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AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS: Secretary Salazar, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Announce Expanded Conservation at Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Represents Key Step in Establishing Rocky Mountain Greenway as America's Next Great Urban Park

GOLDEN, Colo. – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Colorado and local municipalities today closed on a land exchange that will allow approximately 1,200 acres of important wildlife habitat to be added to the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, increasing the refuge's size by nearly one-third and connecting it with the region's open space and trail system. Rocky Flats is one of three National Wildlife Refuges in the Denver metropolitan area that provide open space, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Today's closing is an important step in establishing the [Rocky Mountain Greenway](#), an uninterrupted trail and open space network will connect hundreds of miles of trails in the Denver metropolitan area. The Rocky Mountain Greenway, part of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors program, will link the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Rocky Flats and Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuges, Rocky Mountain National Park, and community trail systems.

"Today's action will significantly expand one of the cornerstones of Colorado's open space and trails network and will protect the Front Range's mountain backdrop as one of the state's crown jewels," said Secretary Salazar. "I applaud all the partners who have come together with the state and local communities to connect people to the great outdoors and to take this key step toward realizing the Rocky Mountain Greenway as America's next great urban park."

The land exchange is a part of a larger set of transactions involving private landowners and other public entities that will result in the conservation of habitat and recreation lands. Together, these transactions seek to eliminate development threats to the western edge of the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, connect the Refuge's protected plant and animal habitats to conserved land owned by local government open space programs, and buffer the Refuge near its southern boundary.

The Governor's Office, Colorado Attorney General's Office, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Public Health and Environment, State Board of Land Commissioners, Jefferson and Boulder counties, Jefferson Parkway Public Highway Authority, the City of Boulder, City and County

of Broomfield and City of Arvada have worked for over four years to complete this set of transactions that benefits the region's land and wildlife conservation and transportation needs.

"This addition to the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge will help protect the future of both Colorado's natural and human resources," said Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper. "The additional land will create more quality open space and wildlife habitat northwest of Denver and will bring nearly \$9.5 million to support public schools and the state school trust. We want to thank all the partners involved in this incredibly beneficial investment in Colorado's future."

"Colorado's public lands and wildlife form the very foundation of what makes our state a great place to live, work and raise a family," U.S. Senator Mark Udall said. "Expanding the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, which I helped create during my time in the U.S. House of Representatives, ensures this important area will remain vibrant for both recreationists and wildlife for years to come."

"I commend the collaborative effort by all the parties to come to agreement on this important land exchange" Rep. Ed Perlmutter said. "Enhancing the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge connects our communities across the region, maintains our open spaces, protects our wildlife and improves recreational opportunities for generations to come."

"On behalf of the Colorado Natural Resources Trustees, we are proud of our early efforts to secure original seed money and work out some early land transactions," said Colorado Attorney General John Suthers. "By establishing a framework for federal, state and local governments, this wildlife refuge creates an important link between existing open space in the Denver-metropolitan area."

"This type of collaborative partnership between local communities and state and federal governments and private landowners is the best way for conservation to proceed in the 21st Century," said Noreen Walsh, FWS Mountain-Prairie Regional Director. "Today, we have completed an exchange and a broader set of actions that will expand the Refuge, conserve wildlife habitat and provide a greater network of open space for the people and wildlife on the Front Range."

Today's land closing follows a favorable ruling by the federal district court in Colorado that the Service complied with the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act of 2001 and applicable laws. Last Friday, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals denied an emergency motion to block the land transaction. As part of the refuge expansion, the Service transferred a 300-foot wide strip of land on the eastern boundary of the Refuge to the Jefferson Public Parkway Highway Authority for transportation improvements. The transfer of the Indiana Street transportation corridor is required by the Refuge's authorizing legislation.

The land exchange offers the protections of the National Wildlife Refuge System to a large, contiguous and intact tract of xeric tallgrass prairie. Xeric tallgrass prairie only exists on a narrow band of the Colorado Piedmont, east of the mountain front in Colorado. The xeric tallgrass prairie grassland on Rocky Flats and the City of Boulder Open Space nearby to the west are believed to be the largest remaining tracts of this plant community in North America. Additionally, portions of land that the Service will receive include additional riparian habit for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, a species listed by the federal government as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1998.

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge sits at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The refuge site played an important role in Cold War history as a Department of Energy-operated facility for the production of plutonium triggers for nuclear warheads. The refuge entered U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stewardship in 2007 following the Environmental Protection Agency's determination that corrective cleanup actions had been completed.

For additional information on the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, please visit:
<http://www.fws.gov/rockyflats/>.

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