

Rocky Flats NWR Sharing Session #3 | BUILDING & EXHIBITS

SUMMARY NOTES

On Feb 22, 2017, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) hosted a public Sharing Session to present conceptual designs for the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge's (RFNWR) new multi-purpose building and interpretive exhibits. The meeting was the third 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.

At Sharing Session #3, the Service requested feedback on the conceptual building and exhibit designs. The ideas, concerns and questions provided by meeting participants are summarized below. In red, next to the questions are responses

NEW MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING

The architects and engineers from Otak/MWH attended the session and these notes have also been passed along to the building design team.

Comments/Suggestions

- Include bike racks outside the building.
- Concerned about the concrete path being wide enough to get a snow plow around the building.
- Include parking for RVs, pickup trucks, trailers, buses.
- Need parking for school buses with safe drop off areas with pathways from drop off areas to the building.

Questions

- What are proposed staffing levels for the building? How many staff members need to operate the building? *USFWS responded that staffing models would likely be similar to that of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR. This is generally supported by volunteers.*
- What's the difference between an equipment room and a mechanical room? *Otak/MWH responded that the equipment room is storage for refuge staff's equipment, the mechanical room will house the building's mechanical machinery.*
- What a lovely meaningful building design but how tragic to build it in the middle of so much plutonium contamination. How do you reconcile this? *USFWS responded that we are confident in the results of the remediation and in the recommendations from experts on public health and safety (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment), which indicate that this area does not pose a health risk.*
- What is the annual attendance estimate for the new building? *USFWS responded that it is difficult to predict how many visitors will enter the building. If RFNWR sees 30,000 annual visitors maybe 1/4 to 1/3 of these visitors will visit the multi-use building.*
- How many parking spaces will there be? *Otak/MWH responded that at current design there are approximately 50-60 parking spaces.*
- Where will donation/memorial plaques be located? *USFWS responded that the location(s) has yet to be determined, but we will look for appropriate location(s).*
- What is the distance between visitor's center and central operating unit? *Using Google Earth, the northern boundary of the Central Operable Unit is approximately 0.6 miles south of the building.*
- Will soil materials be brought in to create the berm outside the new building (intended to block wind) or will onsite materials be used? Concerned about soil disturbance. Will there be

construction techniques intended to minimize soil disturbance and blowing soil? *USFWS and Otak/MWH responded that we are still at the conceptual design, phase at this point and construction practices have not been determined. It is, however, a best practice of ours to minimize disturbance and blowing soil during any construction.*

- What will be done to protect construction crews from contamination during construction and digging and disturbing the soil? *The USFWS has agreed to conduct additional confirmatory soil sampling as a part of any new construction at the RFNWR. This information will be shared. Similar to above, it is a construction best management practice to reduce blowing soil during any construction.*
- Will the workers constructing the project have appropriate hazardous materials suits? *Based on soil sampling described above, it seems unlikely that the USFWS would proceed with any construction project where residual contamination would require additional personal protective equipment (PPE).*
- How will signage be incorporated into the design? As in warnings or the like. *MSD responded that there will be outdoor interpretive signs incorporated into the exterior spaces. However, we will address this further in the next Risk Communication sharing session.*
- Who is providing water and wastewater utilities? *Otak/MWH responded that wastewater would be handled using a typical septic system. USFWS responded that options for potable water are still being explored. Public water can be supplied from a variety of suppliers (e.g., Arvada, Broomfield, Superior).*
- How confident are you about the decision to orient the building along a NW/SE axis to mitigate wind effects? A quick look at the weather data from NREL National Technology Wind Center site will show that the prevailing winds are from the west, especially at ground level. *Otak/MWH responded that we are confident in the buildings orientation, but will review the data.*

INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS & INTERPRETATION

The design team from Main Street Design (MSD) attended the session and these notes have also been passed along to the exhibit design team.

Comments/Suggestions

- The team should work with the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum on display materials. Would like to see oral histories included in displays. Work first on the oral history as the veterans are aging.
- Please recognize the contributions of the Rocky Flats Cold War Museum in saving the artifacts and preserving this story.
- The wind is one of the main natural features of the site. Any thoughts given to some interpretive display about the wind shapes the landscape or presenting real-time and historical wind data?

Questions

- Can oral histories be included? *MSD responded that this is a possibility.*
- What is the ratio of refuge/wildlife to site history interpretation among the exhibits? *MSD responded that at conceptual design, it is currently about 50:50.*
- Will the exhibit include the years of protest by thousands of people? *MSD responded that “yes” the protests will be addressed.*
- Why are no aspects of the exhibits devoted to the hazards of plutonium on the site? *MSD responded that exhibits will address the evolution of the site including the plant, the contamination, and the remediation.*

- Will the exhibits be claiming that there is no plutonium on site present-day? *MSD responded that the exhibits will bring the visitor up to present day and address the remediation of the site and current conditions.*
- Why is there no mention of the homesteader or the Native American in the story? *MSD responded that these topics will be addressed.*

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS & SHARING SESSIONS

Comments/Suggestions

- Please make it a practice of defining acronyms as you use them.
- Please post the evening's presentations and summary notes online.
- Why is the Risk Communication the last of the sharing sessions? Would have preferred to have that earlier in the process. Why are trails and the visitor center being discussed before risk communication? *USFWS responded that the order of the sessions was based on when we had items ready to share with the public (e.g., trail plans, building/exhibits concepts, etc.).*
- Where does the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process stand? *USFWS responded that now that we have conceptual designs for the building, we will begin the process of reviewing environmental compliance (including any additional NEPA) that may be required.*

OTHER TOPICS RAISED

Comments/Suggestions

- Boy Scouts should never camp there.
- I hope you're not avoiding the tough questions.
- Please do not allow humans on the site ever.
- It is unethical to attract people to the site and to use wildlife to do so (as well as views) or first nation folks. They wouldn't want it here.
- There needs to be a current safety testing and evaluation. The public is not okay with reliance on the very old, very politically-charged cleanup statements.
- Plutonium is forever.
- The health and safety concerns of the public about trying to bring the public to a nuclear waste site like Rocky Flats are significant and deeply felt. There needs to be a current safety testing and evaluation. We (the public) are not ok with reliance on the very old, very politically charged cleanup statements.

Questions

- Trail Questions:
 - Are there trails open now? Why not allow trails and trail use prior to building completion? *USFWS responded that trails have not been designed nor built yet. No trails or roads are currently open to public use. We hope to build some trails in conjunction with the new building construction to allow visitors to explore and experience some of the refuge outlying the entrance and the multi-use building.*
 - Will horses be allowed on trails? *USFWS responded "yes" on certain trails.*
 - How many staff will be on site patrolling the trails? *USFWS responded that our national wildlife refuges are administratively managed as a "complex" which means most staff work at multiple locations. We currently have staff to patrol the RFNWR.*
 - Where, how many miles? *USFWS responded that this was the subject of the 2nd Sharing Session and there are approximately 17 miles of trail proposed for the RFNWR. We are*

beginning to scope these trails in March 2017, but you can find a map of the DRAFT proposed trail system here – https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/RFNWR_SS2_ProposedTrailSystemMap.pdf

Note: *The Service will keep the public apprised as plans for the trail system evolve and a design and construction schedule is determined.*

- *Who will be doing the soil testing? How can we be confident that it is an independent source? The USFWS is working with local governments on this matter. Jefferson County has taken the lead in contracting for a Sampling & Analysis Plan.*
- *Please ask how many people are from Broomfield. [There were approximately 125 people at the Sharing Session and about 20 identified as Broomfield residents.]*

Note: *Many of the questions below relate to Risk Communication which will be the topic for the next Sharing Session. These questions will inform the agenda and we will incorporate responses into the presentations at the next Sharing Session. We have not yet set a date for Sharing Session #4, but hope to host it later this spring.*

- Will the signs and maps reflect that RFNWR is surrounding an active superfund site?
- Why do you feel that it is safe to allow people to visit Rocky Flats? What scientific data do you have to support this?
- How can this ever be safe for humans? Plutonium? Beryllium? Run. Its forever.
- Can you please address the elevated contamination around the 903 lip area?
- What makes this space or area safe now? When before it was not safe for public? Family member of former workers lost from cancer and suffering from mental health issues.
- How will you make it know to future generations that Rocky Flats should not be used by humans?
- Are we actually saying there is no plutonium on site after the plant's history?