

detailed burn criteria in an effort to better understand the impacts of prescribed burning and to better implement its use in meeting management objectives.

Prescribed Grazing: Future use of prescribed grazing on the Refuges will be largely dictated by the results of research currently being conducted. In the future, if and when grazing is used, prescriptions will delineate the location of the site to be grazed and specific objectives and purposes of the tool such as to control weeds, increase new growth, and provide a competitive advantage to certain vegetation. This site-by-site evaluation and planning will allow for maximum control and flexibility of this tool as well as ensuring that only delineated sites are affected by the tool and that all factors and interests are considered.

Farming: Under this Alternative, migrating birds would be provided with the same amount of small grain food from crops currently provided. The existing mixed organic/non-organic farming program operated by Refuge staff would be converted to a cooperative farming program. Farming would continue but Refuge staff would only be responsible for irrigation of the crops. The cooperating farmer would continue the crop rotation of two years of small grains followed by two years of alfalfa and then one year fallow. The cooperating farmer would be allowed to keep all or a portion of the alfalfa crop based on yields of the small grain crops.

Refuge staff would also augment the farming program with a moist soil plant management program to diversify the types of feed available to the birds. The farming and moist soil plant programs would be monitored and managed through the adaptive management concept. Research would be encouraged to help identify the amount and kinds of high energy food sources the Refuge could and should be providing for migrating and wintering avian species.

Habitat Protection: Under the proposed Alternative, current support for the Service's Partners for Wildlife program would continue in order to ensure the program's growth and success. The Refuge would also continue to be an active partner in Colorado Wetlands Initiative Legacy project led by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Public Use: Under this Alternative, educating the public as to the nature and value of wetlands will focus on contrasting the intensely managed wetlands of Monte Vista NWR with the more natural aspects on the Alamosa NWR wetlands. To assure compliance with public use minimum standards,

money will be targeted for projects through RONS and MMS. Currently, funding proposals are developed for projects that will improve the quality of visitor experiences.

Hunting: Current waterfowl and small game hunting would continue to be supported and encouraged. To the extent feasible, the hunting experience would be further tailored to meet the desires of hunters using the Refuges based on periodic questioning of waterfowl hunters and other public input.

Fishing: Same as that described under the No Action Alternative.

Wildlife Observation: Support for the Crane Festival would continue as described under the No Action Alternative. Under this Alternative, on the Monte Vista NWR, public and scientific input would be sought regarding the seasonal expansion of the auto tour route, development of wildlife observation sites at Parker Pond, and development of wildlife observation decks along County Road 3E. Opinion and information would also be sought regarding the development of an observation deck adjacent to the Refuge Headquarters at the Alamosa NWR and near the proposed visitor center and education facility at the Monte Vista NWR.

Wildlife Photography: Same as that described under the No Action Alternative.

Interpretation: A multi-purpose education and visitor center facility on the Monte Vista NWR is the highest educational priority for the Complex. Also under this Alternative, the Refuge staff would implement an interpretation program centered around the cultural resources found on the Complex and around the Valley. Interpretation of past human use would focus on the theme that humans have always, and still depend upon natural resources for survival.

Environmental Education: Environmental education goals and programs would be the same as those under No Action.

Universal Access and Design: Efforts in this area would be the same as that described under the No Action Alternative with a few additional efforts. Developments would include new rest room facilities and wildlife observation blinds and/or platforms. Universally accessible hunting blinds would be built on both Refuges. All of these projects will follow the Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines.

Cultural Resources: Archaeological work on the Complex will be expanded to include work needed to determine

the eligibility of four documented sites for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Management under this Alternative would also include a sample archaeological inventory of Refuge lands over a 15-year period.

Elk Management: Under this Alternative, the resident elk would be managed to discourage their use of Monte Vista NWR in large numbers with the intent to prevent habitat degradation.

Dated: November 25, 2002.

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Acting Regional Director, Region 6, Denver, Colorado.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Double-Crested Cormorants; Extension of Comment Period

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability for public comment; extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is extending the comment period on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that is available for public review. The DEIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts of alternative strategies to reduce damages associated with double-crested cormorants in the continental United States. The analysis provided in the DEIS is intended to accomplish the following: inform the public of the proposed action and alternatives; address public comment received during the scoping period; and disclose the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the proposed actions and each of the alternatives. The Service invites the public to comment on the DEIS.

DATES: Written comments on the DEIS must be received on or before May 16, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Mail requests for copies of the DEIS to Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, MBSP-4107, Arlington, Virginia 22203. You can also download copies of the DEIS from the Division of Migratory Bird Management Web site at <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/cormorant/deis/deis.html>. Send comments on the DEIS to the above address. Alternatively, you may submit comments electronically to the