



News Release

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Comments Solicited on Refuge Farm Program

Cibola and Imperial National Wildlife Refuges (Refuges) in western Arizona are 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, 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.

On these two Refuges, 1,338 acres of cropland are farmed (1,253 acres on Cibola NWR and 85 acres on Imperial NWR). On Cibola a cooperative farmer plants 132 acres of field corn and 1,088 acres of alfalfa and Refuge personnel maintain 33 acres of wheat. These crops are mainly planted to provide food for wintering greater sandhill cranes and Canada geese. Alfalfa is used in the crop rotation to provide green browse and improve tilth and nutrients in the soil while ensuring the economic viability of the farming program for a cooperative farmer. Crops are also grown to maintain the land in a non-successional state to prevent salt cedar growth.

On Imperial NWR, 85-acres are farmed by refuge employees, for the purpose of feeding migrating and wintering waterfowl. The Refuge plants mixed-grasses and fields are rotated between agriculture and moist soil units. Moist soil units are managed for endangered marsh birds. No genetically modified crops are used on the refuge.

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 Bill_Seese@fws.gov, or mailed to Deputy Complex Manager, Southwest Arizona Refuge Complex, 9300 E. 28th Street, Yuma, Arizona 85365

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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