

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update

Volume Six, Summer 2004

Letter from the Refuge Manager

Thanks to all of you who submitted comments on the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge. We were pleased that our March 2004 public meetings were so well attended and lively. We left the meetings with a better understanding of your concerns and I enjoyed the opportunity to respond to many of your questions.

We were also impressed by the number of comments we received. By the close of the comment period in April 2004, we had received 5,307 comments from individuals, organizations and agencies.

The Service has been committed to seeking public input throughout the planning process and we appreciate your willingness to provide us with feedback and to openly express your concerns. We received a wide variety of comments and are currently in the process of analyzing and responding to them. Our responses and the changes to the EIS and CCP that resulted from the comments will be documented in the final EIS.

*“Place public use facilities so that they have minimal environmental impacts”
— Boulder Resident*

The Service intends to release the final EIS in the late fall and the final CCP will likely be published in early 2005. While the final EIS will provide an in-depth analysis of the environmental consequences of all four management alternatives, the final CCP will be the working document that will guide future refuge management and will feature only the preferred alternative.

This planning update provides a summary of the comments we received, explains how we will respond to the comments, and outlines the remainder of the CCP/EIS planning process.

Thank you again for your participation.



Dean Rundle
Rocky Flats NWR Manager



“Habitat restoration should be a component of all the alternatives”

—Westminster Resident

Above: Concerns about the restoration of Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat were raised in several comments.

Public Comment Overview

Public Comment Overview

The draft CCP/EIS was released to the public for a 45-day comment period on February 19, 2004. In March 2004, the Service held four public meetings in Westminster, Boulder, Arvada and Broomfield to allow public input on the proposed action and alternatives. The meetings were conducted as hearings in which individuals were given 3 minutes to comment and their comments were recorded by a court reporter. Refuge manager, Dean Rundle, attended all meetings and conducted a question and answer session following the comments. The meetings were well attended with nearly 260 people participating.

In addition to the comments submitted at the public meetings, the Service received many comments via mail, fax and email. The Service has organized all the comments in three groups - individual responses, agency and organization letters, and petition and form letters. Below is a tally of the number of entities we heard from and the number of comments they each submitted:

▪ Individual Responses <i>(1365 comments total)</i>	251
▪ Agency/Organization Letters <i>(482 comments total)</i>	34
▪ Petition/Form Letters <i>(3460 comments total)</i>	933

Comment Responses

Comments and the Service's responses will be documented in an appendix of the final EIS. The appendix will include copies of the letters submitted by government agencies, organizations and businesses with the Service's response printed beside each letter. Additionally, substantive comments made by the public will be summarized and addressed with specific responses. While individual comments and petitions/form letters will not be reprinted in the EIS, the names of all individuals who commented and/or signed a petition or form letter will be listed along with a description of the issues raised within their comment. All letters and hearing testimony will ultimately be made available for public inspection at Front Range Community College's College Hill Library, and on weekends at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR Visitor Center.

Commonly Raised Issues

Public Access

- Continues to be the number one issue. Many do not support public access. Others would like to see more opportunities and sooner.

Hunting

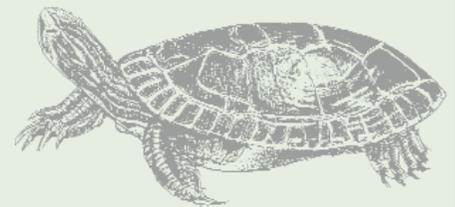
- While many support a hunting program, others are concerned about costs, need for a program, and safety issues.

Restoration Tools

- Agreement about the need to control weeds, but different opinions on the use of fire, grazing, biocontrols, or mowing were voiced.

Contamination / Safety

- Concern about the adequacy of the site cleanup and the demarcation of the DOE retained land boundary.



Below and Right: Many comments supported measures for protecting wildlife habitat.



Summary of Comments

Significant Issues

The three groups of comments - individual responses, organization/agency letters and petitions/form letters - each raised a distinct set of issues. The significant issues raised by each group fell into the categories of *resource management*, *public use* and *contamination*. A summary of the types of comments submitted by each group is provided below.

While issues about site cleanup were raised frequently, the issue is outside the scope of the planning effort. As the Service has routinely communicated to the public, Rocky Flats will not be transferred to the Service until the EPA certifies that cleanup and closure are complete. Contamination and remediation issues are being addressed by DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. However, due to the public's concern about this issue, the final EIS will include an expanded discussion of issues related to cleanup.

Individual Responses

Resource Management:

- ♦ Support for or opposition to prescribed fire and grazing.
- ♦ Range of opinions about how prairie dogs should be managed.

Public Use:

- ♦ Concern about the extent and location of suggested trails, and the types of permitted trail uses.
- ♦ Support for or opposition to public use.

Contamination Concerns:

- ♦ Concern about the appropriateness of public access.
- ♦ Desire for informational signage that convey the history and relative risks of the site.
- ♦ Concern about effects of contamination on wildlife and prairie dogs burrowing in contaminated soil.



Above: Rocky Flats NWR manager, Dean Rundle, conducted a question and answer session at all the public meetings.

Agency / Organization Comments

Resource Management:

- ♦ Support for weed management efforts and comments or concerns about particular management tools.
- ♦ Concern about restoration of Preble's habitat and potential impacts from public use or mining.
- ♦ Support for the stabilization and interpretation of Lindsay Ranch Barn and concern that the other Lindsay Ranch structures would not be stabilized.
- ♦ Interest about the consideration and analysis of a transportation corridor along the eastern edge of the Refuge, and the potential impacts that any transportation improvement could have on wildlife corridors and other Refuge resources.

Public Use:

- ♦ Concern about the types of public use facilities, trail configuration, and how use would be administered.
- ♦ Support for or opposition to public access.
- ♦ Support for or opposition to the hunting program.

Contamination/DOE-retained Area:

- ♦ Range of concerns about cleanup and contamination.
- ♦ Concern about the demarcation of the DOE retained land boundary.

Petitions / Form Letters

Four different sets of petitions/form letters were received.

Public Use:

- ♦ Support for public use as proposed in Alternative B.
- ♦ Objections to public access and recreation.
- ♦ Objections to hunting.

Contamination Concerns:

- ♦ Concern about effects of contamination on wildlife and potential visitors.



Contact Information

For more information on the CCP/EIS project please contact:

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Website <http://rockyflats.fws.gov>

Information regarding cleanup at Rocky Flats can be found at <http://www.rfets.gov>

Next Steps

The Service intends to release the final EIS in late fall of 2004. A notice of the availability of the Final EIS and CCP will be published in the Federal Register. In accordance with NEPA, the Service's Regional Director will issue a Record of Decision on the CCP no sooner than 30 days after the notice in the Federal Register has been published. The Record of Decision will disclose the alternative selected by the Regional Director and the reasons for its selection. The Service anticipates that the final CCP will be released in early 2005. The final CCP or a summary of the document will be made available to interested parties.

Ongoing Public Involvement

The Service will continue to keep the public informed throughout the remainder of the planning process. Another Planning Update is scheduled to be released this fall or winter and will provide additional information on the final CCP and EIS. Important announcements and any changes to the schedule will be posted on the project website - <http://rockyflats.fws.gov>

"Hunting does not seem to be compatible with the term 'Refuge' "
—Arvada Resident

"Rocky Flats' entire history should be included on the interpretive signs"
— Broomfield Resident

"A hunting program provides a valuable recreation opportunity for disabled folks"
—Arvada Resident

Below: Many comments supported the proposed pedestrian, biking and equestrian use of trails built along the the existing road corridors.



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