

Comment #



To: <rockymountainarsenal@fws.gov>
cc:
Subject: Draft plan for RFNWR

Dear Mr. Rundle,

5-1

Having reviewed the draft RFNWR signage for history and language, I must agree that the signs should be short. I feel that the safety signs need to be put in more places other than only at the entrances and trail heads.

5-2

The signs should read, "Plutonium has a half life of 24,000 years and is easily inhaled when air born. The clean up was done only to a depth of three inches and high winds could carry plutonium and other hazardous wastes for many miles."

5-3

The history should include such things as the fact that a safe level of contamination was decided based on averaging of the entire site. Also included in the history should be the FBI raid, and the recently won law suit by near-by residents.

5-4

5-5

Frankly, I find the entire signage suffering from delusions of adequacy. You would be better off, and more honest using the language proposed by Rep. Wes. Mc Kinley.

As for the EPA and CDPHE signing off on the clean- up, I quote Upton Sinclair. "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."

Sincerely,

Response to Individual Letter # 5

5-1. Thank you for your comments.

5-2. The Service acknowledges that all of the site history and safety concerns cannot be addressed on one sign. See response to comment 1-2.

5-3. See response to comment 5-2. (Note that according to the Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study (RI/FS) cleanup was conducted to a depth of 3 feet for surficial soils.)

5-4. See response to comment 1-2.

5-5. Thank you for your comments.

Comment #

Response to Individual Letter # 7

Re: Comments on the draft of safety signs for the RFNWR

7-1

Even though the cleanup is considered complete, approved by state and federal agencies and therefore supposedly safe for public use, I feel the signs should answer the stated question, "Is the Refuge Safe?" with a qualified yes, or with the answer yes and no. I have been involved in the closure process long enough to realize that a number of other contaminated sites around the country were considered "clean" upon closure, but "discoveries" were made in future years that proved these sites were less than clean, and further cleanup was required. Given the accidents and questionable disposal practices known to be part of RF's history, it seems imperative (and legally prudent) to state that, "At present, we feel the site is essentially safe for recreational use, but unknown factors related to past use could prove otherwise in the future, and should be considered by the public when using this Refuge."

7-2

7-3

I am glad the RF site will be undeveloped, which makes possible future discoveries less likely to cause harm. Other sites where homes and other development occurred led to costly and damaging further cleanup and much more potential harm than a wildlife refuge. Thanks for all the work USFWS employees have done to get to this point. I am looking forward to the formal establishment of the Refuge in 2007.

7-1. Thank you for your comments.

7-2. The Service acknowledges that while additional discoveries of contamination are not likely, the possibility is addressed in CERCLA law, and is also addressed in the Rocky Flats National Refuge Act of 2001 (P. L.107 -107, Section 3180).

7-3. Thank you for your comments.

Com-
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To "dean Rundle" <Dean_Rundle@fws.gov>
cc
Subject FW: Rocky Flats remediation

Response to Individual Letter # 12

Dean - These are my comments about the insufficient signage fws is proposing for Rocky Flats...

12-1

Five independent scientists, employed by different entities, - including DOE - were asked to evaluate and validate the cleanup methods and the expected results. They were all very critical of the consequences of this inadequate remediation. The technical experts were of widely differing backgrounds and represented different organizations. One was the engineering firm which originally designed the retaining ponds. All had experience in working with radioactively contaminated sites. I am attaching summaries of their reports.

As you know before you can evaluate the validity of a process, a standard means of comparison is required. The standard in this case is MARSSIM, the Multi Agency Radiation Survey and Site Investigation Manual, a consensus document (EPA, NRC and DOE) on planning, conducting and evaluating radioactive site cleanup processes. DOE did not follow the standard at Rocky Flats. Several of the independent evaluators pointed out that this makes evaluation impossible.

DOE violated several previous agreement. To mention a few:

12-2

The Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act of 2001 mandates an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOE and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The MOU specifies a division of responsibilities between the agencies, the monitoring of contaminants and an established funding for this. None of this was complied with.

The Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement (RFCA) between the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE), EPA and DOE specifies a 50 pCi/g of radioactive soil cleanup to 3' below the surface. This volumetric standard has not been met. An over flight soil survey of the surface only measured surface radioactivity down to 3''.

Several RCRA and CERCLA standards have been violated especially those pertaining to the covers on the huge landfills. The cover on the 20 Acre, 40' deep unlined toxic Original Landfill presently has 8 seeps. Groundwater and surface water contamination by carcinogenic compounds in the dump present a public health problem. The 2' of soil on the landfill allows water penetration and burrowing animals bring up contaminants. Plutonium is a long lived carcinogen. Inhalation of minute particles cause them to lodge in the lungs. And Rocky Flats is one of the windiest areas in Colorado.

12-3

If this was an industrial Superfund site this kind of violation would not be tolerated

On April 30, 2006, 60 Minutes had a program on the inadequate work at DOE's Hanford site in Washington. DOE stated that Rocky Flats is the paradigm for nuclear site remediation. This should be a concern for all of us.

12-1. The Service did not have regulatory authority over the cleanup process, and likewise does not have regulatory authority for the certification of the cleanup. The Service supports the conclusion reached by the EPA and CDPHE after extensive evaluation that refuge land will be safe for all the proposed Refuge management activities.

12-2. The requirement for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOE and the Department of the Interior (DOI) was eliminated by the language found in the Rocky Flats Minerals Acquisition Act, Section 3116 subsection (b) (7) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006. However, the Service and DOE Legacy Management (LM) are currently discussing the details of a revised MOU to address future management.

12-3. Thank you for your comments.

Comment #

Response to Boulder Area Trail Coalition
Letter # 6



EricVogelsberg@cs.co
m
05/23/2006 11:13 AM

To: rockymountainarsenal@fws.gov
cc:
Subject: Rocky Flats Step-Down Plan for Site History / Safety Signs

6-1 I have reviewed the proposed step-down plan and safety signs. As a resident of the City of Boulder and a future visitor to the Wildlife Refuge, I believe the plan and signs are well thought out and appropriate.

6-2 I have closely followed the Rocky Flats closure effort and participated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service public planning process. I have friends who worked at the Rocky Flats facility for many years and who help to cleanup and reclaim the site. I am confident in the completeness of the cleanup process and in the safety of the property for public recreation.

6-3 It seems that any action proposed or taken at the Rocky Flats site elicits hysterical responses from the people who have made careers criticizing the process. Today I noted a letter in our local paper from the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center ("Rocky Flats, Doublespeak obscures the past", Daily Camera, May 23, 2006). Based on my observations of the cleanup activities and of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service planning process, I feel the letter negatively misrepresents the safety of the refuge, the public process, and the diligence of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

6-4 It is regrettable that public discussion is dominated so often by individuals with extreme views and loud voices. I hope the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will also take note of those of us who are supportive of the process and plans set forth for the Rocky Mountain Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

Eric Vogelsberg
President
Boulder Area Trails Coalition

6-1. Thank you for your comments.

6-2. Thank you for your comments and participation. Ensuring the safety of visitors, neighbors and staff is one of the main goals of the Service in refuge management.

6-3. Thank you for your comments.

6-4. Thank you for your comments.

Comment #



CITY OF ARVADA

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FACSIMILE: 720-898-7515 ▲ TDD: 720-898-7869
PHONE: 720-898-7500

June 15, 2006

Dean Rundle, Refuge Manager
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Rocky Mountain Arsenal - Building 111
Commerce City, CO 80022-1748

RE: Draft Rocky Flats Step-Down Plan for Site History / Safety Signs

Dear Dean:

8-1 On behalf of the Arvada City Council, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Draft Step-Down Plan for signage at Refuge access points. It is very much appreciated that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continues to allow the public ample opportunity to comment and become engaged in matters concerning the development and management of the Rocky Flats Wildlife Refuge. Although it is unusual for the Service to draft language for one sign several years prior to any public access, in this case we support and appreciate that it is being done.

8-2 It is important that signage posted at public access points both address the current use of the Refuge as well as past use. The information on the sign must be relevant and objective and include topics such as history and purpose of former uses, past contamination, cleanup, current monitoring, and current risk levels to visitors of the Refuge. However, we do recognize that including too much information on an access sign creates the risk of no one reading the sign. Therefore, in addition to briefly addressing the issues listed above, it must be made clear to the Refuge visitor that additional information is available both within the Refuge through kiosks and interpretive signage and numerous other means such as the websites of the USFWS, DOE, EPA, and CDPHE. We strongly urge the Service to commit to providing additional detailed information within the Refuge and hope that DOE will work with the Service on this issue.

8-3 In addition to the topics listed above, it is also important that signage address the interior, DOE controlled area. Visitors should know that the area is not part of the Refuge and public access is not allowed in order to maintain the integrity of the cleanup and the ability to monitor the area. Based on all accepted and applicable standards, the DOE controlled area and the Refuge are safe and protective for visitors, however, it is important that visitors understand the history of the site and that restrictions designed to protect remedies and monitor the environment must be respected.

8-4 We look forward to continuing to work with you and your team throughout this process. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the issues, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Ken Fellman.

Ken Fellman
Mayor

Handwritten signature of Lorraine Anderson.

Lorraine Anderson
Councilmember

cc: City Council
David Abelson, Rocky Flats Stewardship Council
Scott Surovchak, Department of Energy

P.O. BOX 8101 ▲ 8101 RALSTON ROAD ▲ ARVADA, COLORADO ▲ 80001-8101

Response to City of Arvada Letter # 8

8-1. Thank you for your comments.

8-2. The Service agrees with the importance of interpretative signage. See response to comment 1-2.

8-3. The Service revised the sign wording to reflect that public access will not be allowed on land retained by DOE. In addition, DOE has included the Service's recommendation of a barbed wire fence and signs around the DOE retained lands in their (CAD/ROD) for remedy.

8-4. Thank you for your comments. The Service looks forward to working with the City of Arvada.

Com-
ment #



WESTMINSTER

June 12, 2006

Mr. Dean Rundle
Refuge Manager
Rocky Mountain Arsenal
National Wildlife Refuge
Building 111
Commerce City, Colorado 80022-1748

Re: DRAFT ROCKY FLATS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
STEP-DOWN PLAN FOR SITE HISTORY/SAFETY SIGNS, dated
May 2006

Dear Dean:

The City of Westminster appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the draft signage language as presented in the draft step-down plan. The City supports the Fish & Wildlife Service having the discretion to word the signs as they feel necessary.

We have attached a red-line version of your original language and have made minor editorial comments.

Sincerely yours,

Al Nelson
Rocky Flats Coordinator

cc: Jo Ann Price, City Councillor, City of Westminster
Jim Arndt, P.E., Director Public Works and Utilities, City of Westminster
Ron Hellbusch, Special Projects Coordinator, City of Westminster
Jeanette Alberg, Area Representative, Senator Wayne Allard
David Hiller, State Issues Counsel, Senator Ken Salazar
Doug Young, District Policy Director, Congressman Mark Udall
Margie Klein District Director, Congressman Bob Beauprez
Lori Cox, City Councilor, City & County of Broomfield
Shirley Garcia, Environmental Coordinator, City & County of Broomfield
Frazer Lockhart, DOE-EMCBC
Scott Surovehak, LM Site Manager, Legacy Management
Rocky Flats Stewardship Council

Response to City of Westminster Letter # 9

9-1. Thank you for your comments.

The Service revised the sign wording to better clarify the context of the information.

City of Westminster
Department of
Public Works
and Utilities

4800 West 92nd Avenue
Westminster, Colorado
80031

303-438-2400
FAX 303-650-1643

9-1

Comment #

Response to City of Westminster Letter # 9

(continued)

9-2

~~“What Happened Here?”~~

The land you are about to enter, the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, is an historic Cold War site. Refuge lands ~~are~~ were once part of the former buffer zone of the old Rocky Flats Plant that operated from 1951 until 1989. For nearly four decades, thousands of women and men worked here, building nuclear components for the United States' deterrent weapons. ~~that held the former Soviet Union at bay.~~

Weapons production at the plant involved plutonium and other radioactive and hazardous materials. ~~The work was dangerous and secret.~~ Over the course of decades, there were spills, releases and accidents. Those spills, releases and accidents and some of the accepted waste handling practices of the ~~early decades~~ day resulted in releases of plutonium and other contaminants.

Beginning in 1995, many of the same Cold War veterans who had built America's deterrent arsenal conducted an unprecedented and enormously complex cleanup project to remove contaminated buildings and soil from the landscape. They accomplished that difficult job in 2005, leaving the land as an asset for future generations of Americans.

~~Is the Refuge Safe?~~

~~Yes.~~ An extensive evaluation of contamination at Rocky Flats was conducted by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The levels of contamination on refuge land were low and met conservative state and federal cleanup standards. Both EPA and CDPHE have determined that the land is safe for public recreation and refuge workers.

There are hazards involved in any form of wildland recreation. Hazards at Rocky Flats include inclement or extreme weather conditions, the potential for trips, slips and falls; poisonous snakes; and unreasonable or illegal acts by other persons.

The refuge is open daily during daylight hours. Unless otherwise posted, stay on trails. Please observe “Area Closed” and other regulatory signs. Pets are not allowed on the refuge.

Still have questions?

For more information about the history, contamination, cleanup, or site safety issues at Rocky Flats, please call EPA at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or CDPHE at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.” For information about the refuge contact (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

(Note: Appropriate phone numbers will be determined when signs are fabricated.)

9-2. The Service revised the sign wording to better clarify the context of the information.

Comment #



Post Office Box 471 • Boulder, Colorado 80306

Board of County Commissioners

13th & Pearl Streets • Boulder County Courthouse • Boulder, Colorado 80302 • (303) 441-3500

June 21, 2006


Dean Rundle
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
Building 111
Commerce City, CO 80022-1748

Dear Dean:

10-1

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife's "Step-Down Plan for Site History/Safety Signs," addressing signage at the Rocky Flats Refuge.

The Boulder County Commissioners concur with most of the recommendations for informative signage that has been proposed by the Rocky Flats Stewardship Council (RFSC).

Our proposed language differs from the RFSC proposed language in a few places, indicated in our draft, as follows:

10-2

1. In the second paragraph, we suggest elimination of the clause in the second sentence, which reads "...in accordance with accepted waste handling practices of the time." We're not sure that burying wastes in oil drums on the 903 pad reflected any specifically approved waste handling practices, and we doubt that the practice of dumping of contaminated materials into the Old Landfill reflected accepted practices.
2. In the first paragraph under the section "Is the Refuge Safe for Public Recreation?" we suggest several changes:

10-3

- a. Delete language referring to levels of contamination on the Refuge being "low" and meeting "conservative" state and federal cleanup standards. These terms are subjective, and don't answer the visitor's question, "In comparison to what?"

10-4

- b. Likewise, delete the reference to "independent studies" determining safety of the Refuge, as that implies that every independent study determined that the Refuge is safe. At least one RFSC member's consultant questioned the adequacy of the Old Landfill berm construction, and there were other studies, including the RFSC's own independent study, that raised questions about sampling methodologies.

Tom Mayer
County Commissioner

Ben Pearlman
County Commissioner

Will Iacor
County Commissioner

Response to Boulder County Board of Commissioners Letter # 10

10-1. Thank you for your comments.

10-2. The Service revised the sign language to better clarify the context of the information.

10-3. The EPA and CDPHE have the lead regulatory authority on cleanup efforts at Rocky Flats. The Service added language to clarify the specific relative risk due to residual contamination as defined by EPA.

10-4. There is no language referring to safety determinations by independent studies in the current language for the sign.

Comment #

-2-

10-5 We believe that the major purpose of signage on the Refuge should be limited to clear, objective, and factual information to the site's visitors about basic site history, contamination issues, the cleanup process, and present cleanup and safety status. As signs are the first level of communication with visitors at the site, drafting the language for the signs provides an important opportunity to educate visitors and the community about the site and its stewardship. Language on the signs should thus be carefully crafted to be fact-based for the purpose of informing and educating visitors to the refuge.

10-6 It is important that the messages to the public neither downplay the fact that contaminated materials still exist at the site, nor exaggerate the danger to the public from these contaminants. Thus, we support language changes to the signage draft that was circulated and discussed at the June 5th RFSC meeting, in order to better strike this balance.

10-7 Our suggested language reflects the facts of the site's history, cleanup, and current status of safety for visitors. After each proposed change we have indicated our rationale for the suggested change.

Thank you for consideration of our suggested revisions to the proposed signage at the Refuge.

Sincerely,



Ben Pearlman, Chair
Board of Commissioners
Delegate to Rocky Flats Stewardship Council

cc: David Abelson and Members, Rocky Flats Stewardship Council

**Response to Boulder County Board of
Commissioners Letter # 10**

(continued)

10-5. The Service agrees that providing clear, objective, and factual information for visitors is essential. See response to comment 1-2.

10-6. The Service agrees that it is important to provide accurate information on safety and concerns regarding residual contamination. Residual contamination is below the cleanup levels that are specified in the Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement (RFCA) to protect public safety.

The Service acknowledges that all of the site history and safety concerns cannot be addressed on one sign. See response to comment 1-2.

10-7. Thank you for your comments.

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Response to Boulder County Board of Commissioners Letter # 10
(continued)

REVISED LANGUAGE PROPOSED BY BOULDER COUNTY

What Happened Here?

The land you are about to enter, Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, is an historic Cold War site. Refuge lands are part of the buffer zone of the old Rocky Flats Plant that operated from 1951 until 1989, when it was closed. For nearly four decades, thousands of women and men worked here, building nuclear components for the United States' ~~deterrent~~-weapons arsenal that held the former Soviet Union at bay. In 2001, Congress approved legislation establishing The Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, thus preserving the land and preventing development or other intensive uses.

10-8

Rationale for suggested changes, this paragraph: Clarify that Rocky Flats Plant was closed in 1989. Remove editorial language referring to former Soviet Union. Add sentence explaining transition from the weapons plant to a wildlife refuge.

10-9

Weapons production at the plant involved plutonium and other radioactive and hazardous materials. ~~The work was dangerous and secret. Over the decades, there were accidents. These accidents and some of the accepted waste handling practices of the early decades resulted in some materials were spilled, dumped, and buried on the property.~~ These actions resulted in releases of plutonium and other contaminants into the air and water on and adjacent to Rocky Flats.

Rationale for suggested changes, this paragraph: Remove editorial language about "dangerous and secret" work. Remove language justifying that contaminant handling reflected accepted practices at the time, which we doubt. Change passive and vague language "there were accidents" into a factual description of what happened to some of the materials. Add clause describing where releases of plutonium and contaminants went -- into the air and water.

10-10

Beginning in 1995, ~~many of the same Cold War veterans who had built America's deterrent arsenal,~~ the United States Department of Energy contracted with private cleanup firms and conducted an unprecedented and enormously complex cleanup project to remove virtually all of the contaminated buildings and soil from the landscape. They accomplished that difficult job in 2005, leaving the land as an asset for future generations of Americans. The project was completed in 2005.

Rationale for suggested changes, this paragraph: Again, remove editorial language referring to cold war veterans (other workers were also involved in cleanup), and replace with more factual language about DOE contracts for cleanup. Clarify that "virtually all" cleanup occurred rather than leaving a false impression that all contaminated buildings and soil were removed in their entirety. Delete reference to the difficulty of the cleanup job, and also to "Americans," as foreign visitors will also visit the site. Add factual sentence about when the cleanup project was completed.

10-8. The Service revised the sign wording to better clarify the context of the information.

10-9. The Service revised the sign language to better clarify the contaminant handling and cleanup language. However, the work conducted by Rocky Flats plant employees was indeed dangerous, and was conducted under tight security conditions.

Comment #

-2-

Is the Refuge Safe for Public Recreation?

~~Yes--We believe it is.~~ An extensive evaluation of contamination at Rocky Flats was conducted by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The levels of contamination detected on the land Refuge after cleanup were low and met conservative state and federal cleanup standards. ~~Both EPA and CDPHE have determined the Refuge is safe for public recreation, and refuge workers, and resident wildlife.~~

10-11

Rationale for suggested changes, this paragraph: Clarify that the refuge is safe for *public recreation* (as opposed to leaving visitors with the erroneous presumption that it's safe for *any and all* uses). Delete subjective language referring to "low" and "conservative" levels of contamination after cleanup. Clarify that amount of residual contamination refers to contamination *that's been detected*. Add reference to the safety of the Refuge to its wildlife.

~~There are hazards involved in any form of wildland recreation. Hazards at Rocky Flats include inclement or extreme weather conditions, the potential for trips, slips and falls, poisonous snakes, and unreasonable or illegal acts by other persons.~~

10-12

Rationale for suggested deletion of this paragraph: People will primarily want to know whether Rocky Flats is safe from radioactive contamination. Listing other hazards that are common to all parks, trails, or public access points are merely redundant if printed on all access signs to parks, trails, campgrounds, lakes, etc. unless there are specific local hazards that need to be pointed out.

The refuge is open daily during daylight hours. Unless otherwise posted, please stay on trails. Please observe "Arca "Closed" signs. Pets are not allowed on the Refuge. The interior portion of the site remains under the jurisdiction of the Department of Energy, and is closed to the public. These lands remain under the jurisdiction of the Department of Energy. [put their website here for more information]

10-13

Rationale for suggested changes, this paragraph: Clarify that the site is not entirely open to the public that the DOE retained land is closed to the public, and info on where to get more info about the DOE-retained lands.

Still have questions? For more information about the history, contamination, cleanup, or site safety issues at Rocky Flats, please call EPA at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or CDPHE at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. For more information about the refuge contact (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Response to Boulder County Board of Commissioners Letter # 10

(continued)

10-10. The Service revised the sign wording to clarify the context of the information on cleanup workers. Although foreign visitors would be welcome on the refuge, the Mission Statement for the National Wildlife Refuge System states that the Refuge System is to "Administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation management and where appropriate, the restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

10-11. The EPA and CDPHE have the lead regulatory authority on cleanup efforts at Rocky Flats. The Service supports the conclusion reached by the EPA and CDPHE after extensive evaluation that refuge land will be safe for all the proposed Refuge management activities.

10-12. In the CCP response to comments, the Service committed to a discussion of relative risks on the refuge.

10-13. The Service revised the sign wording to state that public access will not be allowed on DOE retained lands.