

U.S. Department of Energy

Finding of No Significant Impact

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for Rock Creek Reserve

Summary: The Department of Energy (DOE) with the assistance and cooperation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, prepared an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (Plan)(DOE/EA-1371) for the Rock Creek Reserve at the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (Site) located north of Golden, Colorado. The Rock Creek Reserve was established in May 1999 in recognition of the area's biological significance. Although still under the ownership of the DOE, the Rock Creek Reserve will be co-managed with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of an interagency agreement signed by these two agencies in 1999. The need for an integrated natural resources management plan was recognized and included as a requirement in the interagency agreement.

The EA describes and analyzes: a) Alternatives (No Action, Actions Considered But Not Selected, and Proposed Actions) to be considered; b) Affected Environment, which describes the current conditions of the reserve and the buffer zone in general; and c) Environmental Consequences of the various alternatives.

The EA was the subject of public comment from December 4, 2000, through January 31, 2001. Written comments regarding the EA were received from various local city governments, state and federal agencies, environmental organizations, and individuals. Common inquiries included the affects of access and recreation on sensitive species protection, habitat protection, and enhancement. Concerns about specific details regarding features and planned initiatives to accommodate the vegetation and fauna of the reserve were also submitted. Many suggested word changes were submitted by various groups and individuals. The comments received were generally construed to be supportive of the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Rock Creek Reserve. The comments were assessed and considered, and where appropriate the Plan was modified. The comments, as well as the DOE's responses, are included as Appendix 10 in the Final Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan/Environmental Assessment for the Rock Creek Reserve.

Proposed Action: The Plan outlines the proposed steps that provide the stewardship of the natural resources of the Rock Creek Reserve. The Plan proposes the continuation of current management programs and polices for the buffer zone (which include the Rock Creek Reserve) and differs from these programs mainly in the inclusion of these proposed actions:

- expansion of the Rock Creek Reserve from 800 acres to 1,700 acres;
- development of an access and recreation study;
- development of a contaminants study for the Rock Creek Reserve;
- assessment and determination of feasibility to stabilize all, or part of, the Lindsay Ranch;
- within the annual vegetation management plan, provide increased emphasis for noxious weed management, including increased biological controls;
- monitoring of water quality and quantity for Rock Creek, including determination of current and minimum in-stream flows; and

- introductions of sensitive native faunal species (and removal of non-natives) and consideration of introducing federally-listed plant species (in accordance with approved recovery plans) into the Rock Creek Reserve.

Alternatives Considered: Management options that are consistent with existing policies, agreements, and restrictions, and which still meet the goals of the Plan, were proposed. Alternatives that were not considered in the alternative analysis sections include those which could compromise the Site's cleanup and closure mission. Therefore, options such as unrestricted public access and recreation that would inhibit the Site from performing its mission were not considered.

Environmental Effects: No negative environmental effects are expected to result from the implementation of this Plan. On the contrary, positive cumulative impacts should result over time. The Plan encourages bio-diversity through the protection of communities and ecosystems, the promotion of native species, the protection of rare and ecologically important species, and the restoration of ecosystems, communities, and native species.

The management of the Rock Creek Reserve's natural resources now will ensure the future availability of quality lands.

**For Further Information
About This Action Contact:**

Cliff Franklin
NEPA Document Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Rocky Flats Field Office
10808 Highway 93, Unit A
Golden, CO 80403-8200
Telephone: (303) 966-5919

**For Copies Of The EA
Contact:**

Joe Rau
NEPA Compliance Officer
U.S. Department of Energy
Rocky Flats Field Office
10808 Highway 93, Unit A
Golden, CO 80403-8200
Telephone: (303) 966-7410

Determination: Based on the information and analysis in the Plan/EA, the DOE has determined that the proposal to implement the preferred alternatives described in the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Rock Creek Reserve does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required, and the DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact for the Proposed Action.

Signed at Golden, Colorado, this _____ day of April 2001.

Barbara A. Mazurowski, Manager
Rocky Flats Field Office
U.S. Department of Energy