

ROCKY FLATS STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

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Jefferson County -- Boulder County -- City and County of Broomfield -- City of Arvada -- City of Boulder
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League of Women Voters -- Rocky Flats Cold War Museum -- Rocky Flats Homesteaders -- Ken Foelske

June 15, 2006

Mr. Dean Rundle
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
Building 111
Commerce City, Colorado 80022-1748

Re: Step Down Plan for Site History/Safety Signs

Dear Mr. Rundle,

Thank you for the opportunity to review United States Fish and Wildlife Services' proposed language for entrance signs to the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The Board of Directors of the Rocky Flats Stewardship Council remains committed to helping ensure that future visitors to the refuge understand the history of the Site as a nuclear weapons plant and the ongoing wildlife and contaminant management needs.

The Stewardship Council recognizes USFWS does not typically develop this type of step-down plan at this point in the planning process but rather reserves such decisions for the visitor step-down plan. Given the history of Rocky Flats we support USFWS' decision to take this additional step.

Without doubt, USFWS, working in close collaboration with the Department of Energy, must provide objective information to interested community members. Such information should include a summary of the hazardous materials that were used and released at the site when it was in operation, the history of the cleanup, and any relevant information regarding residual wastes, including information on the long-term stewardship controls that will be utilized to manage those residual wastes. A critical step in meeting this obligation is through signage at the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

We understand the visitor step-down plan will include interpretative signage for both wildlife resources and additional information about the history of Rocky Flats. The Stewardship Council supports such additional signage but in order for such signage to be effective it must be layered and, at times, redundant. Signs should be posted at the refuge boundaries (demarcating the

boundary), at all access points, along trails, and at the boundary between refuge lands and lands retained by DOE.

While USFWS and DOE are charged with different management responsibilities at Rocky Flats, as federal agencies jointly charged with managing Rocky Flats, your efforts must be compatible and complementary. The Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement parties' decision to clean up Rocky Flats to a level that is protective of future users and to off-site interests was predicated on, among other things, the development and implementation of a comprehensive long-term stewardship plan. Signs for Rocky Flats, which are integral to this plan, serve two purposes: (1) to inform visitors of the history of the site, and (2) to inform visitors of the ongoing management needs (both wildlife and contaminant management).

One of the benefits of allowing people onto the refuge (as opposed to cordoning it off) is that visitors are a captive audience and thus present an important opportunity by which the federal government can continue to educate the community about the long-term stewardship needs and related responsibilities. While that onus is the primary responsibility of DOE, any signage USFWS will place on the refuge is critical in ensuring the federal government meets this long-term responsibility. The signs USFWS plans to utilize at the access points should not be the primary means to inform visitors; however, when coupled with additional signage UFSWS and DOE are intending to utilize these signs become very important. In meeting this obligation it is important that any signage utilized or information provided to future visitors serves to discourage (and not encourage) visitors from entering the lands DOE will retain.

This idea of USFWS helping DOE meet its obligations is consistent with USFWS' request of DOE that any fence DOE uses to demarcate its boundary allow for the safe passage of wildlife. So it is therefore not unprecedented for one agency to assist the other agency in meeting its long-term management responsibilities. For that reason, we encourage USFWS and DOE to continue to partner so that a consistent and comprehensive message is conveyed.

The language USFWS has proposed is a good start but changes are needed. Attached is language the Stewardship Council Board of Directors unanimously supports. Member governments might also provide additional proposed language. We ask that you likewise give their proposal due credence.

Towards this end, in your letter to the community dated May 5, 2006, you note one of the purposes of the proposed signs is to "address site history, cleanup and restrictions." USFWS' draft language addresses the history of the site and cleanup, but is virtually silent on access restrictions to DOE lands other than to say please observe "Area Closed" signs. We anticipate one of the regulatory restrictions DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment will require for Rocky Flats is for lands DOE will retain to remain off-limits to the general public. In such a case we believe visitors to the refuge should be first informed of the access restrictions at all access points to the refuge and not simply at the interior refuge boundary. Asking visitors to observe "Area Closed" signs does not rise to the level of informing visitors about the reason for access restrictions. Consistent with the aforementioned idea of layering signs, the bulk of the message/information should be reserved

for visitor kiosks and interpretative signage, but the foundation is established in these entrance signs.

Finally, in recent months when debating Colorado House Bill 1389 sponsored by Rep. Wes McKinley two camps have emerged: those who believe the purpose of any signage should be to inform and those who believe signage should serve to warn visitors of the residual risks. As a body charged with overseeing the long-term protection of Rocky Flats, we believe warnings are not simply unnecessary but would, importantly, send the wrong message about the cleanup. If the cleanup is certified as meeting or exceeding the regulatory standards – and we expect such a certification to be forthcoming – then there is no need to issue warnings.

Nevertheless, while the Stewardship Council represents a broad segment of the community, there are various perspectives in the community regarding appropriate signage. As the DOE-designated Local Stakeholder Organization for Rocky Flats, the Stewardship Council encourages USFWS to continue to consider all points of view and to discuss as appropriate such issues with DOE, EPA, and CDPHE.

Thank you for your continued commitment to work with the Stewardship Council and others on this important issue.

Sincerely,

/s/

Lorraine Anderson
Chairman

Cc: Senator Wayne Allard
Senator Ken Salazar
Representative Mark Udall
Representative Bob Beauprez
Frazer Lockhart, DOE
Scott Surovchak, DOE
State Representative Wes McKinley
State Representative Paul Weissmann
State Representative Debbie Benefield
State Representative Dorothy Butcher
State Representative Morgan Carroll
State Representative Mike Cerbo
State Representative Jerry Frangras
State Representative Rafael Gallegos
State Representative Gwyn Green
State Representative Mary Hodge
State Representative Cheri Jahn
State Representative Gary Lindstorm
State Representative Liane McFadyen

State Representative Michael Merrifield
State Representative Jack Pommer
State Representative Ann Ragsdale
State Representative John Soper
State Representative Val Vigil
State Senator Lois Tochtrop

USFWS DRAFT LANGUAGE FOR ENTRANCE SIGNS TO THE ROCKY FLATS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

REVISED LANGUAGE PROPOSED BY THE ROCKY FLATS STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

June 5, 2006

What Happened Here?

The land you are about to enter, Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, is an historic Cold War site. Refuge lands are part of the buffer zone of the old Rocky Flats Plant that operated from 1951 until 1989, when it was closed. For nearly four decades, thousands of women and men worked here, building nuclear components for the United States' weapons arsenal. In 2001, Congress approved legislation establishing The Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, thus preserving the land and preventing development or other intensive uses.

Deleted: deterrent

Deleted: that held the former Soviet Union at bay

Weapons production at the plant involved plutonium and other radioactive and hazardous materials. Over the decades, some materials were spilled, dumped, and buried in accordance with the accepted waste handling practices of the time. These actions resulted in releases of plutonium and other contaminants into the air and water on and adjacent to Rocky Flats.

Deleted: The work was dangerous and secret.

Deleted: there were accidents

Deleted: Those accidents and some of the accepted waste handling practices of the early decades

Beginning in 1995, the United States Department of Energy contracted with private cleanup firms and conducted an unprecedented and enormously complex cleanup project to remove virtually all of the contaminated buildings and soil from the landscape. The project was completed in 2005.

Deleted: many of the same Cold War veterans who had built America's deterrent arsenal,

Deleted: They accomplished that difficult job in 2005, leaving the land as an asset for future generations of Americans.

Is the Refuge Safe for Public Recreation?

We believe it is. An extensive evaluation of contamination at Rocky Flats was conducted by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The levels of contamination detected on the Refuge were low and met conservative state and federal cleanup standards. EPA, CDPHE, and independent studies have determined the Refuge is safe for public recreation, refuge workers, and resident wildlife.

Deleted: Yes.

Deleted: land

Deleted: Both

Deleted: and

Deleted: and

The refuge is open daily during daylight hours. Unless otherwise posted, please stay on trails. Please observe "Area "Closed" signs. Pets are not allowed on the Refuge. The interior portion of the site remains under the jurisdiction of the Department of Energy and is closed to the public. For more information about their ongoing contaminant management program please see the visitor kiosks or go to www.xxx.gov

Deleted: ¶
There are hazards involved in any form of wildland recreation. Hazards at Rocky Flats include inclement or extreme weather conditions, the potential for trips, slips and falls; poisonous snakes; and unreasonable or illegal acts by other persons. ¶

Still have questions? For more information about the history, contamination, cleanup, or site safety issues at Rocky Flats, please call EPA at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or CDPHE at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. For more information about the refuge contact (XXX) XXX-XXXX.