



News Release

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For Release: July 1, 2010

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Comments Solicited on Refuge Farm Program

Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in north-central 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.

There are 760 acres of cropland on the Refuge, which are farmed primarily by refuge personnel and cooperative agreement. The number of acres farmed in any given year is dependent on water availability. In years when water is limited, the Refuge modifies or suspends cooperative farming agreements. Crops include corn, spring wheat, barley, millet, winter wheat, winter rye, winter peas, spring peas, and alfalfa/grass mixes. No genetically modified crops are grown on the Refuge. Agricultural practices on the refuge provide food for migrating mallard, pintails, Canada geese, snow geese and sandhill cranes.

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 Rob_Larranaga@fws.gov; or mailed to Refuge Manager, Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge, Route 1, Box 399, Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701

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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