

# Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

## *Planning Update*

Volume Two, Winter 2002

### **Progress Report**

The *Comprehensive Conservation Plan* and *Environmental Impact Statement* (CCP/EIS) for the future Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge is well underway. We have recently completed the scoping (issues identification) phase of the project and have begun to develop preliminary alternative management options. The purpose of this *Planning Update* is to summarize what the Service learned from the public and how scoping comments will be incorporated during the next phase of the planning process.

During the scoping phase, the Service invited community residents, agency members and interested organizations and citizens to attend public meetings, state their views, and submit written comments. The meetings also provided an opportunity for the public to learn about the CCP/EIS project, develop an understanding of the Rocky Flats site's natural resources, interact with Service staff and ask questions related to the planning of the future wildlife Refuge. Significant issues and concerns that surfaced during the public scoping meetings were later deliberated in a series of focus group discussions – dialogues between local resource specialists and the core planning team.

Currently, the Service and the planning team are analyzing public comments and formulating a range of management alternatives that consider issues and recommendations that arose during public scoping.

### **Thank you for Participating!**

For a comprehensive list and analysis of comments gathered during public scoping please refer to the *Public Scoping Report* that is available for download at <http://rockyflats.fws.gov> and main branch libraries in neighboring communities.

### **A Sample of Public Comments**

*"Preserve the site's tallgrass prairie"*

*"How will the Service balance wildlife conservation and habitat protection with public uses such as hiking, hunting and interpretation?"*

*"The views, terrain and wildlife at the future Refuge provide excellent opportunities for trails."*

*"Consider stabilizing the Lindsay Ranch structures and interpreting them from an overlook area."*

*"Will surface mining and the transportation corridor adversely impact the Refuge's natural resources? How can these impacts be mitigated?"*

*"Convert existing roads into trails and links to outlying trail systems."*

*"How will the refuge be integrated with adjacent and regional open space?"*

*"Allow no public access."*



Left:  
Northern Harrier

# Public Scoping

## What is "Scoping"?

As defined by the *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)*, scoping is " ...an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues."

The scoping process provides a forum for recognizing public and agency concerns that help guide development of alternative refuge management plans and the environmental analysis.

In an effort to recruit public involvement in the CCP/EIS planning process, the Service published *Public Update vol. I* that outlined the purpose and need for public scoping and a schedule of scoping events. Additionally, the Service circulated newspaper advertisements, announcement flyers and press releases.

During September 2002, four public meetings were held in various communities that neighbor the future Refuge. Following the meetings, the Service organized six groups of resource specialists to address the following topics: Recreation, Environmental Education, Public Perception and Public Information: Managing in the Context of Remediation and Contamination, Trails, Vegetation Management and Wildlife Management. In addition to discussing key issues that arose during the public scoping meetings, the focus group participants provided input for management options.

## Public Comments

We received many comments, questions, and concerns about the future Refuge by the close of the public comment period (October 31, 2002) and are grateful to those who have participated. The planning team gathered 1,881 statements through various scoping activities and outreach methods. Although the majority of public comments were generated at the four public scoping meetings and six focus group workshops, statements were also submitted via letter, mail-in questionnaire, email, telephone and the project webpage. While many of the comments echoed similar concerns, it should be noted that the objective of compiling public statements does not represent a voting process. Public statements are gathered to identify issues to be addressed and each comment holds equal importance.

## Public Comment Topics

The table to the right lists the general comment topics received and the percentage of comments in each of the topics. Comments compiled from the focus group meetings have been omitted from these calculations, since the determination of focus groups topics was based on the outcome of public comments.

Topics	Percentage of Scoping Comments
Public Use	31%
Vegetation	13%
Wildlife	12%
Infrastructure	11%
Contamination	10%
Property *	8%
Cultural Resources	6%
Refuge Operations	6%
Planning Process	3%

\* primary issues within this topic include mineral rights, potential land acquisitions and the transportation corridor right-of-way

*Bottom:  
Future Rocky Flats  
National Wildlife  
Refuge and the  
Front Range  
backdrop.*



# Significant Issues

## Issues Summary

Several key issues were identified following the analysis of all comments collected through the various public scoping activities and a review of the requirements of the *National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act* and the *National Environmental Policy Act*. These issues, as well as the many other substantive issues identified during scoping, will be considered during the formulation of alternatives for future refuge management. The key issues are summarized below:

Below:  
Public Scoping  
Meeting in Arvada



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## Vegetation Management

- Need for preservation and restoration of xeric tallgrass prairie, wetland and riparian habitats and other shrub and grassland communities
- Consider a variety of noxious weed management tools including prescribed burning, grazing, herbicide, mowing, hand-pulling, and/or biological controls and the extent (*if any*) of the use of each tool

## Wildlife Management

- Need habitat protection for a variety of wildlife species including the threatened Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse
- Need for management strategies that address population management, wildlife corridors, and coordination with regional wildlife managers
- Consider the reintroduction of extirpated species to the Refuge (*e.g.* Grouse, Pronghorn, Bison) & relocation of prairie dogs to the site

## Public Use

- Need for evaluation of a range of public access options from no access to multiple recreational uses
- Consider the following public uses: hiking, biking, equestrian, wildlife observation, education, interpretation, dog walking, and hunting
- Evaluate different levels (*if any*) of trail development and trail connections
- Consider a range of facility development (*e.g.* interpretive overlooks, parking, motorized vehicle loop, restroom facilities, visitor center, universal access)
- Evaluate regional needs for environmental education and other wildlife-dependent recreation programs

## Cultural Resources

- Need for preservation and recognition (*if any*) of Lindsay Ranch and the site's Cold War heritage
- Consider range of preservation and interpretive options (*if any*) for Lindsay Ranch
- Evaluate levels of public access to site's remaining cultural resources

## Property

- Consider how privately owned mineral rights and the transportation right-of-way may influence refuge resources and final configuration
- Need for management strategies addressing relationships with adjacent land owners, opportunities for land acquisition, mitigation of disturbances such as mining and the transportation right-of-way

## Infrastructure

- Consider the maintenance, use, and/or removal of existing infrastructure such as roads and fences
- Consider measures (*e.g.* signage, fencing) to keep visitor traffic and wildlife away from contaminated areas
- Study the effects of modifications to surface water hydrology and maintenance of water quality following closure

## Refuge Operations

- Need for assessment of requirements for funding refuge staff and operations
- Consider integrating refuge operations with surrounding communities and landowners
- Need for management strategies that effectively preserve the Refuge's ecologically and socially significant resources
- Consider public perception of the site and public outreach efforts including risk communication
- Take into account management of refuge land in the context of residual contamination and how management will correspond to that of the DOE





For additional information on the scoping process and results, please read the *Public Scoping Report*. The report is available at the following locations:

- <http://rockyflats.fws.gov>
- Main branch libraries in communities that neighbor the future Refuge: Arvada, Broomfield, Boulder, Golden and the Front Range Community College Reading Room in Westminster



Right:  
Blue Grama

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## Issues Outside the Scope of Refuge Planning

Several issues that were identified during public scoping will be addressed by means other than the CCP/EIS. The rationale that explains why these issues are considered outside the scope of refuge planning is described below:

### Contamination & Remediation Issues

- Existing contamination levels and reliability of remediated efforts

Contamination and remediation issues are being addressed in the Rocky Flats cleanup process administered by DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The Service and the DOE are developing a memorandum of understanding that will, among other things, identify which areas will be transferred to the Service and which areas will be retained by DOE for the purposes of ongoing remediation. The transfer of land from DOE to the Service will not occur until the Environmental Protection Agency certifies that the cleanup and closure at Rocky Flats has been completed.

The Service will address management of its jurisdictional land in the context of residual contamination and analyze how refuge management corresponds to DOE's jurisdictional controls.

### Cold War Museum Issues

- Location of the museum, including potential co-location with a visitor center

The refuge legislation states that it is DOE's responsibility to work with the City of Arvada and other entities on issues related to the development of the museum.

## Next Steps - Development of Management Alternatives

As part of the next phase of developing the CCP/EIS, the core planning team and Service staff are evaluating issues and concerns identified during scoping, and developing a range of management alternatives. Alternatives define management options and provide a basis for comparing the impacts and effects of various approaches. Several alternative management plans will be generated, including a "no action" alternative, which preserves the existing management regime and provides an environmental baseline against which impacts of the other alternatives can be compared. Within the framework provided by NEPA, each alternative will represent a specific management concept or theme and various levels of management intensity relevant to wildlife, flora, refuge administration, public use, cultural resources, and degrees of facility development. Each alternative will be analyzed in the EIS.

We encourage you to stay involved in the planning process and to provide input on the alternatives when they are presented at public meetings in the Spring of 2003. Prior to the workshop the Service will distribute *Public Update vol. III*, which will describe the alternatives in detail.

### Contact Information

Please direct correspondence about the refuge planning process to:

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