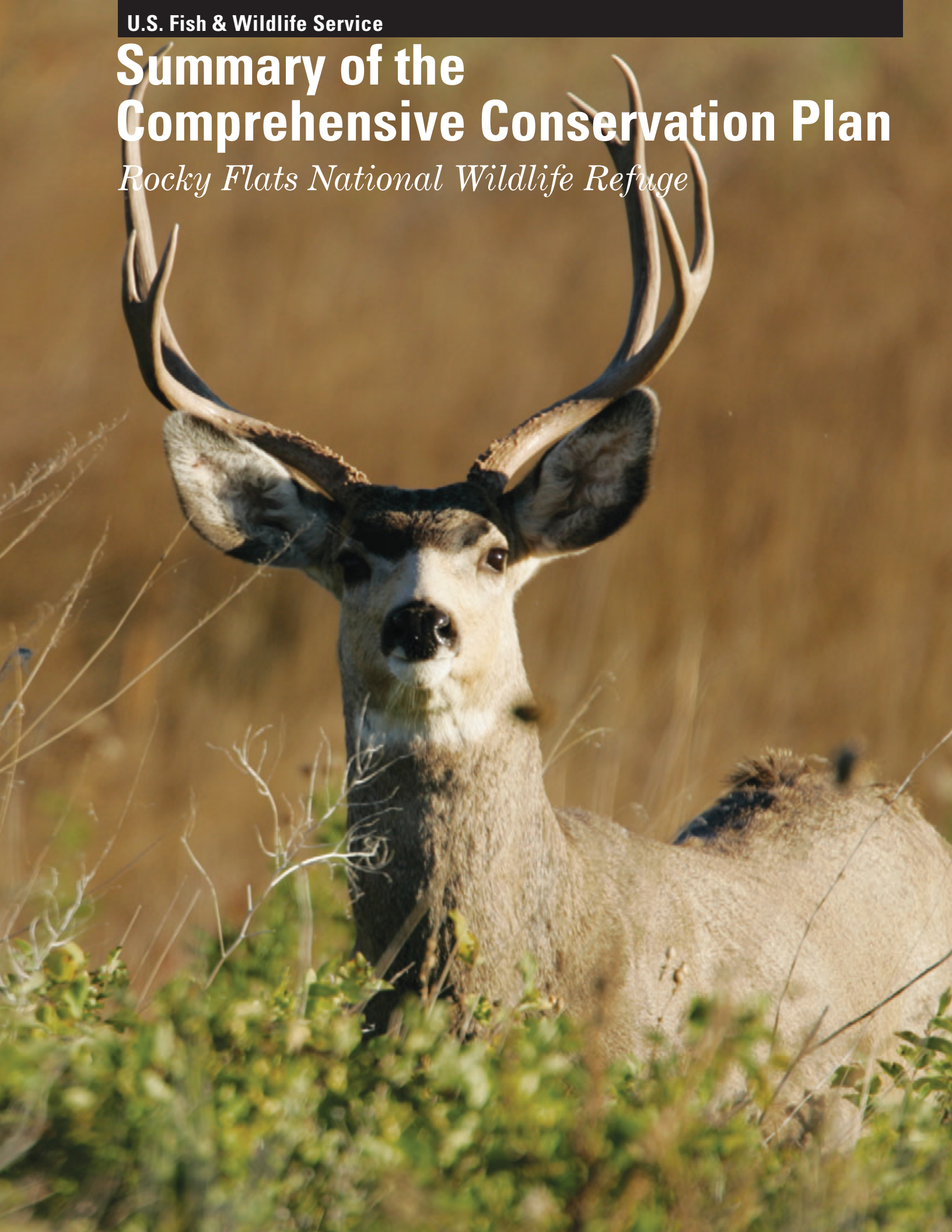


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Summary of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge



Refuge Vision

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge is a healthy expanse of grasslands, shrublands and wetlands, including rare xeric tallgrass prairie, where natural processes support a broad range of native wildlife. The Refuge provides striking mountain and prairie views and opportunities to appreciate the Refuge resources in an urbanized area through compatible wildlife-dependent public uses and education. Working with others, the Refuge conserves the unique biotic communities and sustains wildlife populations at the interface of mountains and prairies on Colorado's Front Range.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) by 2012 for each national wildlife refuge in the system.

The plan is needed to address problems that could negatively affect fish, wildlife, plants and habitats.

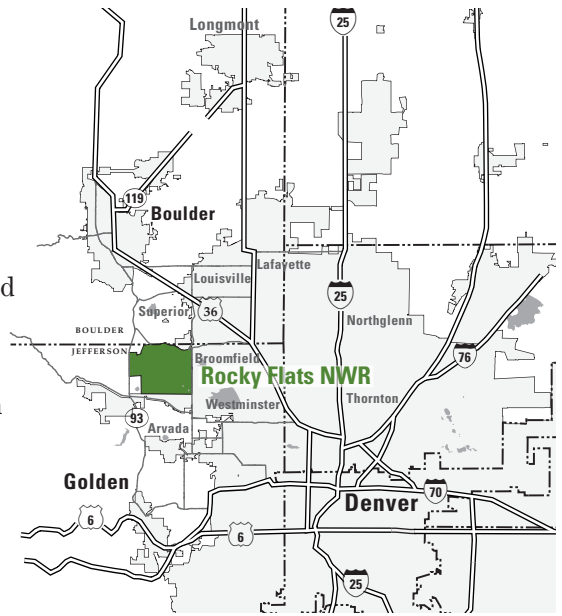
The plan determines opportunities for people to use the refuge in ways that are compatible with resource conservation and refuge purposes.

Cover photograph and all other photographs taken by Michael Mauro. Sketches by Jerry Shapins.

Refuge History

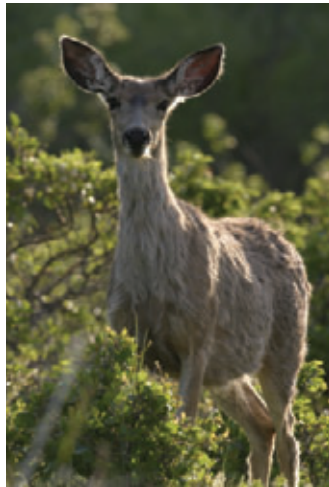
The Rocky Flats site is located at the intersection of Jefferson, Boulder and Broomfield counties, along the Front Range of Colorado. The Rocky Flats site is a 6,240-acre former nuclear defense facility operated by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). All weapons manufacturing was performed in a 600-acre area in the middle of the site known as the Industrial Area. In 1992, the mission of the Rocky Flats site changed from weapons production to environmental cleanup and closure. The DOE is completing the cleanup in accordance with the Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement under oversight by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).

Under the Refuge Act, most of the 6,240-acre Rocky Flats site will become the Refuge following certification from the EPA that cleanup and closure have been completed. The Refuge Act requires that the DOE retain jurisdiction, authority and control over portions of the Rocky Flats site necessary for cleanup response actions. DOE anticipates that it will need to retain land in and around the current Industrial Area to maintain institutional controls and protect cleanup and monitoring systems. Such lands are referred to as the DOE retained area.



Purpose of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)

- Provide a clear statement of desired conditions
- Provide guidance for management decisions
- Ensure management is consistent with laws, policies, and plans
- Provide an opportunity for the public to help shape the future of the refuge
- Provide a clear understanding of management actions and priorities
- Provide a sound basis for budget requests



Mule Deer



Oriole



Coyote

Refuge Habitat

The Rocky Flats site is located at the interface of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, where it supports a diverse mosaic of vegetation communities. Many areas of the Rocky Flats site have remained relatively undisturbed for the past 30-40 years, allowing them to retain diverse natural habitat and associated wildlife. Some of the significant vegetation communities include the rare xeric tallgrass grassland and the tall upland shrubland

communities. The xeric tallgrass grassland community covers over 1,500 acres on the Rocky Flats pediment tops, and is believed to be the largest example of this community remaining in Colorado and perhaps North America. The tall upland shrubland community is primarily found near seeps on north-facing slopes in the Rock Creek drainage. While this community covers less than 1 percent of the total area at Rocky Flats, it contains 55 percent of the plant species on the site.

Wildlife communities are supported by a regional network of protected open space surrounds Rocky Flats on three sides and buffers wildlife habitat from the surrounding urban development. Preble's meadow jumping mouse, a federally threatened species occurs in every major drainage at Rocky Flats, as well as in wetlands and shrubland communities adjacent to the Rock Creek and Woman Creek drainages. A resident herd of about 160 mule deer inhabit the site and elk are occasionally present.



Refuge Purposes

The Refuge Act identified four purposes of the Rocky Flats NWR:

- Restoring and preserving native ecosystems.
- Providing habitat for, and population management of native plants and migratory and resident wildlife.
- Conserving threatened and endangered species.
- Providing opportunities for compatible scientific research.

The Refuge Act also identified wildlife-dependent public uses as a management priority.



Lupine

Cottonwood



Engaging the Public

Throughout the planning process, the Service has solicited input from the public. Public involvement in the planning process ensured that interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies and governmental entities were consulted and given opportunities to offer suggestions on the management direction of Rocky Flats NWR. The Service will maintain public outreach programs when the Rocky Flats NWR is open and will provide clear information about all public use opportunities and access restrictions.



Elk

Horned lark



Refuge Goals

The Rocky Flats Comprehensive Conservation Plan sets realistic goals for the future.

Wildlife and Habitat Management

Provide a riparian community representative of historic flora and fauna in a high valley of the southern Rocky Mountains to provide habitat for migratory birds, mammals, and river-dependent species.

Public Use, Education and Interpretation

Provide visitors and students high quality recreational, educational and interpretive opportunities and foster an understanding and appreciation of the Refuge's xeric tallgrass prairie, upland shrub and wetland habitats; native wildlife; the history of the site; and the NWRS.

Safety

Conduct operations and manage public access in accordance with the final Rocky Flats' cleanup decision documents to ensure the safety of the Refuge visitors, staff and neighbors.

Effective and Open Communication

Conduct communication outreach efforts to raise public awareness about the Refuge programs, management decisions and the mission of the Service and the NWRS among visitors, students and nearby residents.

Working with Others

Foster beneficial partnerships with individuals, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and others to promote resource conservation, compatible wildlife-related research, public use, site history and infrastructure.

Refuge Operations

Based on available funds, provide facilities and staff to fulfill the Refuge vision and purpose.

Public Use Opportunities

Although guided by a "Wildlife First" mission that promotes the conservation, management, and restoration of wildlife and their habitat, the Refuge System is also committed to investing in public use facilities and programs that foster an appreciation of the Refuge's natural resources. With many miles of trail, thousands of acres of grassland habitat, and a beautiful mountain backdrop, Rocky Flats NWR will likely become a popular destination for wildlife enthusiasts, naturalists and students. The Refuge presents many opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation such as hiking, wildlife photography and interpretation. Surrounded on three sides by designated open space, the Refuge will also serve as an important link in a regional network of recreational trails.

Wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities



Great Plains and Rocky Mountain interface



Wildlife photography

Outcome of the Plan

The comprehensive conservation plan emphasizes both wildlife and habitat conservation along with a moderate level of wildlife-dependent public use.

Habitat and Wildlife

Habitat management efforts will employ a variety of tools, including prescribed fire, grazing, and mowing to stimulate and maintain native grassland communities. In order to improve habitat conditions for a variety of wildlife species, including the wetland and riparian Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat areas, the Service will remove 28 miles of unused road and 13 stream crossings. The Service will work with the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) to manage wildlife species. Deer and elk populations will be managed through limited public hunting, culling, and other means. Prairie dog populations will be allowed to expand up to 75 acres in areas outside

of recognized Preble's habitat and the xeric tallgrass community. Additionally, the Service will evaluate the suitability of reintroducing native extirpated species, such as the sharp-tailed grouse to the Refuge.

Public Use

Visitor use facilities will include 12.8 multi-use trails, 3.8 miles of hiking-only trails, a visitor contact station, interpretive overlooks, viewing blinds, and associated access and parking facilities. Public use programs will include environmental education programs for high school and college students, a limited hunting program (two weekends per year) for youth and disabled, and interpretive programs.

Safety and Communication

The Service will address public concerns about the safety of the Refuge through public outreach and clear signage that

articulates access restrictions and public use opportunities. The Service will also work with DOE to develop signage and fencing or another means of boundary demarcation to identify all areas that will be retained by DOE and remain closed to public access.

Research and Partnerships

The Service will provide compatible scientific research opportunities that focus on wildlife habitat and interactions between wildlife and human use. The Service will work closely with surrounding jurisdictions to coordinate natural resource management, public use, and the regional protection of wildlife movement corridors.



Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge
Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Building 121
Commerce City, CO 80022

rockyflats@fws.gov
<http://rockyflats.fws.gov>
303/289 0980
711 state relay, TTY/voice

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The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

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.