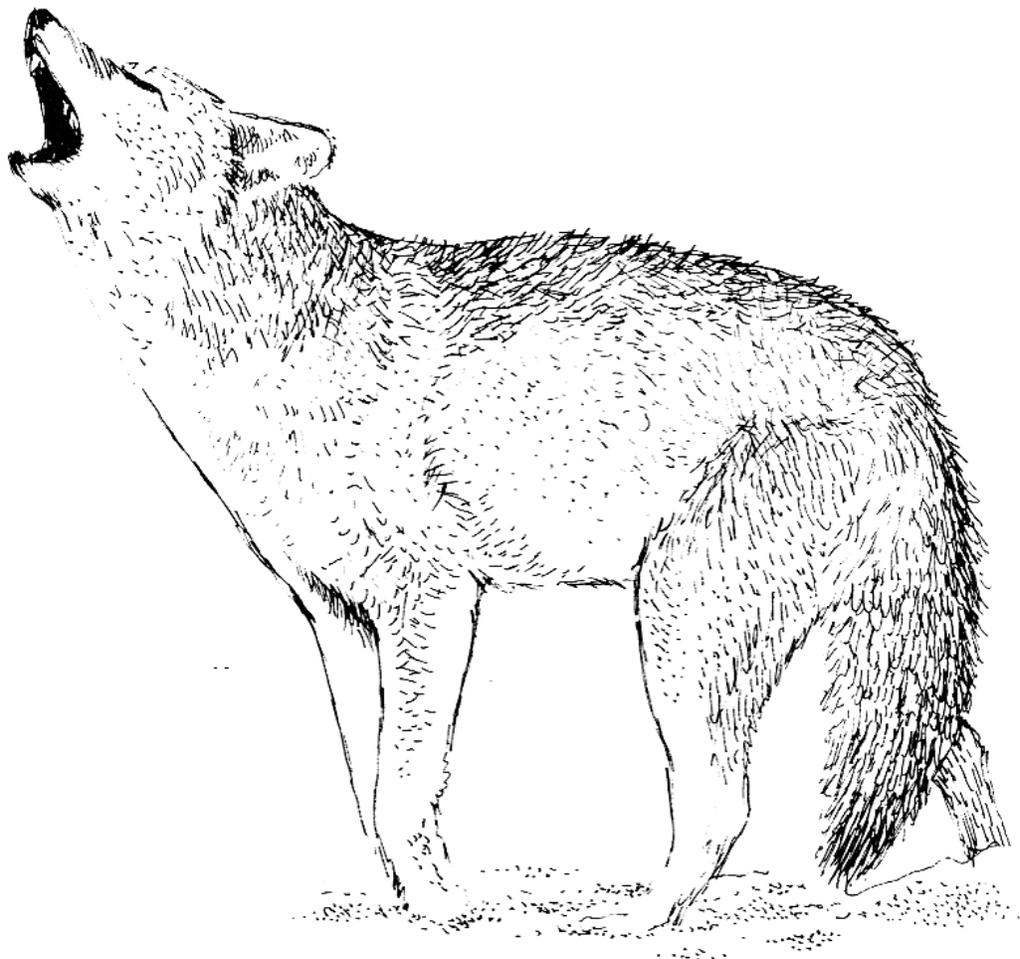


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Vision & Issues Workshop Summary Report





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An Open Space Link

For the future visitor to Rocky Flats, the Refuge location is remarkable because it offers striking views of both the Rocky Mountains and the Denver skyline. With nearly 50,000 acres of publicly owned land surrounding Rocky Flats, the Refuge is also a key component of the Metropolitan region's open space network. The substantial mass of contiguous land encompassing the Refuge will provide wildlife with a habitat corridor that extends from the Continental Divide to the prairie.



Lindsay Ranch barn and homestead in Rock Creek

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Rocky Flats History

From 1952 to 1992, the Department of Energy used the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (Site) to house facilities for the production of nuclear weapons components. Manufacturing at the Rocky Flats Site was conducted in the 400-acre Industrial Area. An approximate 6,000-acre expanse of grasslands called the Buffer Zone surrounds the Industrial Area. The Buffer Zone has been left largely undisturbed

over the years resulting in the preservation of native flora and fauna throughout the site.

With the end of the Cold War in 1992, weapons production at Rocky Flats was terminated and the Department of Energy (DOE) began focusing on the cleanup and closure of the Site. Sometime after 2006, it is anticipated that all nuclear materials and wastes will have been removed from the Site, all buildings demolished, and any remaining contamination will have been remediated and will comply with the appropriate

health and safety standards. The Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act of 2001 stipulates that upon completion of the cleanup and closure tasks, most of the Rocky Flats site will be transferred from the DOE to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) and will become a national wildlife refuge. DOE will retain primary jurisdiction over portions of the site and will continue to have stewardship responsibility of all land in their control.

There is more to the history of Rocky Flats than the Cold War.

For example, the settlement of the western frontier represents an early chapter in the history of Rocky Flats. The area known as Lindsay Ranch in the Rock Creek drainage of the Rocky Flats site was homesteaded by the Scott family in 1868. Within 50 years of its original settlement, the Scott property transferred hands and, through consolidation, was enlarged to over 640 acres. In 1941, G. Lindsay purchased the ranch and surrounding lands. Ten years later, in 1951, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission purchased

Rocky Flats NWR'S Legislated Purposes:

1. Restoring and preserving native ecosystems
2. Providing habitat for, and population management of, native plants and migratory and resident wildlife
3. Conserving threatened and endangered species [including species that are candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.)]
4. Providing for opportunities for compatible scientific research.

Congressional Findings for Rocky Flats NWR:

1. The majority of the Rocky Flats site has generally remained undisturbed since its acquisition in 1951 by the Federal government.
2. Increasing growth and development within Denver's metropolitan region reduces the amount of open space and, thereby, diminishing Front Range mountain vistas for many metropolitan Denver communities.
3. The Rocky Flats site provides habitat for many wildlife species, including a number of threatened and endangered species, and is marked by the presence of rare xeric tallgrass prairie plant communities.

Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) & Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

A Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is a 15-year plan that will provide long-range guidance and management direction for the Rocky Flats NWR.

In summary, the Rocky Flats' CCP will:

- Outline a vision for the Refuge
- Guide management decisions
- Outline goals, objectives and strategies to achieve the Refuge's visions and purpose
- Provide other agencies and the public with an understanding of the management strategies to be implemented
- Describe the desired future condition of the Refuge

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a complementary document to the CCP.

Required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to examine a range of federal actions and their potential effects on the environment, the Rocky Flats EIS requires a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the Refuge's resources. *Qualities* build upon the Congressional findings. They are the characteristics and features of Rocky Flats that make it special and worthy of refuge status. *Issues* are defined as management concerns that need to be addressed during the refuge planning process. Issue identification requires consideration of management challenges both within the Refuge and in relation to adjacent communities and the public.



Prairie Dog

© Michael Mauro

A Unique Refuge [QUALITIES]

The following were identified as important qualities of the Rocky Flats NWR:

Natural Resource Qualities

- Healthy upland shrubland communities in Rock Creek and Woman Creek drainages
- Preble's meadow jumping mouse (a federally listed threatened species) habitat
- Intact native plant communities
- Soils that support a xeric tallgrass prairie in an area where rainfall is usually not sufficient to sustain such plant communities
- Mesic mixed grassland
- Year-round deer habitat

Site Qualities

- An adjacent wildlife habitat corridor extending from the prairie to the Continental Divide
- Nearly 50,000 acres of open space surrounding the site
- Mountain and prairie ecotone
- Proximity to many people in surrounding urban areas
- Unobstructed views of both downtown Denver and the Rocky Mountains
- Proximity to two major universities that can use the site for scientific research
- Preserved habitat and scenic open space on the edge of Denver's rapidly expanded Metropolitan region

Management Qualities

- A high level of public interest in the Rocky Flats project
- Many potential partners
- A collection of resource and planning experts at the nearby Arsenal NWR that can be called upon to lend assistance

Public Use Qualities

- Striking views of the surrounding landscape that are likely to attract visitors
- Wildlife diversity for environmental education and interpretation programs
- A scenic open space enjoyed by visitors and passerby's

Cultural Resource Qualities

- Lindsay Ranch historic structures
- Cold War history
- An Apple orchard and old stagecoach site



Burning helps maintain the ecological health of the prairie

© Fred Krampetz, USFWS

Looking 20 years into the future....

The DRAFT Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Vision

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge is a healthy expanse of grasslands, shrublands and wetlands including rare xeric tallgrass prairie where natural processes support a broad range of native wildlife. The Refuge provides striking mountain and prairie views and opportunities to appreciate refuge resources in an urbanized area through compatible wildlife-dependent recreation and education. Working with others, the Refuge conserves the unique biotic communities and sustains wildlife populations at the interface of mountains and prairies on Colorado's Front Range.

DRAFT Refuge Goals (cont.)

3

Safety Goal:

The Service will conduct Refuge operations and manage public access safely and in accordance with the final Rocky Flats' cleanup decision documents.

In response to concerns about the cleanup and closure of the Refuge, the safety goal demonstrates the Service's commitment to providing a safe visitor experience. The Service will comply with the Department of Energy's cleanup decision documents and abide by all institutional controls.

4

Effective and Open Communication:

The Service will proactively communicate with the public and stakeholders about Refuge programs and management decisions as well as the mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Public outreach will be an important component of Refuge management. The Service intends to keep the public informed about Refuge news and plans to educate Refuge visitors and surrounding communities about the Service and the NWR System.



Refuge wildflowers

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The Next Steps

Engaging the public...

With a draft vision statement and a preliminary list of goals in hand, the CCP/EIS core production team will turn to the public for their input. The core team will conduct public scoping meetings in which they will educate the public about the CCP/EIS process and the Refuge's resources. The meetings will also provide a forum for the public to provide feedback on the draft vision and goals.

The Service is interested in learning more about the public's concerns and will encourage meeting participants and all other interested parties to expand on the issues and qualities lists. The public will be asked to share their ideas about what makes the Refuge an asset for their community and how they think it should be managed in the future to serve both wildlife and people.

Planning for the future...

The next phase of the CCP/EIS process will focus on the development of alternative management strategies. After analyzing comments gathered during the public scoping phase, members of the Service staff, partnering agencies and the core production team will reconvene in order to develop several planning alternatives for the Refuge. Alternatives will address conservation techniques and Refuge management actions as well as compatible wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities.

Once draft management alternatives have been produced, the core team will again turn to the public for their input. During an Alternatives

Workshop, the Service will present the alternatives to the public and will solicit their feedback and ideas for the further refinement of the various strategies.

As the planning process unfolds over the next three years, the Service will return to the draft vision statement outlined in this document. While the statement today seems like a fair expression of what the Refuge will be like in the future and what it will offer visitors and wildlife, the vision of Rocky Flats NWR may continue to evolve over time. Public comments, innovative ideas and new partnerships will continue to shape the refinement of the vision statement and, in turn, guide the development of the CCP.

Planning Stage	Schedule Dates
1 Preplanning Public Involvement Framework • Public Agency Coordination Plan • Project Workplan • Draft Vision & Goals	May 2002 ■ July 2002
2 Public Involvement & Scoping Draft Issues & Concerns • Inventory & Analysis Mapping • Public Workshops (Scoping) • Vision, Goals, & Issues Refinement •	August 2002 ■ October 2002
3 Develop & Analyze Alternatives Alternative Plans • Environmental Consequences Assessment • Public Workshops (Alternative Plans)	November 2002 ■ May 2003
4 Prepare Draft CCP & EIS (for public review) Objectives • Programming • Compatibility Determinations • Alternative Plan Refinement • Environmental Consequences Assessment • Public Workshops (Review Draft CCP/EIS)	June 2003 ■ June 2004
5 Final CCP & EIS & Record of Decision Public Comment Response • Proposed Action • Public Workshops (Public Review Final CCP/EIS) • Record of Decision • Public Celebration of Project	July 2004 ■ December 2004

The three-year CCP/EIS schedule

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**For Refuge Information
1 800/344 WILD**

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