



WESTMINSTER
COLORADO

Agenda Memorandum

Agenda Item – {{section.number}}.B.

City Council Pre/Post-Meeting Study Session
June 23, 2025



Strategic Priority 3: Community Health and Safety

Invest in innovative and collaborative approaches to provide a continuum of services that preserve, promote, and protect the health, safety, and environment of Westminster.

Subject: Presentation on Proposed Signage on Woman Creek Parcel

Prepared By: Aric Otzelberger, Parks, Recreation and Libraries Director

Recommended City Council Action:

Receive a presentation and provide direction on desired language and visuals for the proposed signage on the Woman Creek Parcel.

Summary Statement:

- City Council directed Staff to work with stakeholders to develop meaningful, educational signs that present the risks of accessing the regional trail and Indiana Street bridge adjacent to the Woman Creek parcel and empower users to make their own decisions.
- Staff has engaged stakeholders on draft alternatives for signage on the Woman Creek parcel.
- City Council consideration and direction is requested on draft signage language and visuals.

Fiscal Impact:

\$10,000 to \$20,000 in expenditures

Source of Funds:

Parks Open Space and Trails (POST) Fund

Policy Issue(s):

Does City Council wish to receive a presentation and provide direction on draft signage language and visuals for signage on the Woman Creek Parcel?

Alternative(s):

City Council could choose not to receive a presentation and provide direction on desired language and visuals for signage on the Woman Creek Parcel. This is not recommended, as City Council directed Staff to bring drafts forward for consideration and direction.

Background Information

City Council, the Jefferson Board of County Commissioners, and the Jefferson County Open Space Board approved the Woman Creek Reservoir Authority Property Agreement in March 2025 to resolve a dispute related to the Woman Creek Reservoir Authority property. Per the Agreement, Jefferson County re-deeded the property to the City with the original 2019 reverter language. In exchange, the City agreed to not block public access to the Indiana Street bridge that is currently being constructed adjacent to the property. The City also agreed that the regional trail that connects to the Indiana Street bridge will be allowed to remain on the property.

On April 21, 2025, City Council provided direction to Staff to not pursue improvements to the existing social trail on the Woman Creek parcel, and provided direction to establish signage near the adjacent Indiana Street bridge, which is currently being installed. Staff has engaged stakeholders on draft alternatives, who have provided helpful information, context, preferences, and guidance. Staff is working to get signage language refined and in production as soon as possible so it can be installed in a timely manner.

There are conflicting opinions and messages from various stakeholders. Language proposed by various stakeholders is included in Attachments 1 through 4, and was used to inform the alternatives provided below. Staff engaged and sourced language from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Boulder County, and the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center to reflect diverse viewpoints and made minor modifications to align with Westminster's sign requirements. The three alternatives below attempt to balance these competing views and respect the intent of stakeholders, along with the layers of complexities and challenges over the decades at the adjacent Rocky Flats site where the regional trail and Indiana Street bridge are located.

Staff is seeking City Council preferences and direction on signage language and potential visuals that will accompany the language on the signs. Mixing and matching draft verbiage is acceptable, as is indicating any draft verbiage that is not desired.

Alternative 1

Visiting Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge May Expose You to Radioactive Materials

Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge was once a nuclear weapons site. Although it is now open for recreation, visitors are encouraged to learn about its history and make informed choices before recreating.

The Rocky Flats Plant, located 1.8 miles west of this location, operated from 1951 to 1989. The plant produced plutonium components for nuclear weapons. During this time, radioactive and hazardous materials were released into the environment, affecting land and water.

After cleanup efforts starting in the early 1990s, including removal of contaminated soil, water, and demolition of 800 structures in the central plant area, the surrounding buffer zone was designated the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge in 2007.

While the refuge is open year-round with miles of multi-use trails, radioactive and hazardous materials remain in the soil, water, and airborne dust. Nearby communities and experts continue to express concerns about health risks.

Hikers, bikers, and equestrians should make informed decisions before entering.

If you are concerned, consider alternate routes such as the Indiana Connector to the east or the Prickly Pear Trail, both part of the Rocky Mountain Greenway Trail.

For emergencies, dial 911.

For more information on plutonium hazards, visit [website or QR code here].

Alternative 2

Welcome to Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

A Prairie Passage to Rocky Flats

You are entering a unique landscape that supports rare prairie plants and over 200 wildlife species — a vital habitat preserved for recreation and conservation.

This land also holds a complex history tied to Cold War nuclear weapons production.

From 1952 to 1989, plutonium triggers were manufactured nearby. The central plant site was cleaned up and closed to the public. The surrounding buffer zone became protected habitat in 2007.

What You Should Know

In 1989, Rocky Flats was listed as a Superfund site due to contamination.

Although the Superfund area has been remediated and deemed safe by the Environmental Protection Agency and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, trace amounts of plutonium remain in the soil.

Plutonium emits alpha radiation, which is not harmful outside the body, but inhaling or ingesting dust particles may increase long-term cancer risk. Plutonium particles are invisible and odorless, and they can cling to shoes, tires, or pets.

Travel Safely

We encourage you to stay on designated trails and observe all closure signs to protect yourself and this fragile environment.

Some community members and scientists voice ongoing concerns. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supports the Refuge as safe for recreation. The choice to visit is yours — please consider the following:

- Stay on marked trails
- Respect closure areas
- Clean soil off shoes and pets before leaving
- Consider alternate routes which include the Indiana Connector to the east or the Prickly Pear Trail to the north, both part of the Rocky Mountain Greenway Trail.

Thank you for helping preserve Rocky Flats for wildlife and visitors alike.

Alternative 3

Rocky Flats Entry Exposure Warning

You are entering Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, home to rare prairie vegetation and over 200 wildlife species. This landscape also carries a legacy of nuclear weapons production.

From 1952–1989, the U.S. manufactured plutonium triggers for nuclear weapons nearby. Though the central plant site was cleaned up and closed to the public, this area — once part of the buffer zone — was preserved as habitat in 2007.

What You Should Know

Trace amounts of plutonium remain in the soil. While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have determined the Refuge is safe for public use, some scientists and community members believe no level of plutonium exposure is risk-free.

Plutonium cannot be seen or smelled. Alpha radiation it emits is not harmful outside the body — but inhaling or ingesting particles could increase long-term cancer risk. Dust may cling to shoes, tires, or pets. It is recommended that users stay on designated trails.

Explore with Awareness

The choice to visit is yours. This place holds both ecological wonder and historical complexity. Walk with care — and reflect on the past, present, and future of this land.

Other alternatives are provided as attachments and include:

- Attachment 1: Recommended Language by Stakeholders
- Attachment 2: Existing United States Fish and Wildlife Sign on Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge
- Attachment 3: Draft Language Being Considered in Boulder County
- Attachment 4: Wes McKinley Language – HB10-1127

Visuals

Attachment 5 provides a sample kiosk structure that could be used for the signage adjacent to the bridge. Other smaller form signage could be considered as well. Attachment 6 provides several visual concepts. City Council preference and direction is desired regarding visuals, including the use of the

radioactive symbol and image(s) of the former weapons manufacturing plant.

The City's Strategic Plan priority of Community Health and Safety is met by providing signage to promote public awareness regarding the history of Rocky Flats and offer considerations around recreational opportunities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jody L. Andrews", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jody L. Andrews
City Manager

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Recommended Language by Stakeholders

Attachment 2: Existing United States Fish and Wildlife Sign on Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Attachment 3: Draft Language Being Considered in Boulder County

Attachment 4: Wes McKinley Language – HB10-1127

Attachment 5: Sample Signage Kiosk

Attachment 6: Sample Draft Visuals

Attachment 7: Proposed Signage on Woman Creek Parcel Presentation