will assist in determining the next course of action. Comments will be accepted until August 1, 2010. Comments should be sent to Joe_Saenz@fws.gov, or mailed to Refuge Manager, Bitter Lake NWR 4065 Bitter Lakes Road, Roswell, New Mexico 88201

This review of the Refuge's farming program is part of a nationwide review of all Refuge farming programs. For the status of farming programs being reviewed throughout the southwest and commenting instructions please visit <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/Plan/planindex.html>

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