

Rocky Flats NWR Sharing Session #2 | TRAILS

SUMMARY NOTES

On Dec 6, 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) hosted a public Sharing Session focused on the proposed trail system for Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge (RFNWR). The meeting was the second in a series of sharing sessions the Service is hosting in order to solicit input from the public on how to shape future refuge visitor experiences and to ensure transparency with regards to the Service's plans to improve and open the refuge.

The Service requested feedback on its proposed trail system for RFNWR. The ideas, concerns and questions provided by meeting participants are summarized below.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- This is a great opportunity for new multi-use trail on the Front Range, but we should not diminish the quality of the trail experience by just following roads. Roads ≠ Trails (*multiple comments addressed this topic*)
- The Service should hire a professional trail designer and trail builder to allow for creative design, best practices, and the development of a sustainable trail system. (*multiple comments addressed this topic*)
- Build singletrack trails on the Refuge. These offer a higher quality trail experience for both hikers and bikers. Trails (not roads) will bring more more visitors to system. Building 2 feet wide singletrack is very cost effective.
- After reading these recommendations regarding trail design and layout, please recruit a few of us with trail design and building experience for real world trail routing to help further refine and finalize routing. Thanks!
- Do not build the trails or allow public access to the proposed site.
- It is too dangerous to open the RFNWR to the public.
- Keep the greenway!

SUGGESTIONS ON TRAIL SYSTEM LAYOUT / LOCATION OF TRAILS

- Consider connecting trails on the south side with the east entrance to create a loop around the whole refuge. Connections could occur within the SE corner of the refuge, or within the Indiana ROW, or East of Indiana on adjoining open space.
- Use grade at 128 as much as possible to connect from the east to the 128 underpass.
- Build additional trails in Section 16 (*multiple comments addressed this topic*)
- Consider trails north and south of West Gate Road and a trailhead (w/ parking) off of Hwy 93. The Section 16 area could be a bike "park" or accommodate more single.
 - Trails and biking are compatible with grazing. There are many examples where gates keep cows in, but allow user access (Marshall Mesa in BoCo, BLM land, etc.)
- The terrain along the South edge (near Candelas West Entrance and South Main Trail) lends itself to Kid-friendly trails.
- Use North Main Trail & RM Greenway to move people away from central visitor area, but then have new single track trails intertwine along the contours of the landscape. So close into entrance and the building, trails are wider (and easier and designed for family uses) and then progress into singletrack with more varied features and terrain.

- In the area around the visitor center and for the greenway trail, it would be more reasonable to use old road grades as trails.
- Create a large single-track loop around the entire DOE/closure area
- South Woman Creek Trail is too close to the fence (and maybe traverses a wetland) - move trail further away from the closure area fence.
- Eliminate the South Women Creek trail
- The south loop trail could turn west at the bottom of the hill and follow the drainage west to the western edge of the Flats or ideally cross over the western edge and proceed all the way to the large pond in the area referred to as Section 16

Access Points

- Access needed at south corner of the South Main Trail to allow people who live in the west side of Candelas to get on the trails. (*multiple requests for this access*)
- Consider an access point and trailhead parking off of West Gate Road (Hwy 93)
- Access point Rocky Flats Lake
- Parking not required for the Candelas trailheads - they can just be access points
- Different suggestions for the East access point.
 - A. Prefer northernmost alignment - avoid Indiana connection at low spot (and cross up near 128 at Church Ditch entrance) - this could then connect south to Broomfield trails (east of Indiana St) to the backside of Great Western
 - B. Prefer eastern access as outlined in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan at the Northwest corner of Great Western Open Space (further north than shown on the proposed trail map). Concerns expressed about higher level of contaminants in the Walnut Creek drainage. Moving it north, would get it out of the WC drainage.
- Can you require the builder to the south to guarantee the location for the southern trail entrances? If the builder subsequently changes the entry points he must pay for any costs associated with his changes. It has been my experience that builders will stick to their plans if a change is going to cost them any money.

SUGGESTIONS ON TRAIL USES / VISITOR MANAGEMENT

- I think the primary user of most trails (not adjacent to the visitors center) will be mountain bikes/trail runners. The site is too large for hikers to traverse.
- Different strategies for managing multiple uses:
 - All trails should be multi-use and open to the three uses (hiking, equestrian, biking)
 - Separate trail users – biking only, hiker only, equestrian only – when possible
 - Equestrian use should be across site (no restrictions)
 - Use existing “staff” roads for equestrian only trails
 - Horse and hike only on South Woman Creek
 - Bike and Hike only on South Loop
 - Bike only route from South Main Trail to RM Greenway (South of North Main Trail)
 - Create dedicated hiker only trail near and around Lindsay Ranch
- Local bike shops should be encouraged to sell dosimeters.

TRAIL DESIGN SUGGESTIONS.

- Hire professional trail designers and builders to advise the Service on the layout and appropriate design/construction for the site.

- Use modern trail building techniques to build multi use trails that are sustainable (ie, do it right the first time!). This will keep users on the trail and will minimize habitat degradation while also allowing for a quality trail experience. Sustainable trail techniques include:
 - Avoiding flat areas for trails as they will erode and expand (braid)
 - Building trails that are resilient to wet conditions
 - Build trails on southern exposed sides of canyons to help with snow melt
- Consider a stacked loop system of trails. Create stacked loops from visitor center (1 mile loop, 3 mile loop). Benefits of stacked look trails include: [*Multiple comments on this topic*]
 - Allows for shorter and longer outings
 - Can differentiate difficulty ratings (Green, Blue, Black)
- Take trails off the road beds. If you need to put the trails in road corridors, build parallel single track (not on top or part of existing road).
- Use features of the land to make interesting trails.
- Use City of Boulder experience on the “High Plains Trail” to inform trail design standards. At High Plains, Boulder dealt with the challenge of thin topsoil and cobbles under surface.
- If the site is to be developed then have explicit warnings to pregnant women and children. Have a radiation meter for public display at all entrances. Restricted areas should have radiation symbol warnings.
- Build trails that are bike optimized
 - Single track!!! Get off the roads
 - Move with land contours
 - Lift and tilt construction technique
 - Flowy
 - Bring in material as needed
 - Fun!
- Consider directional trails, especially for higher speeds (e.g., one way for downhill section of a trail)
- Have a “destination” trail built to attract advanced intermediate riders (i.e., a “flow” trail with features liked banked berms, rock gardens, rolling grades... NO water bars!)

CONCERNS

- Trails in Walnut Creek area are not appropriate given DOE and City and County of Broomfield water monitoring locations. Residual contamination is higher according to previous testing (although within allowable thresholds) in area of the refuge West of the East Entrance on the map at the Southwest corner of the Great Western Open Space
- BMA will support the trail development, but we’re concerned that a “watered down” system (one that is depicted, mainly 2-track or built on road bed and not using modern trail design/build techniques) will not be attractive to most of our members
- Federal Highways may not be qualified to build a quality trail system since they are in the business of building roads. Consider collaborating with professional local trail builders and local bike clubs instead on the design of the trails.
- Don’t open trails to the public. Keep testing using independent contractors.
- **Additionally**, prepared written comments were submitted by the following individuals all of whom objected to development of a trail system:
 - Patricia Mellen (student attorney) and Brad Bartlett (professor) University of Denver, Sturm College of Law and Randall Weiner on behalf of the Rocky Mountain Peace and members of the Justice Center and the Rocky Flats Technical Group
 - Roy Young, Boulder, Colorado (*stating that the trail system is “ill-advised” due to Plutonium 239*)

- W. Gale Biggs, Ph.D (*taking issue with failure to monitor for airborne Plutonium 239 or to set airborne standards for Plutonium; stating that it is too dangerous to open RFNWR to the public*)
- o LeRoy Moore (*siting the presence of Plutonium and noting “it would be better for all concerned if trails are never built at the Rocky Flats Refuge and it is never opened to the public”*)

QUESTIONS FOR THE SERVICE

- How many and which roads will you need to maintain for management and administrative access?
- Can we get more maps:
 - o habitat map overlaid onto draft trail system map
 - o Railgrades
 - o topo
 - o Historic maps/features
- Are trails designated all multi-user or will there be specific user designation trails?