

YVAS Members and other interested persons,

You are encouraged to look into the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Charles M. Russell Wetland Management District and Associated Refuges Planning Process at www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/refuges/cmrvmd.php

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) has submitted comments as noted below.

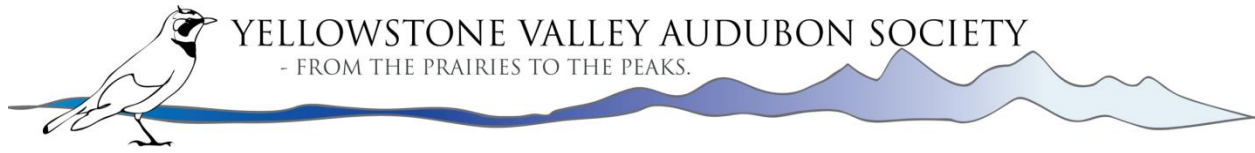
Please consider submitting your own individual comment and suggestions by Email to CMR@fws.gov , and plan to attend one or more of the Public Scoping Meetings:

Public meeting

Date and Time	Site	Address
February 28, 2017, 5:00 to 7:00 pm	Petroleum Country Courthouse	302 East Main Street, Winnett, MT 59087
March 1, 2017, 5:00 to 7:00 pm	Montana State University Extension Office, Conference Room	204 8th Avenue East, Roundup, MT 59072
March 2, 2017, 5:00 to 7:00 pm	Laurel Public Library	720 West 3rd Street, Laurel, MT 59044

For general information about the Charles M. Russell Wetland Management District and associated refuges visit [www.fws.gov/refuge/Charles M Russell WMD/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Charles_M_Russell_WMD/)

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PO Box 1075, Billings MT 59103 [www.yvaudubon.org](http://www.yvaudubon.org)

To: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Charles M. Russell Wetland Management District

Thank you for considering the following comments from Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) regarding US Fish and Wildlife Service, Charles M. Russell Wetland Management District and Associated Refuges (District) Planning Process.

**Comment Form item 1:** Qualities of the District that YVAS values most:

The value of the District to wildlife, watersheds and regional and global ecological integrity is extremely important and priceless. YVAS members, members of many other organizations, and the general public greatly value the hiking, birding, solitude, hunting, and research opportunities provided in the District. YVAS and other birders particularly value quality waterfowl, shore bird and upland bird observation areas. Also the limited motorized vehicle, and limited foot traffic policies are appreciated. It is of great importance that the sites are managed so that the majority of the seasons there is adequate water in the refuges and production areas. Of great value also is the fact that there is a variety of vegetation and habitats for wildlife. The areas are exceptionally valuable as great resting area for migrating birds and also as bird production areas (if human traffic is limited).

Such activities and opportunities on public lands are invaluable and add greatly to the quality of life of the many individuals visiting the sites in the District.

**Comment Form item 2:** Issues that YVAS would like to see addressed or included in the Plan:

Durable access roads with right of way for District wildlife viewing (e.g. Grass Lake NWR from the north and south. Also a two track road connecting the three lakes in the refuge).

Good parking at District wildlife viewing areas with managed plant cover to minimize fire danger and for ease of access by elderly or disabled wildlife observers.

Compilation of historical and forthcoming wildlife data (agency and public) for the refuges in the District in one easily accessible repository.

Long term data acquisition and publication of District plants, animals and water resources.

Enhanced focus on and protection of nongame species in the District (e.g. mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians).

Motor vehicle use for management purposes only. Possible vehicle use within defined limits by elderly or disabled wildlife observers and for data survey,.

Limit access to these areas during wildlife breeding season as determined necessary by biologist.

Enhanced cooperative efforts between the USFWS and the public to facilitate stewardship and improvements with in the District.

Grass Lake as a possible pilot project with respect to the above considerations - best practices results to be applied elsewhere in District (e.g. Lake Mason, War Horse NWR).

**Comment Form item 3:** Additional comments:

We look forward to mutually beneficial project work with the USFWS and other groups and individuals.

**Comment Form item 4:** Residence:

YVAS members reside in Billings and other towns and addresses in southcentral and southeastern Montana.

**Comment Form item 5:** Name: Stephen M. Regele, President, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society representing the YVAS Board Directors and members. PO Box 1075, Billings MT 59103, [www.yvaudubon.org](http://www.yvaudubon.org) 1-406-962-3115. YVAS is a 501 (c)3 organization and is registered as a "Public Benefit Corporation with members" with the Montana Secretary of State.