



**Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
A Unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System
Commerce City, Colorado**

Fact Sheet

October 13, 2006 Land Transfer and Refuge Expansion

Background on the RMA

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA), located in Commerce City, Colorado, approximately 10 miles northeast of downtown Denver, is one of the largest cleanup sites in the country. In 1942, at the height of World War II, the U.S. Army purchased 17,000 acres of land to manufacture chemical weapons to be used as a war deterrent. To foster economic growth in the area, offset operational costs and maintain the facilities for national security, private industry was encouraged to lease facilities at the RMA after the war. Under the lease program, Julius Hyman and Company began producing pesticides in 1946. In 1952, Shell Chemical acquired Julius Hyman and Company and continued to produce agricultural pesticides on site until 1982. Since 1985, the site's sole mission has been environmental remediation. In 1987, the RMA was listed on EPA's Superfund National Priorities List.

Currently, the RMA is undergoing an extensive and safe environmental cleanup of the site's soil, structures and groundwater. Cleanup plans were developed and approved by the U.S. Army, the EPA and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, with concurrence from Shell

Oil Co. and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Once the cleanup is complete, the remainder of the RMA's vast open spaces will officially transition to one of the largest urban national wildlife refuges in the nation. The site now provides sanctuary for more than 330 species of wildlife, including deer, coyotes, bald eagles and burrowing owls. The cleanup is approximately 2/3 complete and is expected to conclude in 2011.

The Refuge was formally established by former Interior Secretary Norton in a major event in April 2004 that marked the culmination of years of commitment and cooperation. The latest milestone in the cleanup process is a land transfer, from the Army to the Service resulting in a significant (7,266 acre) expansion of the Refuge. As the Army's largest land transfer this year, it will more than double the size of the current Refuge, one of America's premier urban wildlife refuges and a high-profile, dynamic resource located in the heart of the rapidly-growing metro Denver region.

(For more historical background, please see the enclosed timeline.)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Role at the RMA

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's involvement with the RMA dates to the early 1980s, when the Service assisted the U.S. Army with managing fish and wildlife resources on the RMA. The Service's involvement with the RMA intensified in 1986 with the discovery of a major roosting area for wintering bald eagles on the site. Bald eagles began nesting on the RMA in 2001.

In 1989, the Service and the Army completed a Cooperative Agreement detailing the Service's role for managing fish and wildlife resources on the RMA while clean-up activities were underway. Thanks to the bipartisan sponsorship and passage of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge Act (P.L. 102-402) in 1992, which was championed by Sen. Wayne Allard and Rep. Pat Schroder, the site's future use as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System was established. A Record of Decision with final clean-up requirements for the RMA was completed in June 1996, initiating full-scale clean up and transition to the Service and the refuge system.

A close and effective partnership among the U.S. Army, Shell Oil Co. and the Service, known as the Remediation Venture Office (RVO), has made the site a national model of public-private cooperation. By approaching the clean up from the "outside-in," the RVO has been able to remove close to 80 percent of the site from the EPA's national priorities list.

The recent deletion of 7,266 acres of land at the RMA from the Superfund list, and the transfer of that land from the Army to the Service, expands the Refuge to more than

12,000 acres and highlights the progress of the clean up to date. Once the clean up is complete, the Refuge will grow to 15,000 acres. The Army will maintain close to 1,000 acres for operations and maintenance of its groundwater treatment systems, landfills, etc. The RVO is fulfilling the site's future by ensuring a Refuge-friendly clean up.

The RMA is well underway to becoming a premier urban wildlife refuge through significant public outreach, particularly for inner city youth and the Spanish-speaking community, and growing partnerships for wildlife-based education, interpretation, and recreation. Since initiating environmental education programs in 1989, more than 76,000 students have learned about the Refuge, and the National Wildlife Refuge System, through on-site and off-site programs. A large habitat mitigation effort is continuing with more than 3,500 acres planted to date with native prairie grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs. More than 8,000 acres will be restored by the end of the cleanup.

As the clean up progresses, future land transfers from the Army to the Fish and Wildlife Service (involving about 2,500 acres) will occur, increasing the size of the Refuge and creating more opportunities for the public to enjoy this haven for years to come.

Highlights of the October 13, 2006 Land Transfer and Refuge Expansion

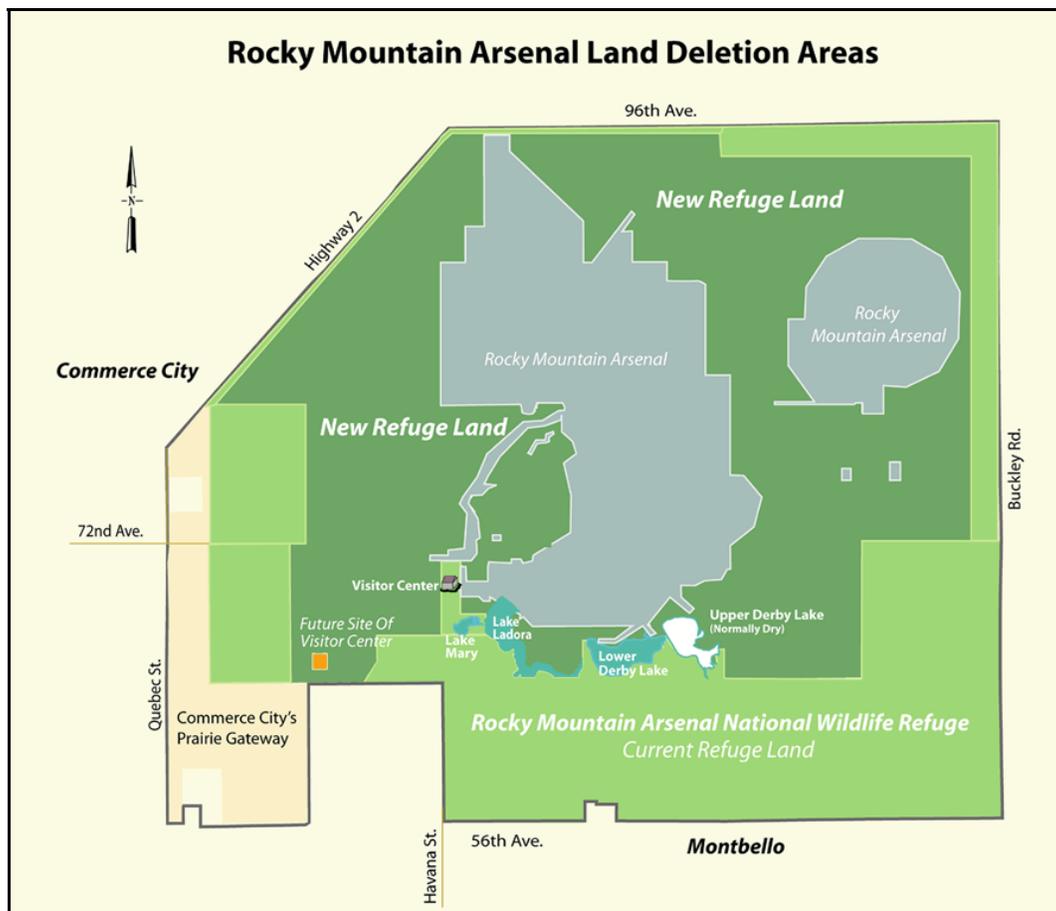
The October 13, 2006 transfer and expansion ceremony will mark several significant milestones, including:

- The impressive progress of one of the nation's largest environmental clean-up sites;

- The continued transition of a World War II and Cold War-era site to a national wildlife refuge and a valuable resource for the people of metropolitan Denver, Colorado and the nation;
- The successful achievement of a partnership among the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Army, Shell, the State of Colorado, EPA, Tri-County Health Department, local communities, and others; and,
- The observance of National Wildlife Refuge System Week, an annual event to celebrate the 103-year old system and its unique and essential role in conserving the nation's fish, wildlife and their habitats.

Overview of the Land Transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The October 13, 2006 land transfer from Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service totaled 7,266 acres. The transferred land is located in the central and northern portion of the site (see map).



The land includes different types of vegetation, including:

- Weedy sites that will require restoration to remove current exotic plant species and to re-establish native shortgrass prairie;
- Sites already seeded through ongoing restoration activities to native shortgrass prairie;
- Remnant native shortgrass prairie;
- Riparian and wetland areas (including both native and exotic woody species and other vegetation); and,
- Open water on two reservoirs with some associated aquatic vegetation.

As a result of the transfer, all of First Creek, and associated riparian and wetland habitat, is now located within the Refuge. Also, the majority of waterfowl and shorebird habitat is now located within the Refuge. In addition, a large portion of the prairie dogs' and burrowing owls' habitat (and the numerous associated wildlife species) is located on the transferred acres. Lastly, the main communal winter bald eagle roost is now located on Refuge property.

There are cultural resources on the newly transferred land, including the Egli farmhouse, which is currently on the State Register of Historic Places and eligible for the National Register. In the future, the farmhouse will be restored and used for historical interpretation.

For more information, please contact:

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN RMA TIMELINE

- 6,000 B.C.:** Oldest traces of Native American big-game hunters on what became the Rocky Mountain RMA (RMA) (“Late Paleoindian” cultures)
- 3,000 B.C.:** Campsite on First Creek and isolated spear points found on what became RMA
- 1700 A.D.:** Pottery-makers camp on what became RMA (“Early Ceramic” cultures) along Second Creek
- 1850s:** RMA prairies only occupied by occasional ranches and homesteaders
- 1860s – 1930s:** 200 + families are farming and ranching on what will become the RMA
- 1941:** December 7, 1941 – Bombing of Pearl Harbor
- 1942:** War Board announces that 19,883 acres of prairie and farmland east of Denver have been selected to be the future site of RMA, a chemical weapons manufacturing center. Construction begins, and six months later the first fully operational production plant is activated, manufacturing mustard gas, Lewisite, chlorine gas, and incendiary bombs to support war time effort
- 1943-1946:** Rose Hill POW camp is in operation for captured German soldiers
- 1950s:** United States and Russia compete as “super powers” during the Cold War

RMA officially back on war-time status – manufacturing phosphorus-filled munitions, artillery shells filled with distilled mustard, and incendiary cluster bombs
- 1951-1957:** North Plants produces GB nerve agent
- 1957:** July – RMA is placed on standby status due to military cutbacks

Government decides to accelerate production of nuclear-powered rockets to keep up with the Soviets and begins producing rocket fuel
- 1952-1982:** Shell Chemical Company acquires Julius Hyman and Company and continues to produce agricultural pesticides on the RMA
- 1960s:** Production of GB nerve agent and rocket propellants continues through most of the decade

1969: Apollo 11 flight is powered by efforts of RMA’s hydrazine plant (rocket fuel)
- 1970s:** RMA’s primary mission changes from production to disposal of chemical warfare materials and demilitarization of stockpiled munitions, as well as preventing additional off-site migration of contamination
- 1974:** Army begins a systematic investigation into site contamination
- 1975:** Groundwater treatment system installed

- 1979:** 14 Interim Response Actions (cleanup projects) were implemented to reduce RMA contamination
- 1982:** The last of munitions demilitarized and pesticide production ceases at RMA
- 1984:** More than 50,000 samples of water, soil and structures are taken to determine the extent of RMA contamination
- November 1986:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service discovers bald eagles roosting at RMA
- 1987:** RMA is placed on the Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List (Superfund)
- 1989:** The Army, the EPA and Shell Oil Company enter into the Federal Facility Agreement (FFA) to create a blueprint for the clean up under CERCLA (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act)
- October 1989:** U.S. Representative Pat Schroeder proposes accelerated cleanup of RMA and conversion to a national wildlife refuge
- January 1990:** First public event at RMA - "Bald Eagle Day"
- October 1992:** President George HW Bush signs the *RMA Refuge Act*, co-sponsored by Sen. Wayne Allard and Rep. Pat Schroeder, which designates the site as a future Refuge
- 1996:** The Record of Decision (ROD) is signed by the U.S. Army, Environmental Protection Agency and the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment with concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Shell Oil Company. The ROD provides the framework and overall rationale for the clean-up actions at the RMA.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presents its Comprehensive Management Plan outlining the development of the refuge
- 1997:** The 33 clean-up projects identified in the ROD begin. They are designed to address contamination of the site's soil, structures and groundwater
- 2003:** EPA certifies all clean-up actions have been completed on 5,053 acres of the RMA's perimeter parcel and are ready to be removed from the National Priorities List
- 2004:** 4,930 acres of the RMA's perimeter parcel are transferred from the Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to officially become the Rocky Mountain RMA National Wildlife Refuge
- 2006-Future:** 7,266 acres of the RMA's internal parcel are transferred from the Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expanding the RMA National Wildlife Refuge to more than 12,000 acres
- Upon completion, approximately 15,000 acres of land will be managed by the Service as Rocky Mountain RMA National Wildlife Refuge, one of the largest urban wildlife areas in the United States. The Service will manage the Refuge to protect endangered plants and animals, enhance wildlife habitat, preserve natural diversity, and to furnish a place for people to enjoy and learn about wildlife.