



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

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PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNS LAW CREATING  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

President George Bush today signed legislation ultimately converting the Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver, which once produced chemical warfare products, into one of the largest urban national wildlife refuges in the United States.

Approximately 10 miles from downtown Denver, the Arsenal site encompasses 27 square miles of prairie, wetlands, lakes, and rolling uplands, providing vital habitat for more than 240 species of wildlife. President Bush's action paves the way for eventual inclusion of these lands in the National Wildlife Refuge System, administered by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Once agricultural, the lands were purchased in 1942 by the Army and used as a top secret site for the manufacture of chemical weapons. In later years, the area was used for the production of pesticides. Under this new legislation, the Arsenal will become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System once the Army has completed all necessary contaminant clean-up activities.

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"This is in keeping with the Bush Administration commitment to expand conservation and recreation opportunities in or close to our cities," said Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan. "The Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Army, will work hand-in-hand to first clean-up, and then ensure the future of this unusual island of habitat adjacent to a major urban area."

Under an existing wildlife partnership agreement with the Army, the Service manages the fish and wildlife resources and public use on the Arsenal. This is to continue while the Army conducts its clean-up operations. In line with Federal wildlife laws, the Army will consult with the Service to ensure its activities do not adversely impact wildlife resources.

Mike Hayden, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks said, "This alliance of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army demonstrates the good that can be done for wildlife - even in the most surprising places - when we all work together."

Bald eagles, golden eagles, ferruginous hawks, migratory waterfowl, songbirds, coyotes, foxes, and mule and white-tailed deer are just a few of the species found on the Arsenal's largely undisturbed lands. Extensive prairie dog towns cover more than 1,500 acres, providing an abundant food source for predatory species. The Arsenal's waters teem with northern pike, largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish.

"The Arsenal will provide a great place for the citizens of metropolitan Denver, and others, to get out and enjoy seeing wildlife close to home," said John Turner, Service Director. "Just one indication of how much people are into wildlife is the fact that over 10,000 people turned out to visit the area during special Bald Eagle Day wildlife watching activities held last winter."

The Service has been administering public use programs and access at the Arsenal since 1989. Since then, its various programs have reached well over 150,000 people. Activities have included interpretive tours, eagle watching, fishing opportunities for youth groups and adults with disabilities, nature walks, and other special educational programs.

Ralph Morgenweck, the Service's Regional Director in Denver, said the public will be called upon to assist the Service in creating a management plan for the future refuge, meeting the needs of wildlife, as well as local communities. He also thanked Colorado congressional members, wildlife organizations, and individuals for pushing forward the national legislation that has made the refuge a reality.