

POSTAL PATRON

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Refuge Expands Hours, Breaks Ground On New Visitor Center

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge has expanded its hours and nature and environmental programming to meet increased public demand.

“We’re filling our tours and programs on a regular basis, so we’ve opened for two more days a week to allow more people to enjoy their national wildlife refuge,” said Visitor Services Manager Sherry James of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Refuge is now open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day but Monday. The Visitor Center is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Guided wildlife viewing tours on the “Wild Rides” bus are offered every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also offers new nature and environmental programs each season to feature different wildlife species and recreational opportunities. This summer, for example, the Service will host a Refuge Fishing Clinic on Saturday, Aug. 7,

from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. to teach new anglers the basics of fishing. Experienced anglers will be on hand to coach participants on fishing techniques so they can enjoy the height of fishing season this fall.

The Service has also launched an evening guest lecture series for adults at 7 p.m. on the third Saturday of the month. Experts from the Black-Footed Ferret Center will bring ferrets to the Refuge on Aug. 21 and discuss recovery efforts for the species. On Sept. 18, the Buffalo Soldiers will offer a glimpse into the role and daily life of the African-American soldiers who served in the early days of the American West.

To learn about other nature and environmental programs, visit the Refuge online at <http://www.fws.gov/rockymountainarsenal>. Please note: Reservations are required for all tours and nature programs. To reserve your spot, please call 303.298.0930. ■



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service started construction this spring on the new Visitor Center, which is scheduled to open in Spring 2011. Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army, Shell Oil Co., EPA, Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, Tri-County Health Department, Restoration Advisory Board, Adams County, City of Commerce City and others joined in the ceremonial groundbreaking.

Photo by Rich Keen/DPR&A Inc.



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Rocky Mountain Arsenal
Community Information Line
303.289.0136



Top: Crews pull a protective cover liner into place. Left: Seed is dispersed and mixed into the cover soil. Right: Irrigation channels direct rain and snow from covers.

Cover Over Enhanced Landfill Completed

The second of two on-site landfills at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal passed its final cover construction inspection this spring. The cover was the last one constructed over the landfill and consolidation areas to be completed.

“The cleanup is progressing within budget and a full year ahead of schedule,” said Charlie Scharmann, U.S. Army

program manager at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal. “Thanks to the support of the community and collaboration with the regulatory agencies, we are fulfilling the vision of transforming the site into one of the premier urban wildlife refuges in the United States.”

The final cover inspection for the Enhanced Landfill demonstrated that the cover met the health and safety

Enhanced Landfill continued on next page.

Five-Year Review Under Way

The Arsenal has begun its third Five-Year Review, which is being conducted collaboratively with federal, state and local regulatory agencies. The purpose of the review is to complete a comprehensive assessment of how the environmental cleanup program is performing and evaluate its ongoing protectiveness of human health and the environment. The Arsenal completed its first Five-Year Review in 2000, and reviews will continue to be conducted after the environmental cleanup ends to ensure it performs as designed.

Components of the Review

Under the EPA's Superfund law, Five-Year Reviews are required at sites where contamination remains (for example, in landfills, disposal basins and groundwater treatment facilities). During each review, a multiagency team examines documents, conducts data review and analysis, completes site inspections and community interviews, and provides an overall assessment of the cleanup program and whether it continues to be protective of public health and the environment.

The team is tasked with answering the following questions:

- Is the remedy functioning as intended and as outlined in the Records of Decision (the documents that provide the

overall framework and rationale for the environmental cleanup program)?

- Are the assumptions used at the time of the cleanup selection still valid, and have any relevant environmental standards changed?

Community Involvement

After the review is completed, the team will prepare a report and issue it for a 30-day public comment period, which will be announced in local newspapers and on the Arsenal's website and community information line. The team will then consider the comments and questions posed by the public and include responses in the final report.

The agencies involved in the review are the U.S. Army, Shell Oil Co., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment and Tri-County Health Department.

For more information, please call the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Community Information Line at 303.289.0136, or visit www.rma.army.mil and click on the Five-Year Review link. Or, contact the EPA community information officer at 303.312.6601. ■



Once vegetation is established, the covers blend in with the surrounding landscape (pictured here: Hazardous Waste Landfill Cover).

Enhanced Landfill continued front front page.

requirements of federal, state and local regulatory agencies. Similar inspections had already occurred for covers over the Hazardous Waste Landfill and waste consolidation areas.

Those areas are all located in the central portion of the site and will be permanently retained by the U.S. Army. The landfills and consolidation areas will be monitored and maintained to ensure they perform as designed and remain protective of public health and the environment. ■

New Wetlands Created During Revegetation Effort

New wetlands have been created at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal as part of the ongoing reseeding and restoration of the site.

“Wetlands play an essential role in the health of any ecosystem,” noted Refuge Manager Steve Berendzen of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “They provide habitat for hundreds of species of birds, fish, mammals and insects and act as natural filters for rain and snow runoff.”

The new wetlands provide additional habitat for waterfowl and migrating birds, which are already using the lakes near the Visitor Center. The largest of the new wetlands were seeded in April, when U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service volunteers planted a mixture of native seeds and plants, including Bebb's sedge, swordleaf rush, longstyle rush, inland saltgrass, blackcreeper sedge and arrowgrass.

Although the Arsenal had originally planned to plant prairie grasses, crews noticed that a thin layer of clay beneath the surface caused rain and snow to form in natural shallow ponds, which attracted wildlife. The Arsenal worked with the regulatory agencies to modify the plans and to incorporate a two-acre wetlands area. The wetlands are located along the Refuge tour route, near the bison pilot area, so the wildlife will be visible to birdwatchers and other visitors.

The new wetlands are part of more than 6,750 acres that have been reseeded at the site in a cooperative effort conducted by the U.S. Army, Shell Oil Co. and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. By the time the revegetation program is completed, more than 10,000 acres will have been restored to a native shortgrass prairie. ■



The new wetlands are attracting diverse waterfowl and bird species, including ducks, sandhill cranes and killdeer (inset photo).