

# Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

## *Planning Update*

Volume Four, Summer 2003

### **Letter from the Refuge Manager**

Thanks to all of you who participated in our May 2003 public workshops, and to those who submitted electronic and written comments on the preliminary alternatives.

Though the National Environmental Policy Act did not require us to hold public meetings during this stage of planning, we felt it important to keep the public informed on our progress and to solicit feedback on the alternatives. We highly value the public input we've received throughout the planning process and will consider your suggestions as we begin writing the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS). Your comments have helped us develop a better sense for the public's preferences and concerns.

Developing a range of alternatives is a key component of the planning process because it helps us establish suitable management strategies for Rocky Flats. The alternatives also provide a basis for comparing the impacts and effects of the different approaches.

*"I support the proposed action, but I'd like to see equestrian use included in Alternative B."*

— Boulder Resident

The alternatives focus on the lands that will be transferred to the Service following clean-up and closure. The Department of Energy (DOE) will retain jurisdiction over a portion of the site in order to monitor remediated areas.

This planning update reports what we learned from public comments, and defines the next steps in the process.

Again, thank you for your input!



Dean Rundle  
Rocky Flats NWR Manager

*"Manage the Refuge for wildlife for the first fifteen years, while analyzing safety issues."*

— Arvada Resident



*Above: Conservation of wildlife and their habitat is a common concern.*

# Public Workshops

## The Alternatives

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed four preliminary management alternatives as part of the CCP/EIS development. The alternatives ranged from providing little or no public access (*Alternatives A & C*) to moderate recreational uses (*Alternative B*), to extensive public access and facility development (*Alternative D*). All four alternatives involve habitat conservation and restoration. The vast majority of people felt that the range of alternatives was appropriate.

### Alternative A - No Action

The current management regime would be retained and restoration efforts would focus on the Rock Creek drainage.

### Alternative B - Wildlife, Habitat & Public Use

#### Draft Proposed Action

Alternative B would emphasize the conservation of wildlife and their habitats while allowing a moderate level of public use.

### Alternative C - Ecological Restoration

This alternative would emphasize habitat conservation with a focus on restoring the Refuge to presettlement conditions.

### Alternative D - Public Use

Alternative D would provide the highest level of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for refuge visitors.

\*Please refer to *Planning Update Vol. III* or visit, <http://rockyflats.fws.gov> for more detailed alternative descriptions.

*Below: American Goldfinch and American Robin (right) within the upland shrubs.*

## Public Workshops

Four workshops held in Westminster, Boulder, Broomfield, and Arvada in May 2003 provided a forum for explaining the alternatives and soliciting public comment.

At the workshops, the Service presented the alternatives and encouraged participants to provide their input about what they liked and disliked about the various plans.

## Issues to Reconsider

The public expressed differing opinions on several issues. The following were the predominant concerns:

- **Proposed Action:** Re-examine Alternative B and determine if it should remain as is or be modified in some specific way.
- **Equestrian Use:** Evaluate whether equestrian use is consistent with the goals of Alternative B, and if it is compatible with the Refuge purposes.
- **Trail Design:** Consider modifying trail configurations in Alternatives B and D to improve connectivity and enhance visitor experience while minimizing potential impacts on sensitive natural resources.
- **Restoration:** Consider phasing options which would accelerate habitat conservation and delay public use facility and programming development until restoration efforts are underway.

The Service will take a closer look at all the issues and determine if the alternatives should be revised prior to the development of the CCP/EIS.

## Public Preferences

Comments were highly varied as to people's desires, with some wanting no public access to Rocky Flats and some wanting extensive public use. More people supported Alternative B - either as it is or with some modifications.



## Topics of Interest

(by percentage of all comments received)

Public Use	42%
Habitat and Wildlife	30%
Infrastructure	8%
Contamination*	7%
Property	5%
Refuge Operations	4%
Cultural Resources	4%

\* see the explanation of "Issues Outside the Scope of Refuge Planning".



# Summary of Public Comments

## Habitat and Wildlife Management

- *Restoration:* Several suggested that public use should be limited until restoration is completed.
- *Weed Management:* Some expressed support for aggressive weed management.
- *Grazing:* While some supported the use of grazing as a habitat management tool, a few did not support grazing.
- *Prescribed Burning:* While a few expressed their opposition to burning as a habitat management tool, others supported burning.
- *Wildlife Corridors:* Many expressed support for preserving wildlife corridors at the Refuge boundaries.
- *Prairie Dog Relocation:* Several opposed relocation of prairie dogs from off-site.

## Public Use

- *Equestrian use:* Many supported equestrian use on the Refuge, and several noted a preference for Alternative B with equestrian access.
- *Hunting:* While some supported limited hunting on the Refuge, others did not support any hunting on the site.
- *Trail Connections:* Many supported off-site trail connections, with about half of those asking for better connections to Boulder trails.
- *Loop Trails:* Many wanted to see more loop trails in the plan.
- *Perimeter Trail:* Several asked for a perimeter trail on the Refuge, and several others asked that the trail be located away from roads.
- *North-South Trail:* Several preferred a north-south trail connection in the eastern part of the Refuge.
- *Trail Development:* Several expressed their concerns about trail development on the Refuge and the impacts that it would have on sensitive resources.

## Infrastructure

- *Fencing:* Several supported some type of boundary fencing, while some of those suggested a chain-link security fence to exclude people from the site.
- *Water Supply:* While a few wanted a water supply for a visitor's center and restroom facilities, others cautioned that such infrastructure would accelerate adjacent land development.



Above: Public workshop in Boulder.

## Refuge Operations

- *Visitor Management:* Some expressed concerns about the Service's ability to manage visitors and enforce regulations.
- *Signage:* Several asked for signage to inform visitors about the Refuge's history and safety issues.

## Cultural Resources

- *Lindsay Ranch:* Several expressed support for retaining/stabilizing the Lindsay Ranch barn, while a few wanted all structures stabilized.

## Property

- *Mineral Rights:* Several expressed concern about mining on the Refuge. This issue is being addressed separately from the CCP/EIS.

## \* Issues Outside the Scope of Refuge Planning

Several issues related to contamination were identified during public workshops. 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 and are not within the scope of the CCP/EIS.





### Contact Information

Please direct correspondence about the refuge planning process to:

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Comprehensive Conservation Plan  
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Rocky Mountain Arsenal - Building 121  
Commerce City, CO 80022

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For additional information on CCP/EIS development, visit <http://rockyflats.fws.gov>

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

*Below:  
Opportunities for  
wildlife observation  
are valued by the  
public.*



### Next Steps

The Service will revisit the alternatives and revise them as needed before drafting the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS).

The CCP/EIS will describe desired future conditions and provide long-range guidance to achieve the Refuge's primary purposes of habitat conservation, scientific research and the management of wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

#### Contents of the CCP/EIS:

- Vision, goals, objectives, strategies
- Resource and issue descriptions
- Alternative descriptions
- Impact evaluation for each alternative
- Monitoring plans
- Prioritized projects, costs, staffing
- Partnership opportunities

Once complete, the draft CCP/EIS will be released to the public for comment.

Following the public comment period, the document will be revised and finalized by December 2004.

### Future Public Review

We encourage you to stay involved in the planning process, and to provide input on the draft CCP/EIS when the document is presented at another series of public workshops in the Spring of 2004. Prior to these workshops the Service will distribute *Public Update vol. V*, which will summarize the draft document. This update and a CCP/EIS summary will also be posted on the project website.

*"Limit access to the Refuge during the first few years and focus on restoration."*

— Broomfield Resident



*Right:  
Prairie dog  
relocation  
from offsite is  
a concern.*

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