



NEWS RELEASE
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**INTERIOR SECRETARY NORTON TO JOIN PARTNERS
IN CELEBRATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

COMMERCE CITY, CO – April 13, 2004 - Interior Secretary Gale Norton will return to her home state of Colorado on Saturday, April 17 for a ceremony marking the formal transfer of nearly 5,000 acres out of the 17,000 acres of land at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA) from the U.S. Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the establishment of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Once the cleanup is complete, approximately 10,000 additional acres of land will be transferred to the Service.

Secretary Norton will join past and present members of the Colorado Congressional delegation, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment, Geoffrey Prosch, EPA Deputy Administrator, Steve Johnson, and representatives from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Shell Oil Company and other organizations, as well as the general public, in celebrating the addition of land into the National Wildlife Refuge System and recognizing the cooperative effort that led to this significant accomplishment.

“The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge has a rich past and a promising future,” said Norton. “In celebrating this important milestone and the establishment of the Refuge, we also must remember the history of this site, its role in national defense and the valuable lessons learned here.”

“Once used to protect and preserve our freedom, this parcel of land has now been transformed into a national resource and treasure by joining the national wildlife refuge system,” said Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment, Geoffrey Prosch. “The Army is very proud to turn this land over to the Department of the Interior for the public to enjoy its abundant resources for generations to come.”

“Shell congratulates the Army and Fish and Wildlife Service on the official establishment of the Refuge,” said Ray Collins, Vice President and Global Divestments Manager for Shell Chemicals. “The commitment of all parties involved here to ensure a comprehensive and safe cleanup is a great example of what can be accomplished through private and public sector cooperation.”

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“Today is a historic occasion in EPA’s Superfund program, marking the successful cleanup of nearly 5,000 acres of land, culminating after years of hard work to ensure that rigorous health standards are met. Thus returning the Arsenal for reuse as a wildlife refuge benefiting the communities of Commerce City, Montbello, Henderson and Denver,” said Steve Johnson, Deputy Administrator for the EPA.

The media is invited to visit Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge during its invitation-only, refuge establishment ceremony. The Refuge will host a public celebration in the afternoon. Spectacular wildlife viewing opportunities will be available through guided walking and tram tours. Environmental education programs and activities also will be a part of the event’s festivities.

When: Saturday, April 17th, 10:30 a.m. (Invitation only – VIP and Media Event)
Public celebration from 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Where: Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
72nd and Quebec Street, West Gate entrance

Background

The 27 square-mile Rocky Mountain Arsenal, located in Commerce City, Colorado, approximately 10 miles northeast of downtown Denver, is one of the largest cleanup sites in the country. In 1942, RMA was built to manufacture chemical weapons to be used in World War II as a war deterrent. In 1946, some of the facilities were leased to private industry for the production of industrial and agricultural chemicals. The Arsenal later became a site for chemical agent demilitarization programs. Since 1985, the sole mission of the Arsenal has been environmental remediation. In 1987, RMA was listed on EPA’s Superfund National Priorities List.

Currently, 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 Army, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Colorado, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Shell Oil Company. Once the cleanup is complete, the remainder of 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 nearly 300 species of wildlife, including deer, coyotes, bald eagles and white pelicans.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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