



Contacts:

Charlie Scharmann for U.S. Army, 303-289-0300
Sherry James for U.S. FWS, 303-289-0659
Jennifer Watson for Shell, 303-382-4065
Jennifer Chergo for U.S. EPA, 303-312-6601
Warren Smith for CDPHE, 303-632-3373

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to Join Partners in Celebrating Transformation of Rocky Mountain Arsenal *Completion of Refuge, End of All Fieldwork Signals Vision Fulfilled*

COMMERCE CITY, CO – October 13, 2010 –U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar will join the U.S. Army and Shell Oil Co. on Oct. 15 to celebrate fulfilling the vision of transforming the Rocky Mountain Arsenal into a premier urban national wildlife refuge.

The event will officially mark the end of all major environmental cleanup work at the site. The ceremony will also celebrate the formal transfer of 2,500 acres of land from the U.S. Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, bringing the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge to its final size of roughly 15,000 acres.

Secretary Salazar will join Congressman Ed Perlmutter; Colorado Attorney General John Suthers; Hershell (Hew) E. Wolfe, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health; Carol Rushin, Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 Deputy Regional Administrator; Howard Roitman, Acting Director of Environmental Programs for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment; and representatives from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army, Shell Oil Co. and other organizations in recognizing the cooperative effort that led to this achievement.

“With the successful completion of the vision to create a premier urban national wildlife refuge, a new chapter now begins,” said Secretary Salazar. “I commend the hard work by so many partners that led to this great achievement. This vital natural resource will provide a permanent safe haven for wildlife and offer many opportunities for people from all walks of life, especially our youth, to connect with nature in the heart of a large urban area.”

For more than a decade, the Army, Shell and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have worked cooperatively with the Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and Tri-County Health Department to complete a comprehensive environmental cleanup of the Arsenal. All fieldwork will conclude this fall, within budget and a year ahead of schedule. The total cost of the environmental cleanup, which is shared by the Army and Shell, is \$2.1 billion.

“The Army is proud to have completed its mission at the Arsenal by transitioning land that was once used to protect and preserve our freedom into one of the largest urban national wildlife refuges in the country,” said Hew Wolfe, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health. “As we approach the conclusion of the environmental cleanup program, which has surpassed the highest environmental and safety standards, we would like to thank our partners, the community, and the citizens of Colorado. Together, we have created a conservation asset for countless generations to enjoy.”

“I congratulate the U.S. Army and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their accomplishments here at the Arsenal and thank the community for its support in helping us realize this goal,” said Ray Collins, General Manager for Shell Oil Downstream. “Shell is proud to be a part of this productive partnership, which former Defense Secretary William Cohen called a ‘national model’ of cooperation among the public and private sectors.”

“Today we celebrate the transformation of contaminated land into a spectacular, thriving national wildlife refuge,” said EPA Assistant Regional Administrator Carol Campbell. “EPA is proud to have helped pave the way for this great achievement.”

“Restoring and preserving Colorado’s open spaces is a gift to future generations,” said Martha Rudolph, executive director of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. “The road to this day has been paved with the hard work, determination and talents of many people, who deserve the highest praise for making our state a safer, healthier place.”

Background

The 17,000-acre Rocky Mountain Arsenal, located in Commerce City, Colorado, approximately 10 miles northeast of downtown Denver, is one of the largest environmental 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. Following the war, the Army leased some of the facilities to private industry, including Shell Oil Co., for the production of agricultural chemicals. The RMA later became a site for munition demilitarization programs. All manufacturing stopped in the mid 1980s, and the site’s sole mission became environmental remediation and restoration. In 1987, RMA was listed on EPA’s Superfund National Priorities List.

All fieldwork related to the cleanup of soil and structures will conclude this fall, within budget and a year ahead of schedule. Cleanup plans were developed and approved by the U.S. Army, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Colorado, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Shell. The Army and Shell conducted the cleanup at a total cost of \$2.1 billion. Documentation related to program completion will conclude in 2011. Groundwater treatment will continue until all water leaving the site meets federal and state standards.

The Refuge was formally established in April 2004 and doubled in size in 2007 with another land transfer from the Army to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This final significant land transfer in 2010 will increase the Refuge to its final size of roughly 15,000 acres, making the site one of America’s premier urban wildlife refuges and a high-profile, dynamic resource located in the heart of the rapidly-growing metropolitan Denver region. The site provides sanctuary for more than 330 species of wildlife, including bison, deer, coyotes, bald eagles, and burrowing owls.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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