

# Planning Update

## *Comprehensive Conservation Plan Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge*

Issue 1, June 2013



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*Walking Trail at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge*

### **The National Wildlife Refuge System**

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which began in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt established Pelican Island in Florida as the Nation's first bird sanctuary. He went on to establish many other sanctuaries for wildlife during his presidency. This small network of sanctuaries grew to become the largest system of lands in the world dedicated to the conservation of wildlife. We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency within the Department of the Interior, administer the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. This legislation pro-

vides clear guidance for our management of the National Wildlife Refuge System and includes our mission:

*The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, 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.*

The act directs us to manage the National Wildlife Refuge System as a national system of lands and waters devoted to the conservation of wildlife and the maintenance of the biological integrity of ecosystems.

### **Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge**

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is the nation's premier urban national wildlife refuge. Located just outside of Denver, Colorado, it is approximately 16,000 acres in size and consists of a number of important fish and wildlife habitats, including native shortgrass and mixed-grass prairies, riparian corridors, numerous wetlands, and multiple lakes.

The U.S. Army and Shell have finished their remediation of the site,

which included restoring thousands of acres of native grasslands. We are beginning a new chapter at the refuge by managing the site solely for wildlife conservation. Now bison, deer, bald eagles, Swainson's hawks, burrowing owls, and numerous other wildlife species can be seen there.

Without traveling far, people have a unique opportunity to connect with their natural environment. There are a variety of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the over 300,000 annual visitors. They can hike trails, observe wildlife from the Auto Tour Route or the Wildlife Drive, participate in environmental education programs, and experience one of the best catch-and-release fisheries in Colorado.

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## What is a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?

To support and fulfill our mission, the National Wildlife Refuge System

Improvement Act requires that all national wildlife refuges be managed under comprehensive conservation plans. To meet this requirement, we have started work to revise the 1996 comprehensive management plan for the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. A draft plan and accompanying environmental impact statement, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, will describe the management alternatives we considered for the refuge and their effects on the environment.

This 15-year plan will provide long-range guidance and management direction for all of the refuge's programs. The plan will outline a vision statement and supporting goals, objectives, and strategies. It will be a "living" document that is updated every 15 years.

In summary, the final comprehensive conservation plan will do the following:

- Outline a vision for the refuge.

- Guide management decisions.
- Set goals and specify objectives and strategies to achieve the refuge's vision and purposes.
- Provide other agencies and the public with an understanding of the management to be carried out at the refuge.

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## Reintroduction of the Black-footed Ferret

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is considering reintroducing the black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) as a part of its planning process. The black-footed ferret is the only ferret native to North America and is considered to be one of the most endangered mammals in the world. Historically, they lived throughout the Great Plains wherever



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*Reintroduction of the endangered black-footed ferret will be considered during this planning process.*

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*Bison Calf and Mom at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge*

prairie dogs (*Cynomys* spp.) were found. As a specialized predator, black-footed ferrets prey upon prairie dogs and use their underground burrows for shelter. Black-footed ferrets and prairie dogs are part of an ecosystem that has been dramatically altered and reduced in size over the past century. The proposed reintroduction of the black-footed ferret to the refuge is a positive step toward the recovery of this iconic prairie species.

to the planning team leaders (see Contacts).

## Scoping Meeting Schedule

Reunion Recreation Center  
Thursday, July 25, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.  
17910 E. Parkside Dr. North  
Commerce City, Colorado

Central Park Recreation Center  
Tuesday, July 30, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.  
9651 E. Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Denver, Colorado

Commerce City Recreation Center  
Monday, August 5, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.  
6060 E. Parkway Drive  
Commerce City, Colorado

## Why Did You Receive This Update?

We are widely distributing this planning update to generate interest in the planning process and to collect ideas and thoughts from the public, State and local governments, organizations, and other partners.

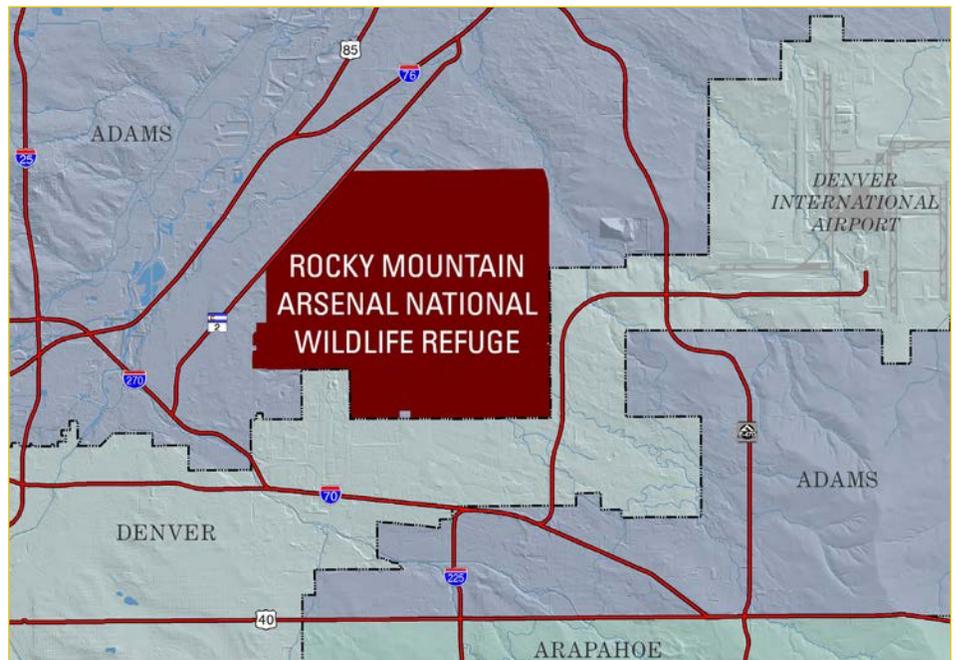
Since the mailing list may be requested by the public under the Freedom of Information Act, your permission is needed for us to place your name on it. If you do not request to be on the mailing list, we will assume that you do not wish to receive further information on this planning process.

If you would like to continue receiving planning updates, please complete the mailing list consent form enclosed and return it to the address noted on the form. You may also phone, fax, or email Bernardo Garza or Toni Griffin (planning team leaders, see Contacts) and request that your name be placed on the mailing list.

## Public Involvement and Scoping

A series of public scoping meetings are scheduled for late July and early August. These meetings are essential for us to develop a list of issues that the comprehensive conservation plan will address. You are invited to drop by anytime after at 5:30 p.m., with each meeting beginning at 6 p.m. and ending at 7:30 p.m. These meetings will provide you with an opportunity to get to know our personnel, learn more about the planning process, and provide input.

We will accept your comments during the scoping portion of the planning process, through October 11. You may submit written letters or emails, and these can be mailed, emailed, or faxed



*Vicinity Map of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge*

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## Contacts

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## Find Out More About the Refuge

[www.fws.gov/refuge/rocky\\_mountain\\_arsenal](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/rocky_mountain_arsenal)

[www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/ccp/co/rkm/rkm.html](http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning/ccp/co/rkm/rkm.html)

Phone: 303 / 289-0232

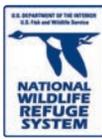
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## Information on the Planning Process

[www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning](http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/planning)

## Planning Timeline

Spring 2013	Preplanning
Summer 2013	Public Involvement and Scoping
Fall 2013	Vision and Goals
Fall 2014	Alternative Development and Analysis
Spring 2015	Public Review of Draft Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
Fall 2015	Plan Completion
Fall 2015	Implementation



*June 2013*

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

