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Secretary Salazar, Governor Hickenlooper Applaud Efforts to Advance Rocky Mountain Greenway

Initiative is Centerpiece of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative in Front Range and Metropolitan Denver

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, Commerce City, CO – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Governor John Hickenlooper of Colorado today commended the members of the newly-established Rocky Mountain Greenway Steering Committee for their early leadership in moving forward President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative in the Front Range and metropolitan Denver region. The Steering Committee, which consists of leaders from federal and state agencies, local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and other partners, met for the first time today to discuss opportunities to enhance trail networks, restore natural areas, and promote public access to open spaces and recreation.

“The steering committee has important work ahead to turn the vision of America's next great urban park - the Rocky Mountain Greenway - into a reality,” Secretary Salazar said. “This committee was selected because we have confidence that these individuals will be able to think beyond our fences, leverage our resources and align our visions so that we can enhance the Denver and Front Range metropolitan area to create an even stronger system of trails, parks and open spaces.”

“The ‘Rocky Mountain Greenway’ will provide yet another way for Coloradans to connect with the outdoors via readily accessible trails, waterways and wildlife,” said Governor John Hickenlooper. “This is especially important for young people in urban communities, who benefit from easy connections with the natural environment. Activity outside promotes healthier living, feeds our spirit and leads to greater appreciation for nature's treasures within our own neighborhoods.”

The vision for the Rocky Mountain Greenway project, reflected in a recent agreement between the Department of the Interior and the State of Colorado, is to create uninterrupted trails and transportation linkages connecting the Denver metro area's trail systems, the three Denver-area units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Two Ponds, and Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuges), Rocky Mountain National Park, and the community trails systems in between.

The Rocky Mountain Greenway Steering Committee will identify priority projects in support of this vision and pursue partnerships to deliver tangible, consensus-driven results that benefit both residents of and visitors to the region. An early example of the Rocky Mountain Greenway's work is the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge connector trail which, when completed later this year, will link the refuge to the existing Sand Creek Regional Greenway and other regional trails networks.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director Stephen Guertin, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, thanked the Committee Members for their collaborative spirit, noting “The Rocky Mountain Greenway will elevate metro Denver’s already-impressive network of trails and natural areas to world-class status by enhancing connectivity among and between one of the nation’s largest urban national wildlife refuges, numerous local trail systems, an iconic national park, and many other local open spaces and natural resources.”

Ginny Brannon, Assistant Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and Steering Committee Co-Chair, added, “This greater connectivity will provide Denver area residents and visitors with improved access to rivers, parks, and numerous other outdoor/wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, which will in turn promote greater public support for conservation and outdoor-oriented lifestyles, resulting in healthier, more economically vibrant communities.”

America’s Great Outdoors is President Obama’s 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda for the nation. Founded on the premise that long-term solutions to conservation problems should emerge from the grassroots, AGO seeks to foster stronger, more efficient partnerships between the federal government and states, tribes, and local communities to protect America’s natural heritage and grow the nation’s economy.

Members of the Rocky Mountain Greenway Steering Committee include:

- Stephen Guertin, Regional Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie Region (Co-Chair)
- Ginny Brannon, Assistant Director for Water and Energy, Colorado Department of Natural Resources (Co-Chair)
- Deb Gardner, County Commissioner, Boulder County
- Faye Griffin, County Commissioner, Jefferson County
- Gordon Robertson, Director of Parks Planning, Design and Construction, City and County of Denver
- Pat Schuler, Manager, Open Space and Natural Resources Division, City of Aurora Parks and Open Space Department
- Ruben Valdez, Ruben Valdez and Associates
- Howard Kenison, Partner, Lindquist and Vennum
- Carolyn Boller, President, Friends of the Front Range Wildlife Refuges
- Tim Wohlgenant, Colorado and Southwest Director, The Trust for Public Land

For more information on AGO, including progress to date, go to: americasgreatoutdoors.gov

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