

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Planning Update

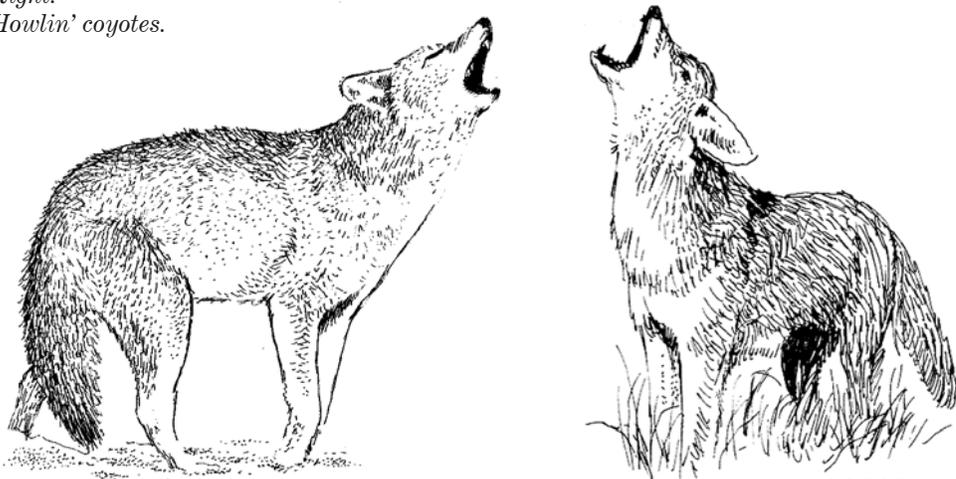
Volume One, Fall 2002

Let Your Voice Be Heard!

A new National Wildlife Refuge is coming to Colorado's Front Range! Transfer of lands on the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will occur after the cleanup completion scheduled for 2006. Under the Service's management, the site will become the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). In order to prepare for this new challenge, the Service has begun developing a *Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)* for the future Refuge. The complexity of issues inherent to the site will also require an in-depth analysis accomplished by an *Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*. The CCP/EIS is essential because it will direct wildlife conservation, management and wildlife-dependent recreation at the Refuge for the next fifteen years.

The Service needs your help in determining how the Refuge can best provide for wildlife and serve its neighboring communities. The Service is committed to keeping you informed about Rocky Flats and invites the public to engage in the CCP process and to share your ideas about how to plan for the Refuge's future.

Right:
Howlin' coyotes.



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As a refuge, Rocky Flats will provide a serene natural setting and a welcome retreat from the developed areas along Colorado's Front Range. Given the site's natural resources, location and Cold War history, planning for a Refuge at Rocky Flats will be an exciting and challenging project. The presence of rare plant communities and federally-listed threatened wildlife species distinguish the Refuge as important habitat for native wildlife. The Service, dedicated to the Refuge System's "Wildlife First" mission, wants to hear the public's suggestions for maintaining and restoring the Refuge's native wildlife populations and plant communities. We are also interested in working with the public and interested organizations and agencies to develop compatible *wildlife-dependent* recreation opportunities for Refuge visitors.

Public Scoping Meetings

- Broomfield
September 9, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Broomfield Recreation Senior Center
Lakeshore Room
280 Lamar Street

- Arvada
September 10, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Arvada Center For the Arts and Humanities
Ballroom C
6901 Wadsworth Boulevard

- Westminster
September 11, 12:30 - 2:30 pm

West View Recreation Center
Community Room
10747 W. 108th Street

- Boulder
September 12, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Boulder Community Senior Center
East Rooms · Mountain View
5660 Sioux Drive

Come hear presentations about the Refuge resources and the CCP/EIS process, and engage in discussions about planning issues and opportunities. Meetings will begin promptly according to the above schedule.

An optional questionnaire about Refuge issues will be circulated at the workshop and will also be available online or by request.

If you have special needs and will be attending one of the workshops, please call 303/289 0980 at least one week in advance so arrangements can be made.

The Planning Process

The CCP Is About Wildlife

The Rocky Flats CCP/EIS will focus on the primary purposes of the Refuge that include restoring and preserving native ecosystems; providing habitat for, and population management of, native plants and migratory and resident wildlife; conserving threatened and endangered species; and providing opportunities for scientific research. Management for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses will also be addressed as part of the plan.

The CCP Isn't About Cleanup

Cleanup and closure are the responsibility of the Department of Energy (DOE); therefore, the Service will not address cleanup issues as part of the CCP planning process. DOE and the Service are engaged in continuous dialog to insure that the refuge and cleanup planning processes are complimentary and well coordinated. Rocky Flats will not be transferred to the Service until DOE's cleanup and closure efforts have been completed and the site has met the appropriate health and safety standards.

Glossary of Terms

Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP): A 15-year plan that will provide long-range guidance and management direction for Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The plan will outline the Refuge's vision and desired future condition and explain the goals, objectives and strategies necessary to achieve the vision and purpose of the Refuge.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): A document that assesses the effects of the actions presented in the CCP on people and the environment

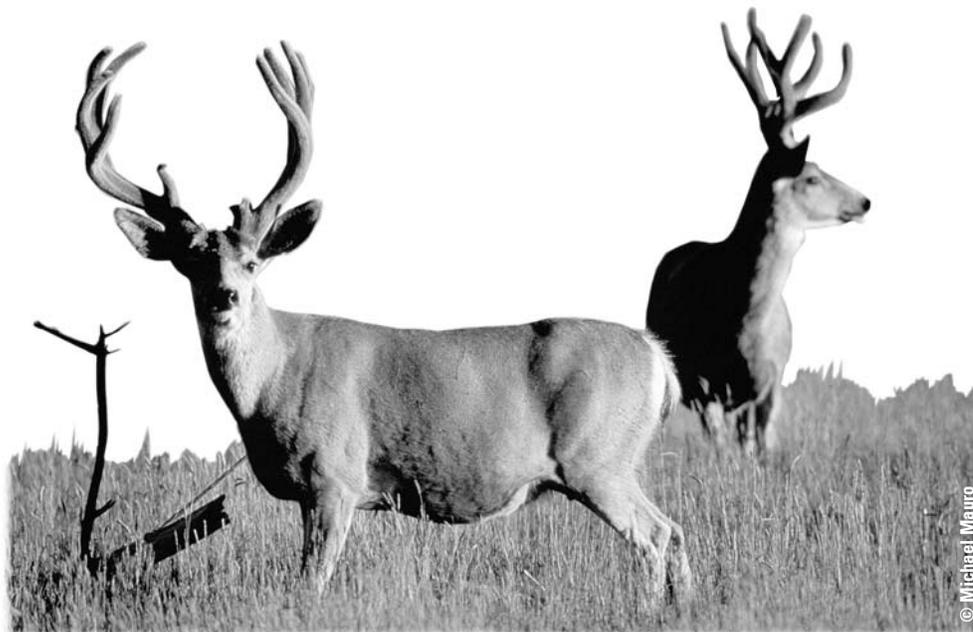
Compatible Wildlife-dependent Recreation: Recreational activities that are directly tied to wildlife. The recreational use is considered "compatible" if it does not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (System) or the purposes of the Refuge. The six wildlife-dependent recreation activities identified by Congress as the System's priority public uses include: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation.

Vision & Goals Statement: A vision statement is a compelling, future-oriented expression of what the Rocky Flats site will be, or what the Service hopes to do, based primarily upon the Refuge System's mission and Rocky Flats' purpose. Goals are descriptive, open-ended, and often-broad statements that direct work toward achieving the vision and purpose of the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

The Planning Schedule

The three-year CCP process will involve the following five planning stages:

Planning Stage	Dates
1. Preplanning	May 2002 - July 2002
2. Public Involvement and Scoping	Aug. 2002 - Oct. 2002
3. Develop and Analyze Alternatives	Nov. 2002 - May 2003
4. Prepare Draft CCP/EIS (For Public Review)	June 2003 - June 2004
5. Final CCP/EIS and Record of Decision (ROD)	July 2004 - Dec. 2004



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Left:
Mule deer are year-round residents of the Refuge.

Working Toward A Refuge Vision and Goals

During a *Vision and Issues Workshop* in July 2002, Service staff and representatives from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) developed the following draft vision and goal statements for Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). At the upcoming public scoping workshops, the public will be asked to review the statements and offer suggestions for refinement.

Draft 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 Goals

1. *Wildlife and Habitat Management:*

The Refuge will conserve, restore and sustain the biological diversity of the native flora and fauna of the mountain/prairie interface with particular consideration given to threatened and endangered species.

2. *Public Use, Education & Interpretation:*

The Service will provide compatible wildlife-dependent recreational, educational and interpretive opportunities for people to learn about and appreciate the National Wildlife Refuge System; the Refuge's xeric tallgrass prairie, upland shrub and wetland habitats; native wildlife; and the history of the site.

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

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.

5. *Working with Others:* The Service will work with others on issues of mutual concern including resource conservation, compatible wildlife-related research, public use, site history, and infrastructure.

6. *Refuge Operations:* Based on available funds, the Service will provide resources to fulfill the Refuge vision and purpose.

What Does The Refuge Have To Offer?

At the public workshops, participants will be asked to comment on what they feel are important qualities and features of the Refuge and to identify issues of concern related to Rocky Flats NWR. Here are some examples that we have identified:

Qualities

- Visitors to the site will be impressed by views of the Rocky Mountains, downtown Denver and the expansive prairie.
- Tall Upland Shrubland, a rare plant community located primarily above seeps within the Rock Creek drainage, has increased in size since monitoring began 10 years ago.

Issues

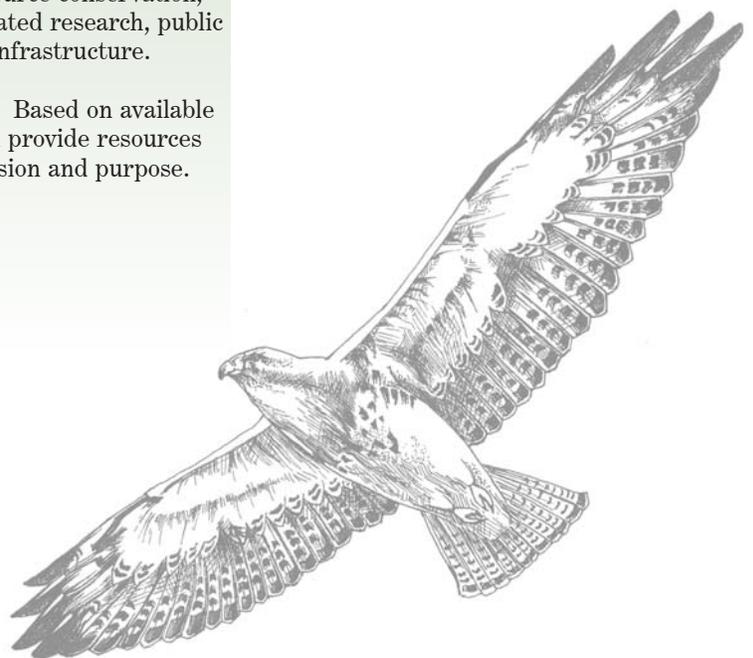
- Noxious Weeds: The presence of invasive weeds is a problem that threatens the integrity of native plant communities at Rocky Flats NWR.
- Hunting: If hunting is permitted at Rocky Flats NWR, what type of hunting programs will be offered?



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*Right:
Swainson's Hawk
In Flight*

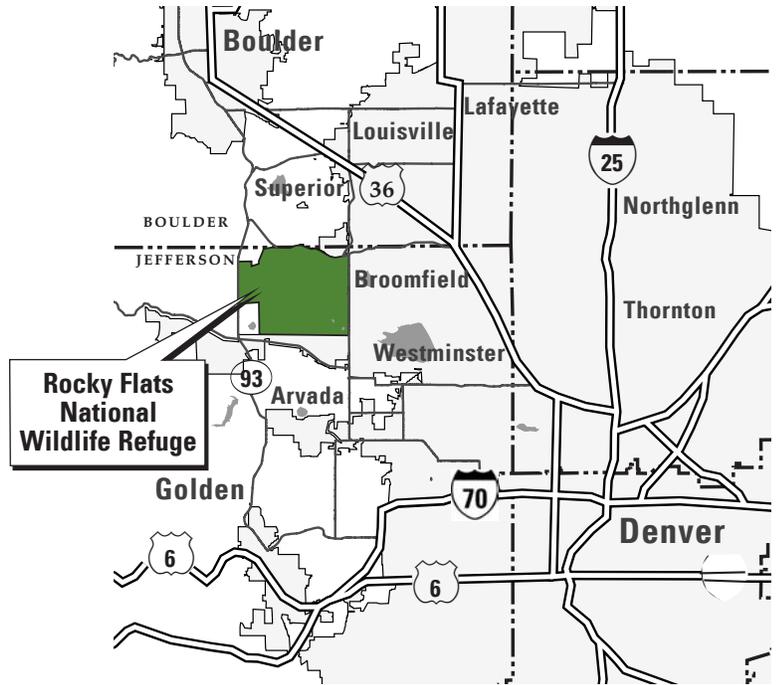
*Left:
Wildlife
observation is a
popular
wildlife-dependent
recreation activity
at Refuges.*



© Paul Kerris



Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge



Contact Information

Public comments will be accepted by written letter or e-mail at the following addresses:

Rocky Flats NWR
Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Attn: Laurie Shannon,
Planning Team Leader
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Building 121
Commerce City, CO 80022
Ph: 303/289 0980
Fax: 303/289 0579

Email: rockyflats@fws.gov
Online: <http://rockyflats.fws.gov>

Rocky Flats Natural Features

Big Bluestem (right), a tall prairie grass with rich fall color, is common to the xeric tallgrass prairie plant community at Rocky Flats. The tallgrass prairie provides important habitat for birds and mammals at Rocky Flats NWR throughout the seasons. In the spring and summer, wildlife use the tall grasses for nesting, foraging, and as escape cover. Since some prairie grasses like Big Bluestem resist collapse under the weight of snow they also provide winter forage and allow deer to remain year-round residents of the Refuge.

The expansive prairie at Rocky Flats NWR contains a number of beautiful wildflowers. Blanket Flower (left) is a member of the mixed mesic prairie plant community and is often found in open, dry areas.



Blanket flower (Gaillardia aristata)



Big Bluestem (Andropogon gerardii)

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge
Building 121
Commerce City, CO 80022

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