



# National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey 2012: Individual Refuge Results for Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

By Alia M. Dietsch, Natalie R. Sexton, Lynne Koontz, and Shannon J. Conk

This is an "urban refuge" at its best! You guys have done a great thing to allow us to enjoy this space again. It has a cool mix of outdoor recreation and history. I love it!

— *Survey comment from a visitor to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge*



Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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## **Introduction**

The National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System), established in 1903 and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), is the leading network of protected lands and waters in the world specifically dedicated to the conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats. There are 560 national wildlife refuges (refuges) and 38 wetland management districts nationwide, including possessions and territories in the Pacific and Caribbean, encompassing more than 150 million acres (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2013). As stated in the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, the mission of the Refuge System is “to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.” Part of achieving this mission is the goal “to foster understanding and instill appreciation of the diversity and interconnectedness of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats” and the goal “to provide and enhance opportunities to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006, p. 2). The Refuge System attracts nearly 45 million visitors annually, including 34.8 million people who observe and photograph wildlife, 9.6 million who hunt and fish, and nearly 675,000 teachers and students who use refuges as “outdoor classrooms” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2012). Understanding visitor perceptions of refuges and characterizing their experiences on refuges are critical elements of managing these lands and meeting the goals of the Refuge System.

The Service contracted with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct a national survey of visitors regarding their experiences on refuges. The purpose of the survey was to better understand visitor experiences and trip characteristics, to gauge visitors’ levels of satisfaction with existing recreational opportunities, and to garner feedback to inform the design of programs and facilities. The survey results will inform performance, planning, budget, and communications goals. Results will also inform Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs), visitor services, and transportation planning processes.

## Organization of Results

These results are specific to visitors who were contacted at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) (this refuge) during the specified sampling periods and are part of USGS Data Series 754. All refuges participating in the 2012 survey effort will receive individual refuge results specific to the visitors to that refuge. Each set of results is organized by the following categories:

- **Introduction:** An overview of the Refuge System and the goals of the national survey effort.
- **Methods:** The procedures for the national survey effort, including selecting refuges, developing the survey instrument, contacting visitors, and guidance for interpreting the results.
- **Refuge Description:** A brief description of the refuge location, acreage, purpose, recreational activities, and visitation statistics, including a map (where available) and refuge website link.
- **Sampling at This Refuge:** The sampling periods, locations, and response rate for this refuge.
- **Selected Survey Results:** Key findings for this refuge, including:
  - Visitor and trip characteristics
  - Visitor spending in the local communities
  - Visitors opinions about this refuge
  - Visitor opinions about Refuge System topics
- **Conclusion**
- **References Cited**
- **Survey Frequencies (Appendix A):** The survey instrument with frequency results for this refuge.
- **Visitor Comments (Appendix B):** The verbatim responses to open-ended survey questions for this refuge.

## **Methods**

### **Selecting Participating Refuges**

The national visitor survey was conducted from January–December 2012 on 25 refuges across the Refuge System (table 1). Each refuge was selected for participation by the Refuge Transportation Program National Coordinator in conjunction with regional office Visitor Services Chiefs. Selection was based on the need to inform transportation planning processes at the national level and to address refuge planning and transportation needs at the individual refuge level.

### **Developing the Survey Instrument**

Researchers at the USGS developed the survey in consultation with the Service Headquarters Office, managers, planners, and visitor services professionals. The survey was peer-reviewed by academic and government researchers and was further pre-tested with eight Refuge System Friends Group representatives (one from each region) to ensure readability and overall clarity. The survey and associated methodology were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB control #: 1018-0145; expiration date: 6/30/2013).

### **Contacting Visitors**

Refuge staff identified two separate 15-day sampling periods, and one or more locations at which to sample, that best reflected the diversity of use and specific visitation patterns of each participating refuge. Sampling periods and locations were identified by refuge staff and submitted to the USGS via an internal website that included a customized mapping tool. A standardized sampling schedule was created for all refuges that included eight randomly selected sampling shifts during each of the two sampling periods. Sampling shifts were 3–5 hour (hr) time bands, stratified across AM and PM as well as weekend and weekdays. In coordination with refuge staff, any necessary customizations were made to the standardized schedule to accommodate the identified sampling locations and to address specific spatial and temporal patterns of visitation.

Twenty visitors (18 years of age or older) per sampling shift were systematically selected, for a total of 320 willing participants per refuge (or 160 per sampling period) to ensure an adequate sample of completed surveys. When necessary, shifts were moved, added, or extended to alleviate logistical limitations (for example, weather or low visitation at a particular site) in an effort to reach target numbers.

**Table 1.** Refuges participating in the 2012 national wildlife refuge visitor survey.

<b>Pacific Region (R1)</b>
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (WA)
<b>Southwest Region (R2)</b>
Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge (TX)
Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge (TX)
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (AZ)
Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge (TX)
Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge (OK)
<b>Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region (R3)</b>
La Crosse District, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (WI)
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (MN)
<b>Southeast Region (R4)</b>
Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (FL)
Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (AL)
Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge (AR)
Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge (LA)
National Key Deer Refuge (FL)
Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (GA/SC)
<b>Northeast Region (R5)</b>
Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge (MA)
Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge (VA)
Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (VA)
Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (NJ)
Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge (ME)
<b>Mountain-Prairie Region (R6)</b>
Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (UT)
Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge (MT)
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (CO)
National Bison Range (MT)
<b>California and Nevada Region (R8)</b>
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (CA)
San Luis National Wildlife Refuge (CA)

Refuge staff and/or volunteers (survey recruiters) contacted visitors onsite following a protocol provided by the USGS that was designed to obtain a representative sample. Instructions included contacting visitors across the entire sampling shift (for example, every  $n^{\text{th}}$  visitor for dense visitation, as often as possible for sparse visitation) and contacting only one person per group. Visitors were informed of the survey effort, given a token incentive (for example, a small magnet or temporary tattoo), and asked to participate. Willing participants provided their name, mailing address, and preference for language (English or Spanish) and survey mode (mail or online). Survey recruiters were also instructed to record any refusals and then proceed with the sampling protocol.

All visitors that agreed onsite to fill out a survey received the same sequence of correspondence regardless of their preference for survey mode. This approach allowed for an assessment of visitors' likelihood of completing the survey by their preferred survey mode (see Sexton and others, 2011). Researchers at the USGS sent the following materials to all visitors agreeing to participate who had not yet completed a survey at the time of each mailing (Dillman, 2007):

- A postcard mailed within 10 days of the initial onsite contact thanking visitors for agreeing to participate in the survey and inviting them to complete the survey online.
- A packet mailed 9 days later consisting of a cover letter, survey, and postage paid envelope for returning a completed paper survey.
- A reminder postcard mailed 7 days later.
- A second packet mailed 14 days later consisting of another cover letter, survey, and postage paid envelope for returning a completed paper survey.

Each mailing included instructions for completing the survey online, so visitors had an opportunity to complete an online survey with each mailing. Those visitors indicating a preference for Spanish were sent Spanish versions of all correspondence (including the survey). Finally, a short survey of six questions was sent to nonrespondents four weeks after the second survey packet to determine any differences between respondents and nonrespondents at the aggregate level. Online survey data were exported and paper survey data were entered into Microsoft Excel using a standardized survey codebook and data entry procedure. All survey data were analyzed using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS, v.20) software<sup>1</sup>.

## Interpreting the Results

The extent to which these results accurately represent the total population of visitors to this refuge is dependent on the number of visitors who completed the survey (sample size) and the ability of the variation

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<sup>1</sup> Any use of trade, firm, or product names is for descriptive purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

resulting from that sample to reflect the beliefs and interests of different visitor user groups (Scheaffer and others, 1996). The composition of the sample is dependent on the ability of the standardized sampling protocol for this study to account for the spatial and temporal patterns of visitor use unique to each refuge. Spatially, the geographical layout and public-use infrastructure varies widely across refuges. Some refuges can be accessed only through a single entrance, while others have multiple unmonitored access points across large expanses of land and water. As a result, the degree to which sampling locations effectively captured spatial patterns of visitor use will vary from refuge to refuge. Temporally, the two 15-day sampling periods may not have effectively captured all of the predominant visitor uses/activities on some refuges during the course of a year, which may result in certain survey measures such as visitors' self-reported "primary activity during their visit" reflecting a seasonality bias. Results contained within this report may not apply to visitors during all times of the year or to visitors who did not visit the survey locations.

In this report, visitors who responded to the survey are referred to simply as "visitors." However, when interpreting the results for Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR, any potential spatial and temporal sampling limitation specific to this refuge needs to be considered when generalizing the results to the total population of visitors. For example, a refuge that sampled during a special event (for example, birding festival) held during the spring may have contacted a higher percentage of visitors who traveled greater than 50 miles (mi) to get to the refuge than the actual number of these people who would have visited throughout the calendar year (that is, oversampling of nonlocals). Another refuge may not have enough nonlocal visitors in the sample to adequately represent the beliefs and opinions of that group type. If the sample for a specific group type (for example, nonlocals, hunters) is too low ( $n < 30$ ), a warning is included in the text. Finally, the term "this visit" is used to reference the visit during which people were contacted to participate in the survey.

## **Refuge Description for Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge**

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR is located just outside of Denver, CO. At its current size of 15,000 acres, the "Arsenal" is one of the largest urban refuges in the country. The area was first occupied by Native Americans nearly 8,000 years ago, and was eventually homesteaded by Euro-American settlers beginning in the 1870s. In 1942, the U.S. Army built a chemical weapons production facility on the land. Mustard gas, Lewisite, and chlorine gas were the main weapons produced throughout the Second World War (WWII) in response to the potential threat of Germany or Japan using chemical weapons. The Arsenal facility also produced other munitions, including the napalm bomb, which was used in 1945 to help end the war. The grounds also hosted approximately 300 German prisoners-of-war during the wartime effort.

Following the conclusion of WWII, demilitarization programs began at the Arsenal and portions of the property were leased to private industry engaged in the manufacturing of pesticides and herbicides. The Army again used the site for chemical weapons production during the Cold War. After years of use, the local community observed side effects of soil and groundwater contamination. The Army and Shell Oil Company became active in clean-up efforts during the early 1980s, and the oversight of the Environmental Protection Agency beginning in 1987 helped to bolster these activities. During this time, the Service found more than 300 species of wildlife on or nearby these lands, and Congress responded by enacting a law that would turn

the Arsenal into a refuge pending final clean up. The Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR was officially opened to the public in 2010, and is often used as an example of successful remediation efforts.

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR now hosts over 330 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish over a wide range of prairie, woodland, and wetland habitat. Wild bison, coyotes, deer, raccoons, bald eagles, and burrowing owls can be spotted throughout the refuge. Just over 30,000 visitors explore the refuge each year (2011 Refuge Annual Performance Plan measures; Rob Miller, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2012, written commun.), and is expected to grow dramatically in the next decade. Visitor opportunities and activities include wildlife observation, an auto tour route, 9 miles of trails, catch-and-release fishing, as well as environmental education and interpretive programs at the state-of-the-art Visitor Center. Figure 1 displays a map of the refuge. For more information, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/rockymountainarsenal/>.

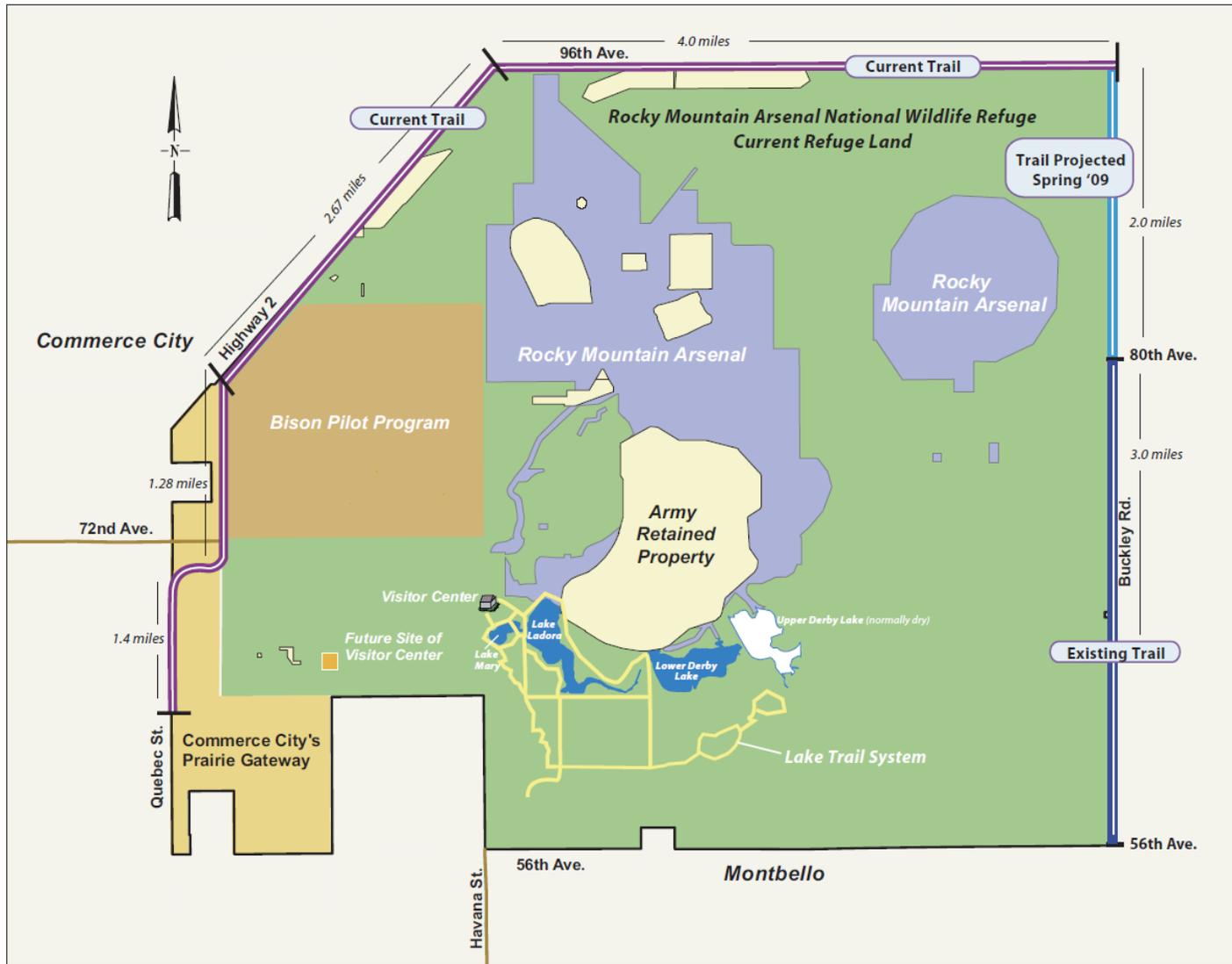


Figure 1. Map of Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR, courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Sampling at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

A total of 286 visitors agreed to participate in the survey during the two sampling periods at the identified locations at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (table 2). In all, 199 visitors completed the survey for a 75% response rate, and  $\pm 4.6\%$  margin of error at the 95% confidence level.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2.** Sampling and response rate summary for Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR.

Sampling period	Dates	Locations	Total contacts	Undeliverable addresses	Completed surveys	Response rate
1	6/9/12 to 6/23/12; and 7/11/12 to 7/22/12	Lake Mary Visitor Center				
SP1 Totals			149	12	99	72%
2	10/13/12 to 10/27/12	Lake Mary Visitor Center				
SP2 Totals			137	10	100	79%
Combined Totals			<b>286</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>75%</b>

<sup>2</sup> A margin of error of  $\pm 5\%$  at a 95% confidence level, for example, means that, if a reported percentage is 55%, then 95 out of 100 times, that sample estimate would fall between 50% and 60% if the same question was asked in the same way. The margin of error is calculated with an 80/20 response distribution, assuming that for a given dichotomous choice question, approximately 80% of respondents would select one choice and 20% would select the other choice (Salant and Dillman, 1994).

## Selected Survey Results

### Visitor and Trip Characteristics

*A solid understanding of visitor characteristics and details about their trips to refuges can inform communication and outreach efforts, inform managers about desired types of visitor services and modes of transportation used on refuges, and help forecast use and gauge demand for services and facilities.*

#### Familiarity with the Refuge System

Many visitors to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR reported that before participating in the survey, they were aware of the role of the Service in managing refuges (81%) and that the Refuge System has the mission of conserving, managing, and restoring fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (89%). It is important to note that we did not ask visitors to identify the mission of the Refuge System or the Service, and positive responses to these questions concerning the management and mission of the Refuge System do not necessarily indicate that these visitors fully understand the day-to-day management practices of individual refuges, only that visitors feel they have a basic knowledge of who manages refuges and why.

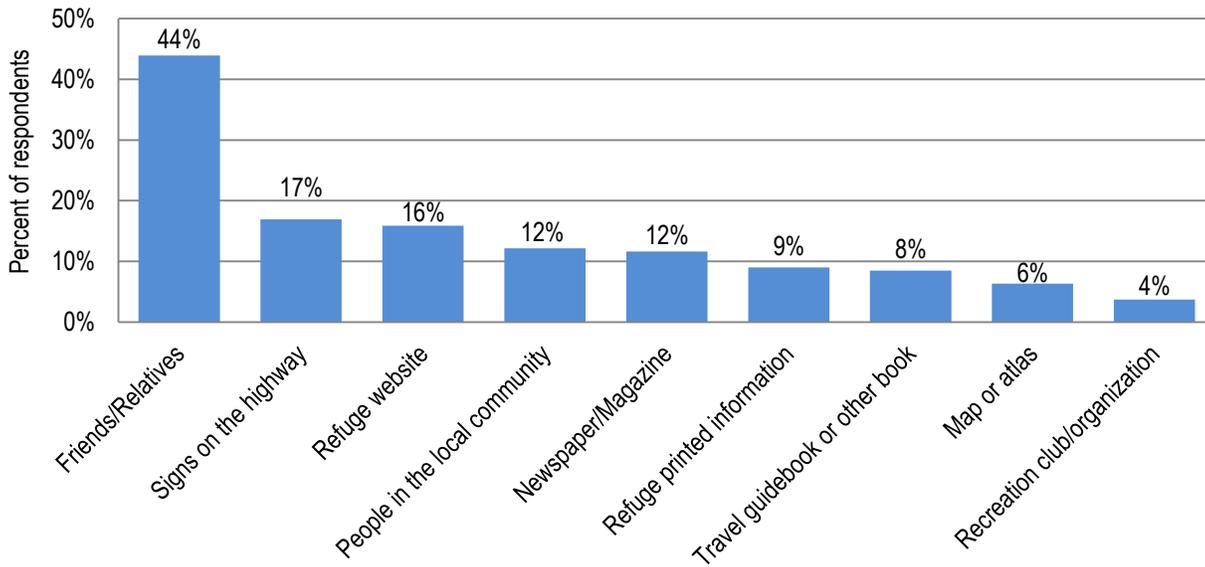
Most visitors (87%) feel that refuges, compared to other public lands, provide a unique recreation experience (see Appendix B for visitor comments on “What Makes National Wildlife Refuges Unique?”); however, reasons for why visitors find refuges unique are varied and may not directly correspond to their understanding of the mission of the Refuge System.

Almost half of visitors to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR had been to at least one *other* national wildlife refuge in the past year (49%), with an average of 4 visits to *other* refuges during the past 12 months.

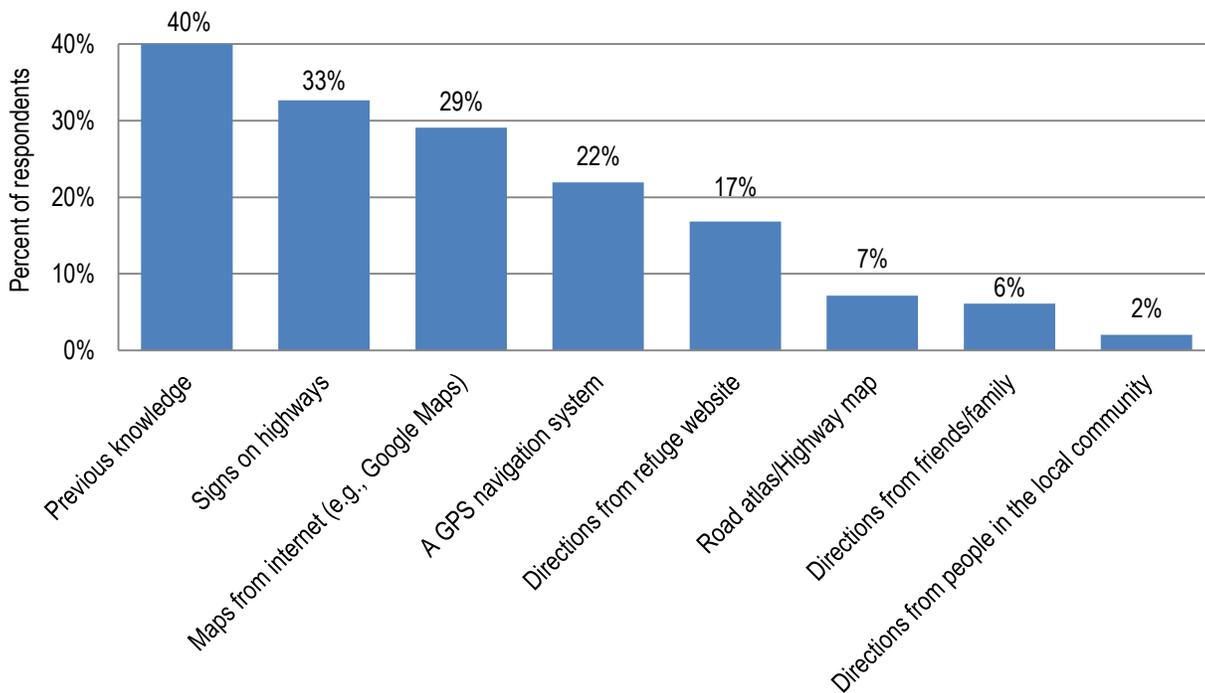
#### Visiting This Refuge

A majority of surveyed visitors (60%) had only been to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR once in the past 12 months, while less than half of visitors had been multiple times (40%). These repeat visitors went to the refuge an average of 8 times during that same 12-month period. Visitors used the refuge during only one season (71%), during multiple seasons (20%), and year-round (9%).

Visitors first learned about the refuge from friends/relatives (44%), signs on the highway (17%), or the refuge website (16%; fig. 2). Key information sources used by visitors to find their way to this refuge include their own previous knowledge (40%), signs on the highways (33%), or maps from the internet such as those from Google Maps (29%; fig. 3).



**Figure 2.** How visitors first learned or heard about Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (n = 189).



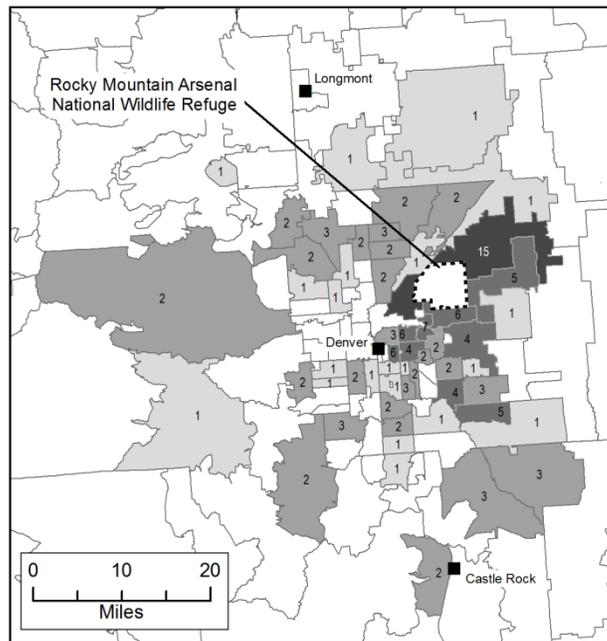
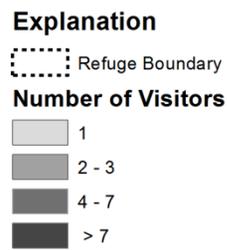
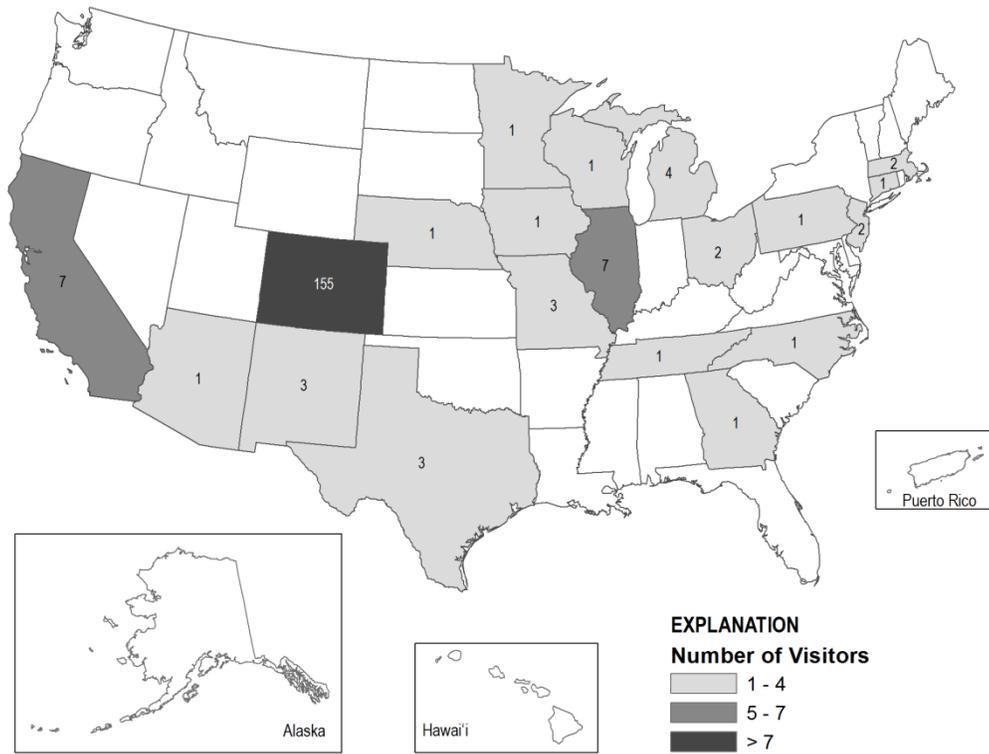
**Figure 3.** Resources used by visitors to find their way to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR during this visit (n = 196).

Most visitors (74%) lived in the local area (within 50 mi of the refuge), whereas 26% were nonlocal visitors. For most local visitors, Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR was the primary purpose or sole destination of their trips (90%; table 3). For most nonlocal visitors, the refuge was an incidental or spur-of-the-moment stop on a trip taken for other purposes (57%).

Local visitors reported that they traveled an average of 17 mi to get to the refuge, while nonlocal visitors traveled an average of 602 mi. The average distance traveled for all visitors to this refuge was 105 mi, while the median was 15 mi. Figure 4 shows the residences of visitors traveling to this refuge. About 78% of visitors traveling to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR were from Colorado.

**Table 3.** Influence of Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR on visitors' decisions to take their trips.

Visitors	Visiting this refuge was...		
	the primary reason for trip	one of many equally important reasons for trip	an incidental stop
Nonlocal	20%	24%	57%
Local	90%	6%	3%
All visitors	72%	11%	17%



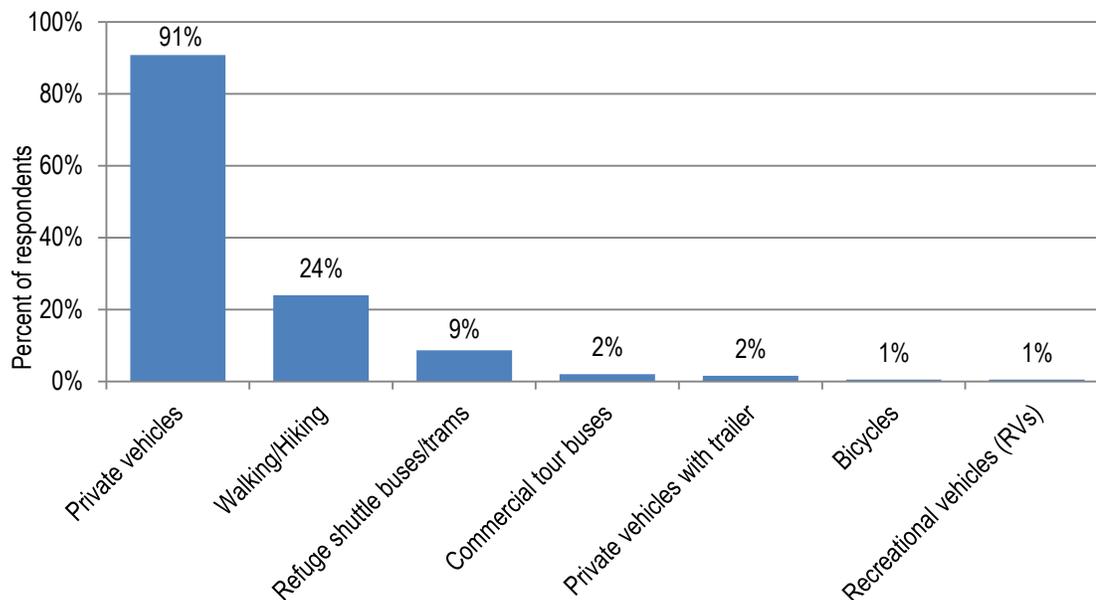
**Figure 4.** Number of visitors travelling to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR by place of residence. The top map shows visitors residence by state and the bottom map shows residence by zip codes near the refuge (n = 198).

Surveyed visitors reported that they spent an average of 4 hr at the refuge during one day there, while the most frequently reported length of a day visit (the modal response) was 3 hr (29%). Most visitors indicated they were part of a group on their visit to this refuge (89%). Of those people who indicated they traveled with a group, visitors primarily traveled with family/friends (table 4).

**Table 4.** Type and size of groups visiting Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (for those who indicated they were part of a group, n = 174).

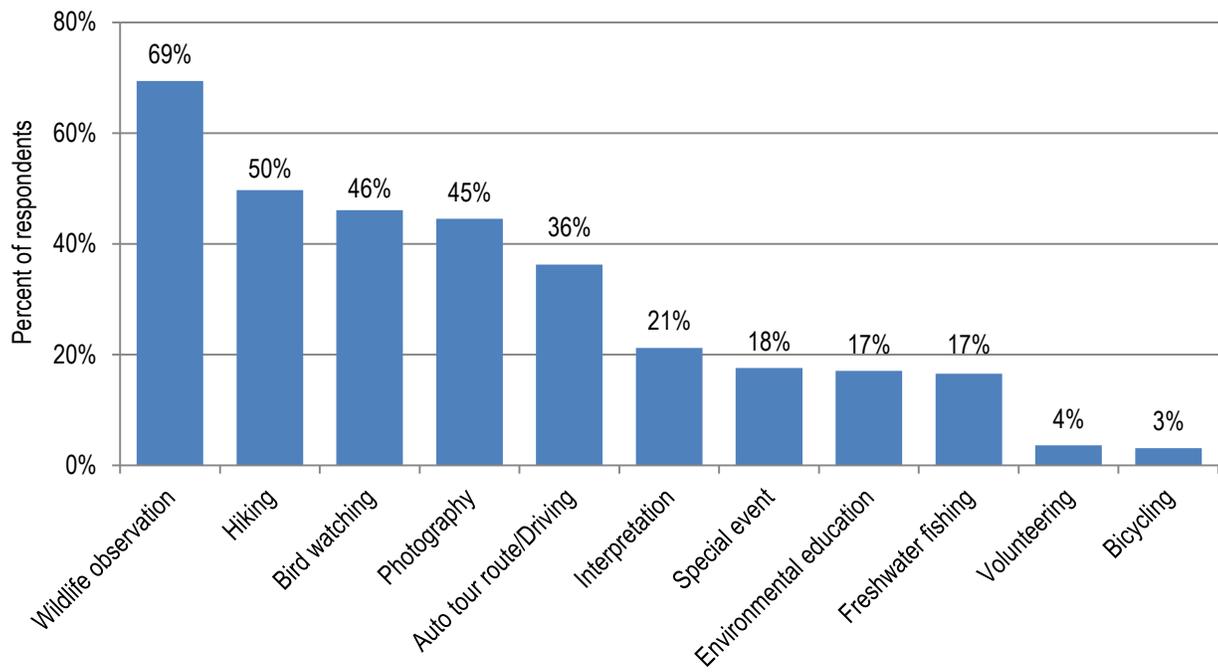
Group type	Percent (of those traveling in a group)	Average group size		
		Number of adults	Number of children	Total group size
Family/Friends	81%	2	1	3
Commercial tour group	0%	0	0	0
Organized club/School group	9%	8	7	15
Other group type	9%	13	1	14

The key modes of transportation used by visitors to travel around the refuge were private vehicles (91%), and to a lesser degree, walking/hiking (24%; fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Modes of transportation used by visitors to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR during this visit (n = 196).

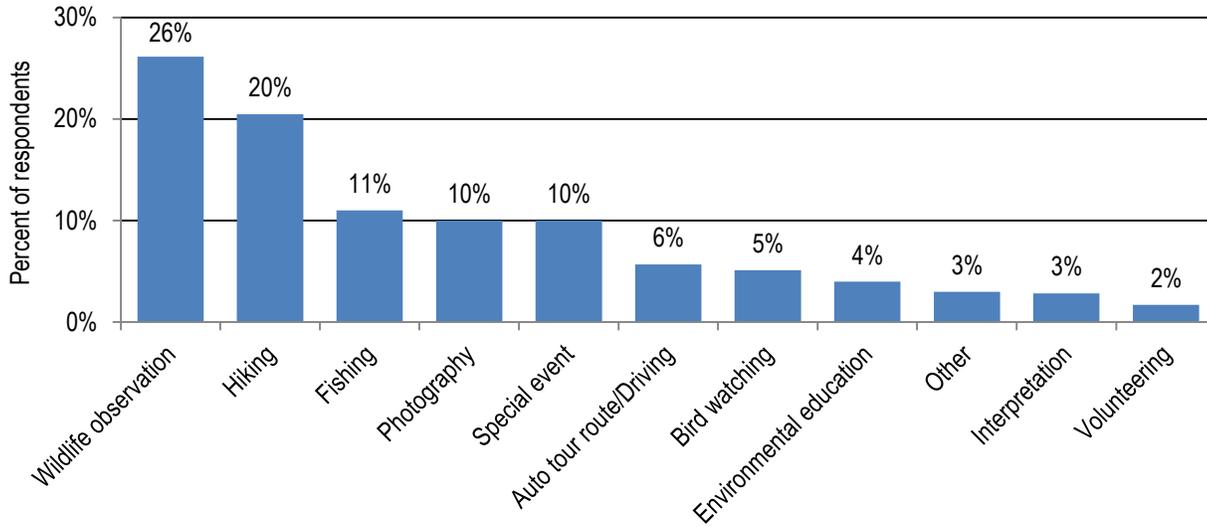
Surveyed visitors participated in a variety of refuge activities during the 12 months prior to completing the survey (fig. 6); the top activities in which people reported participating were wildlife observation (69%), hiking (50%), bird watching (46%), and photography (45%). The primary reasons for visitors' most recent visits included wildlife observation (26%) and hiking (20%; fig. 7). Many visitors also used the Visitor Center during their trips (86%), mostly to view the exhibits (95%), visit the gift shop/bookstore (73%), ask information of staff or volunteers (70%), and stop to use the facilities (69%; fig. 8).



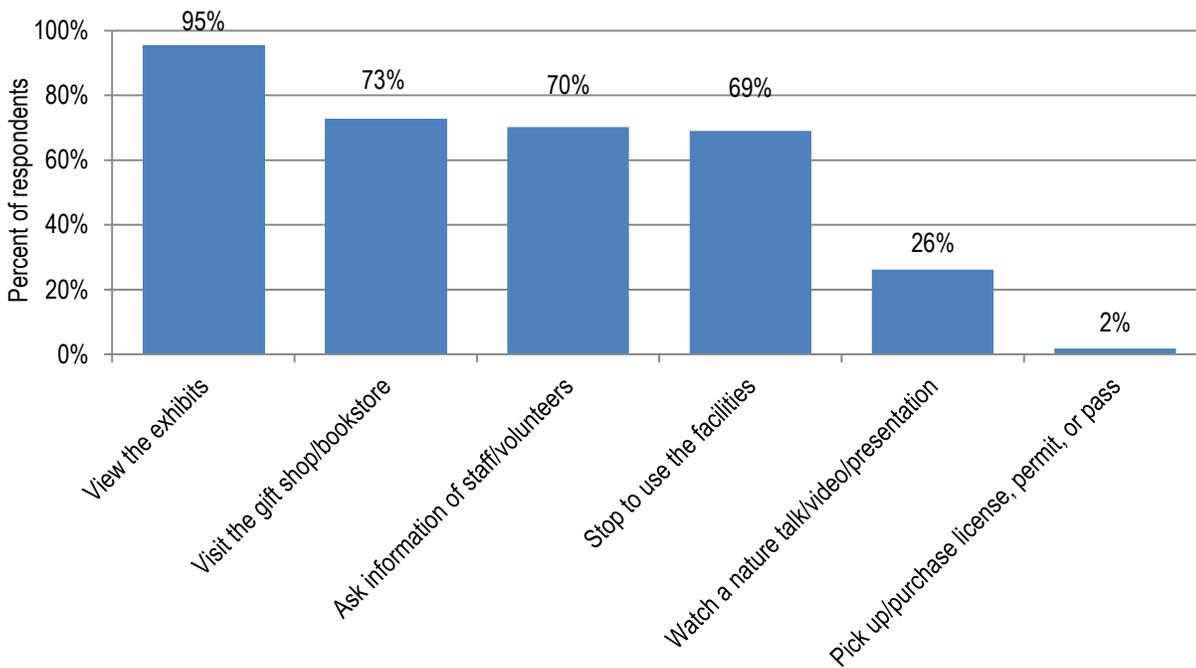
**Figure 6.** Activities<sup>3</sup> in which visitors participated during the past 12 months at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (n = 193). See Appendix B for a listing of “other” activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Bicycling is allowed on the refuge only when participating in a refuge-led tour. Otherwise, visitors can bike to the Visitor Center, but no further.



**Figure 7.** The **primary** activity in which visitors participated during this visit to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (n = 176). See Appendix B for a listing of “other” activities.



**Figure 8.** Visitor Center activities in which visitors participated at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR (n = 168).

## Visitor Characteristics

Nearly all (99%) visitors who participated in the survey at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR indicated that they were citizens or permanent residents of the United States. These visitors were a mix of 48% male (with an average age of 52 years) and 52% female (with an average age of 47 years). Visitors, on average, reported they had 16 years of formal education (equivalent to four years of college or technical school). The median level of income was \$75,000-\$99,999. See Appendix A for more demographic information.

In comparison to these results, the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007) found that participants in wildlife watching and hunting on public lands were 55% male and 45% female with an average age of 46 years, an average level of education of 14 years (equivalent to an associate degree or two years of college), and a median income of \$50,000–74,999 (Anna Harris, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011, written commun.). Compared to the U.S. population, participants in wildlife-related recreation are more likely to be male, and tend to be older with higher education and income levels (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

## Visitor Spending in Local Communities

*Tourists usually buy a wide range of goods and services while visiting an area. Major expenditure categories include lodging, food, supplies, and gasoline. Spending associated with refuge visitation can generate considerable economic benefits for the local communities near a refuge. For example, more than 34.8 million visits were made to refuges in fiscal year 2006; these visits generated \$1.7 billion in sales, almost 27,000 jobs, and \$542.8 million in employment income in regional economies (Carver and Caudill, 2007). Information on the amount and types of visitor expenditures can illustrate the economic importance to local communities of visitor activities on refuges. Visitor expenditure information also can be used to analyze the economic impact of proposed refuge management alternatives.*

Visitors that live within the local 50-mi area of a refuge typically have different spending patterns than those that travel from longer distances. During the two sampling periods, 74% of surveyed visitors to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR indicated that they live within the local 50-mi area while nonlocal visitors (26%) stayed in the local area, on average, for 6 days. Table 5 shows summary statistics for local and nonlocal visitor expenditures in the local communities and at the refuge, with expenditures reported on a per person per day basis. During the two sampling periods, nonlocal visitors spent an average of \$84 per person per day and local visitors spent an average of \$17 per person per day in the local area. Several factors should be considered when estimating the economic importance of refuge-visitor spending in the local communities. These factors include the amount of time spent at the refuge, influence of the refuge on the visitors' decision to take this trip, and the representativeness of primary activities of the sample of surveyed visitors compared to the general population. Controlling for these factors is beyond the scope of the summary statistics presented in this report.

**Table 5.** Total visitor expenditures in local communities and at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR expressed in dollars per person per day.

Visitors	n <sup>1</sup>	Median	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Nonlocal	44	\$60	\$84	\$87	\$0	\$435
Local	104	\$8	\$17	\$24	\$0	\$136

<sup>1</sup>n = number of visitors who answered both locality *and* expenditure questions.

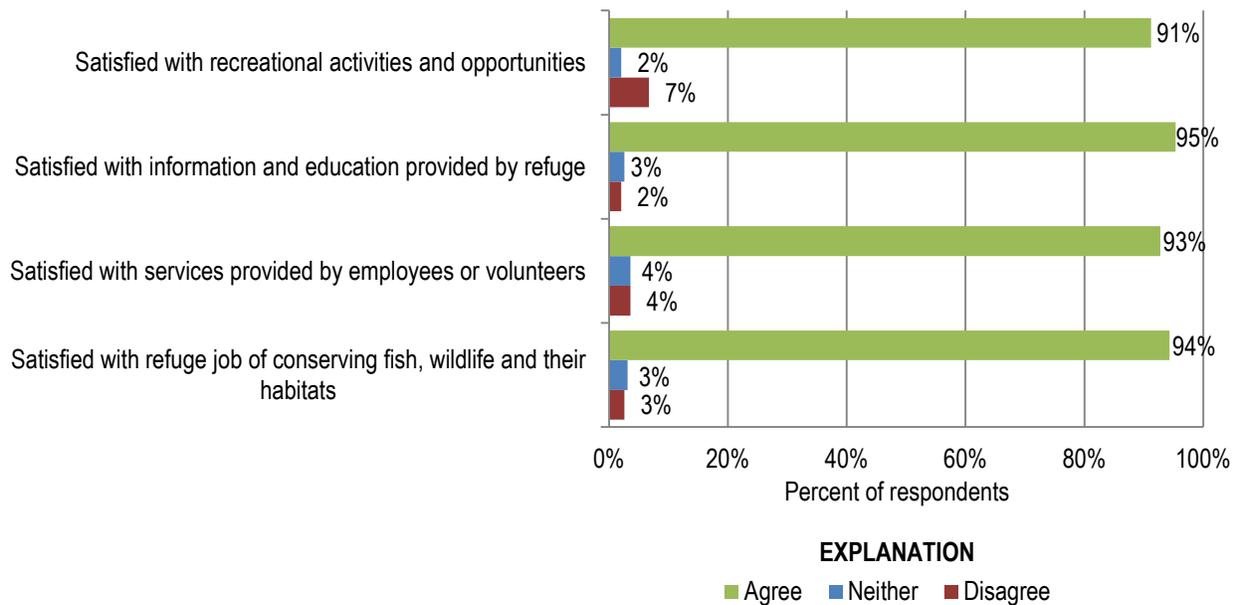
Note: For each respondent, reported expenditures were divided by the number of persons in their group that shared expenses in order to determine the spending per person per trip. This number was then divided by the number of days spent in the local area to determine the spending per person per day for each respondent. For respondents who reported spending less than one full day in the local community, trip length was set equal to one day. These visitor spending estimates are appropriate for the sampling periods selected by refuge staff (see table 2 for sampling period dates and figure 7 for the *primary* visitor activities in which people participated), and may not be representative of the total population of visitors to this refuge.

## Visitor Opinions about this Refuge

Refuges provide visitors with a variety of services, facilities, and wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities. Understanding visitors' perceptions of refuge offerings is a key component of the Refuge System's mission. In particular, a baseline understanding of visitor experiences provides a framework from which the Refuge System can monitor trends in visitor experiences overtime, which is increasingly useful in the face of changing demographics and wildlife-related interests. Some studies on wildlife-related recreation trends have indicated declines in participation over the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in traditional activities such as hunting (for example, U.S. Department of the Interior and others, 2007), while others highlight a need to connect the next generation of people to nature and wildlife (for example, Charles and Louv, 2009). These types of factors highlight a need to better understand visitors' opinions of their refuge experiences and to monitor trends in these opinions over time.

Surveyed visitors' overall satisfaction ratings with the services, facilities, and recreational opportunities provided at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR were as follows (fig. 9):

- 91% of visitors were satisfied with the recreational activities and opportunities,
- 95% of visitors were satisfied with the information and education about the refuge and its resources,
- 93% of visitors were satisfied with the services provided by employees or volunteers, and
- 94% of visitors were satisfied with the refuge's job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.



**Figure 9.** Overall satisfaction with Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR during this visit (n ≥ 193).

## Importance/Satisfaction Ratings

*Comparing the importance and satisfaction ratings for visitor services provided by refuges can help to identify how well the services are meeting visitor expectations. The importance-performance framework presented in this section is a tool that examines the importance of an attribute to visitors in relation to their satisfaction with that attribute (Martilla and James, 1977). Drawn from marketing research, this tool has been applied to outdoor recreation and visitation settings (for example, Tarrant and Smith, 2002). Results for the attributes of interest are segmented into one of four quadrants (modified slightly for this study):*

- Keep Up the Good Work = high importance/high satisfaction;
- Concentrate Here = high importance/low satisfaction;
- Low Priority = low importance/low satisfaction; and
- Look Closer = low importance/high satisfaction.

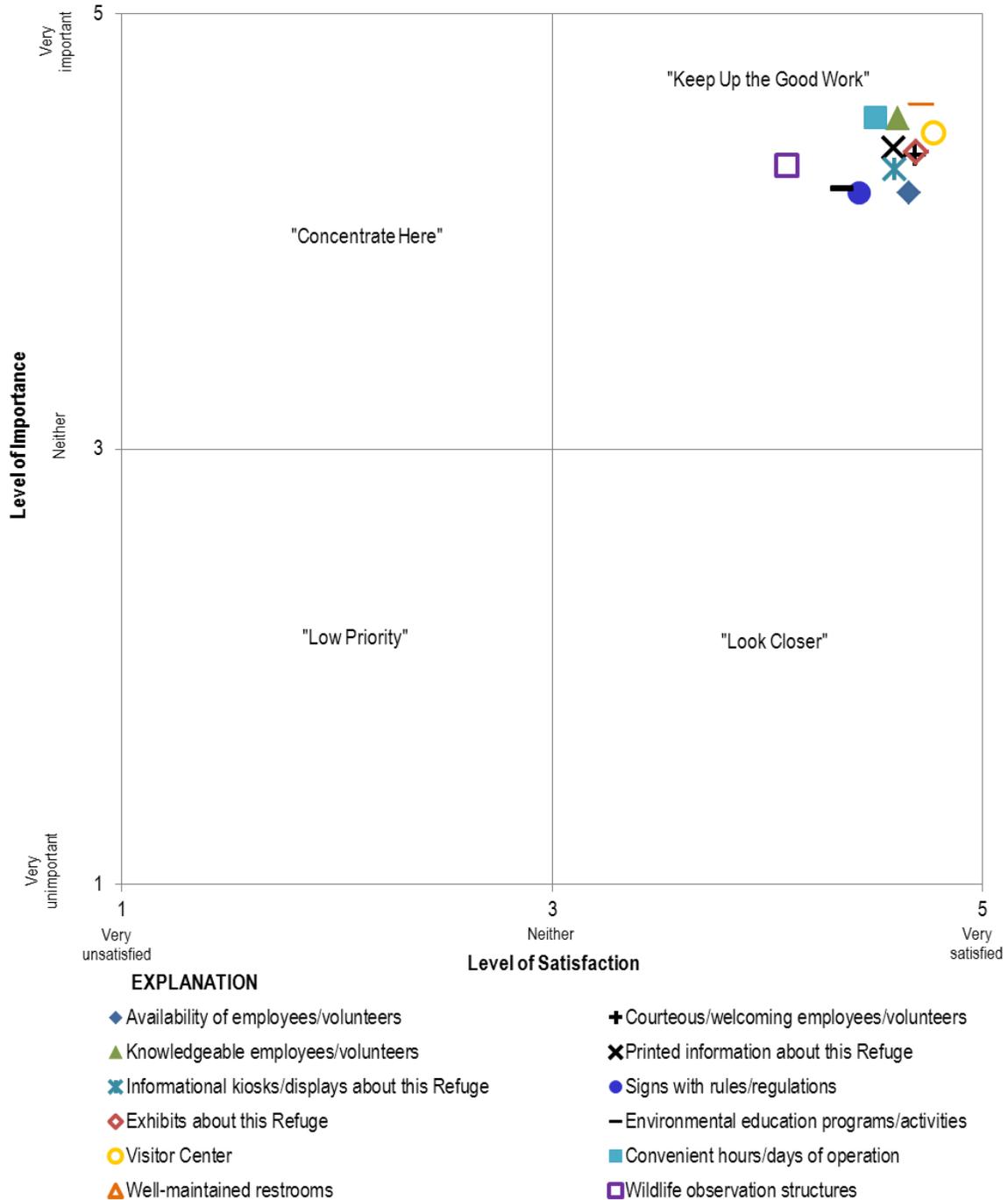
*Graphically plotting visitors' importance and satisfaction ratings for different services, facilities, and recreational opportunities provides a simple and intuitive visualization of these survey measures. However, this tool is not without its drawbacks. One is the potential for variation among different visitor groups regarding their expectations and levels of importance (Vaske and others, 1996; Bruyere and others, 2002; Wade and Eagles, 2003); certain services or recreational opportunities may be more or less important for different segments of the visitor population. For example, hunters may place more importance on hunting opportunities and amenities such as blinds, while school-group leaders may place more importance on educational/informational displays than would other visitors. This potential for highly varied importance ratings needs to be considered when viewing the average results of this analysis. This consideration is especially important when reviewing any attribute that falls into the "Look Closer" quadrant. In some cases, these attributes may represent specialized recreational activities in which a small subset of visitors participate (for example, hunting or kayaking) or facilities and services that only some visitors experience (for example, exhibits about the refuge). For these visitors, the average importance of (and potentially their satisfaction with) the attribute may be much higher than the overall importance (and satisfaction) would be for the sample of visitors summarized in this report.*

Figures 10–12 depict surveyed visitors' importance-satisfaction ratings for refuge services and facilities, recreational opportunities, and transportation-related features at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR. Results are summarized as follows:

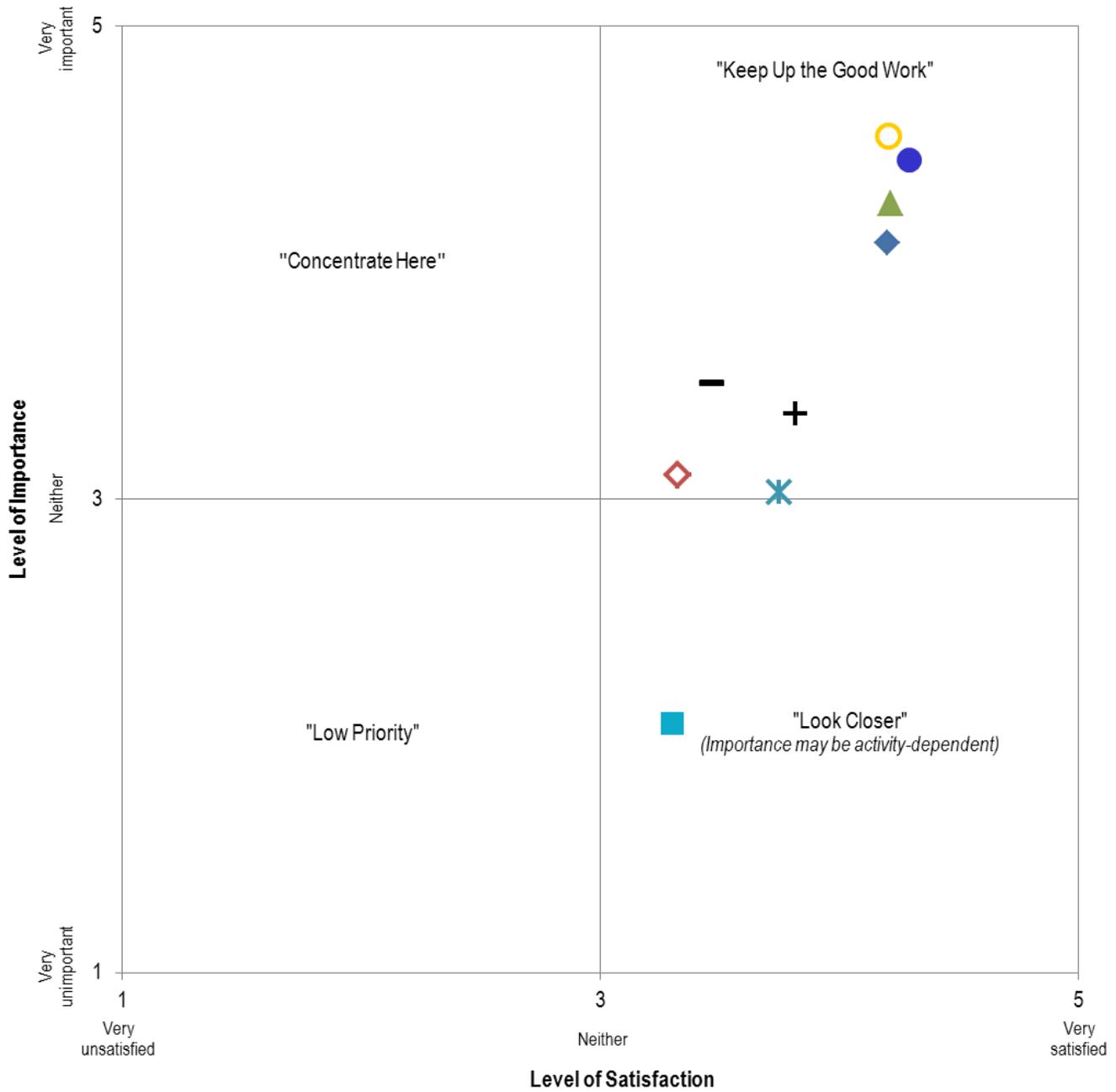
- All refuge *services and facilities* fell in the "Keep Up the Good Work" quadrant (fig. 10).
- All refuge *recreational opportunities* fell in the "Keep Up the Good Work" quadrant except hunting activities, which fell into the "Look Closer" quadrant (fig. 11). The average importance of this activity is likely higher among visitors to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR who actually participated in the activity during the 12 months prior to taking the survey than the score reported here. For example, hunters, as part of the 2010–2011 national visitor survey, had an average importance score of 4.6 for

this recreational opportunity, while the average importance score of hunting activities across all visitors was lower.

- All *transportation-related features* fell in the “Keep Up the Good Work” quadrant (fig. 12).



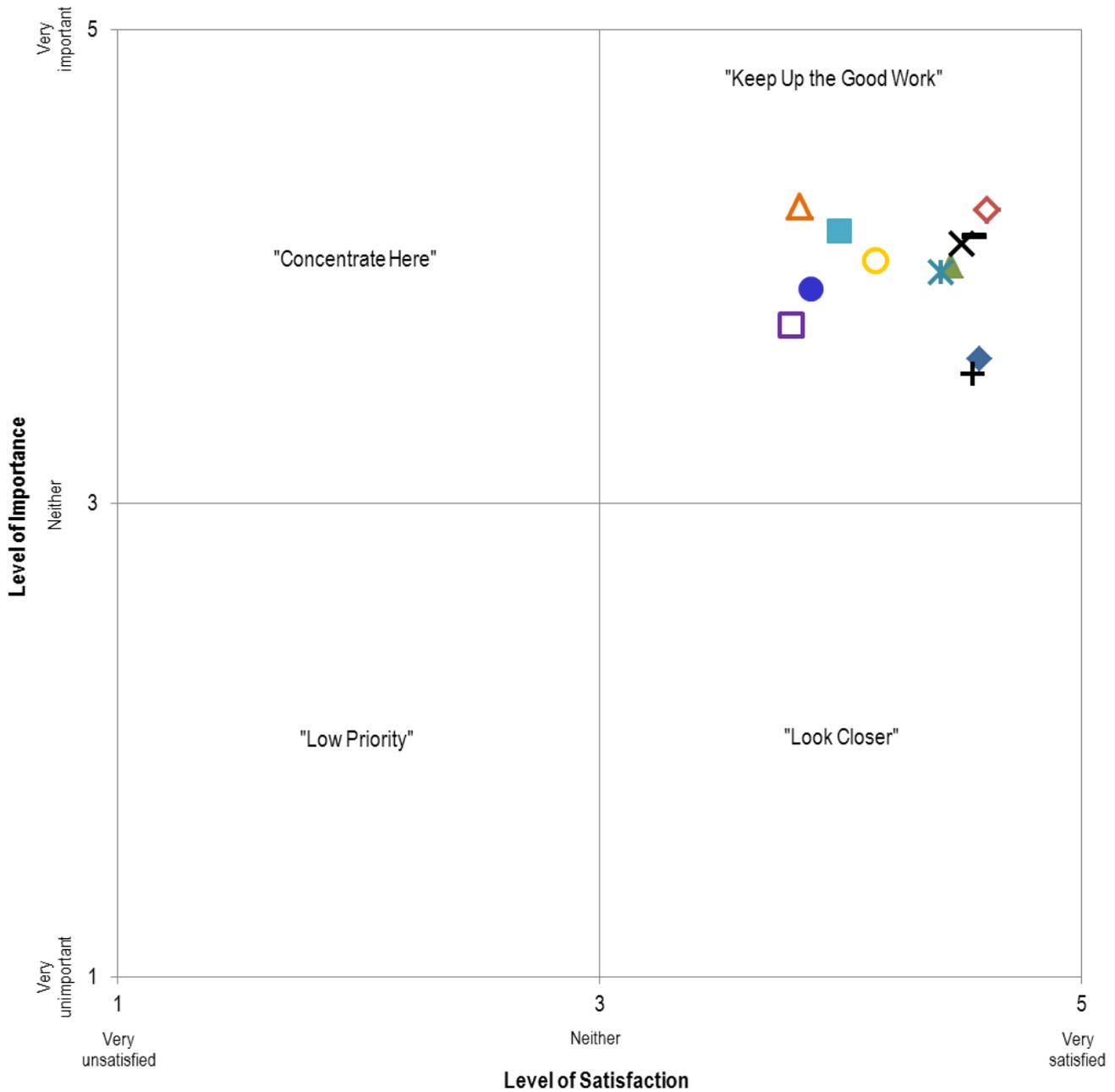
**Figure 10.** Importance-satisfaction ratings of services and facilities provided at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR.



**EXPLANATION**

- ◆ Bird watching opportunities
- Hunting opportunities
- ◇ Kayak/Canoe opportunities
- Wildlife viewing opportunities
- ✕ Fishing opportunities
- Bicycling opportunities
- ▲ Photography opportunities
- Hiking opportunities
- ✚ Volunteer opportunities

**Figure 11.** Importance-satisfaction ratings of recreational opportunities provided at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR.



**EXPLANATION**

- ◆ Condition of roads
- ◆ Condition of parking areas
- ◆ Condition of bridges
- ◆ Condition of trails/boardwalks
- ✖ Number of parking places
- Number of pullovers
- ◇ Safety of driving conditions
- Safety of Refuge entrances
- Directional signs on highways
- Directional signs on Refuge
- △ Directional signs on trails
- Disabled access

**Figure 12.** Importance-satisfaction ratings of transportation-related features at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR.

## Visitor Opinions about National Wildlife Refuge System Topics

*One goal of this national visitor survey was to identify visitor trends across the Refuge System to more effectively manage refuges and provide visitor services. Two important issues to the Refuge System are transportation on refuges and communicating with visitors about climate change. The results of these questions will be evaluated in aggregate form (data from all participating refuges together) to better address national-level goals. Basic results for Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR are reported here.*

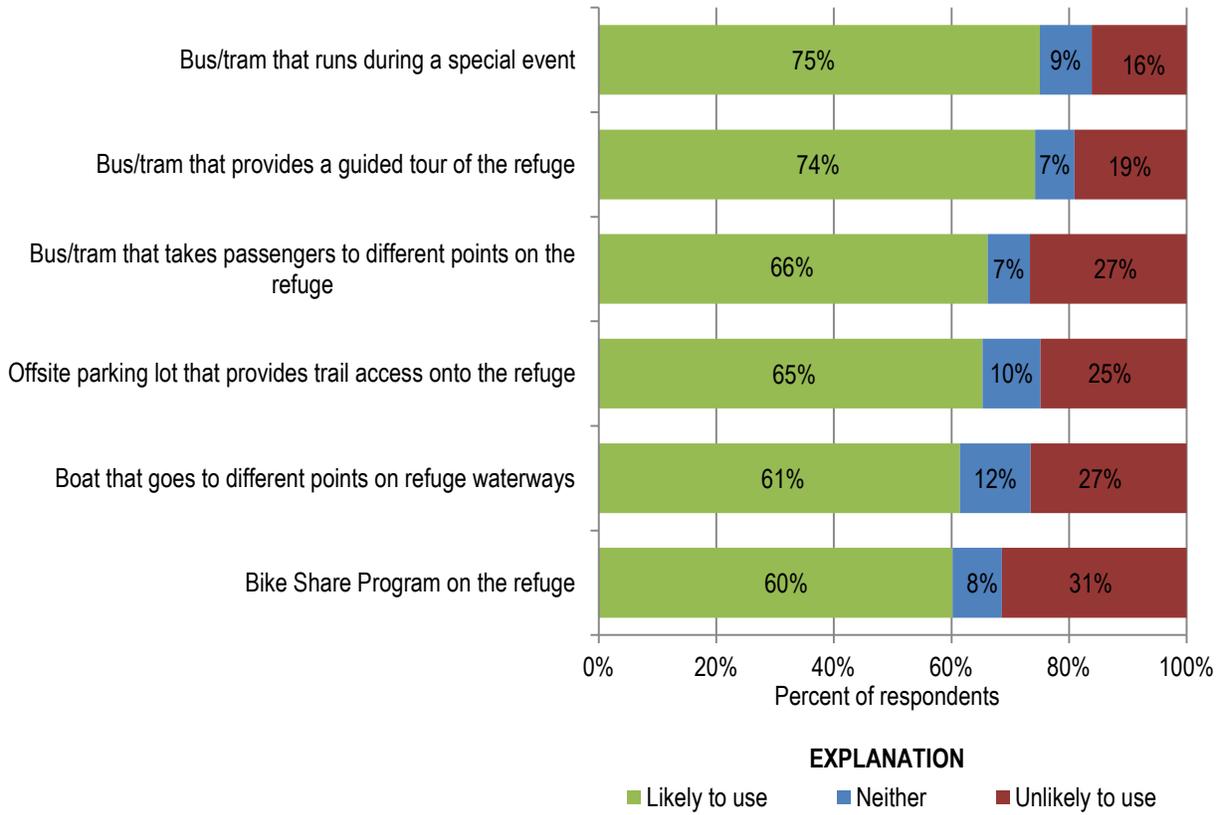
### Alternative Transportation and the Refuge System

*Visitors use various types of transportation to access and enjoy refuges. While many visitors arrive at the refuge in private vehicles, alternatives such as buses, trams, watercraft, and bicycles are increasingly becoming a part of the visitor experience. Previous research has identified a growing need for transportation alternatives within the Refuge System (Krechmer and others, 2001), and recent efforts are beginning to characterize the use of transit and non-motorized transportation modes for visitor access to refuges (Volpe Center, 2010). However, less is known about how visitors perceive these new transportation options. An understanding of visitors' likelihood of using certain alternative transportation options can help in future planning efforts. Visitors were asked their likelihood of using alternative transportation options at refuges in the future.*

Of six alternative transportation options listed on the survey, a majority of Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR visitors were likely to use the following at refuges in the future (fig. 13):

- a bus/tram that runs during a special event;
- a bus/tram that provides a guided tour;
- a bus/tram that takes passengers to different points on the refuge;
- an offsite parking lot that provides trail access;
- a boat that goes to different points on refuge waterways; and
- a bike share program.

When asked specifically about using alternative transportation at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR, some visitors thought alternative transportation would enhance their experience (36%) while others thought it would not (16%). An additional 48% of surveyed visitors indicated they were unsure whether alternative transportation would enhance their experiences.



**Figure 13.** Visitors' likelihood of using alternative transportation options at refuges in the future (n ≥ 191).

## Climate Change and the National Wildlife Refuge System

*Climate change represents a growing concern for refuge management. The Service's climate-change strategy, titled "Rising to the Urgent Challenge," establishes a basic context for the agency to work within a larger conservation community to ensure wildlife, plant, and habitat sustainability (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2010). To support the guiding principles of the strategy, refuges will be exploring options for more effective engagement with visitors on the topic of climate change. Previous research suggests that human thought about climate change is influenced by individuals' levels of concern, levels of involvement, preferences for policies, and associated behaviors (Maibach and others, 2009). The results presented below provide baseline information on these factors in relation to the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife, and their habitats.*

*These results are most useful when coupled with responses to belief statements, because such beliefs may be used to develop message frames (or ways to communicate) about climate change with a broad coalition of visitors. Framing science-based findings does not alter the overall message, but rather places the issue in a context in which different audience groupings can relate (Nisbet, 2009). The need to mitigate impacts of climate change on refuges could be framed as a quality-of-life issue (for example, preserving the ability to enjoy fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitat) or an economic issue (for example, maintaining tourist revenues or supporting economic growth through new jobs/technology). Framing information in ways that resonate with visitors' beliefs may result in more engaged audiences who support strategies aimed at alleviating climate-change pressures. Data will be analyzed further at the national level to inform the development of a comprehensive climate change communication and engagement strategy.*

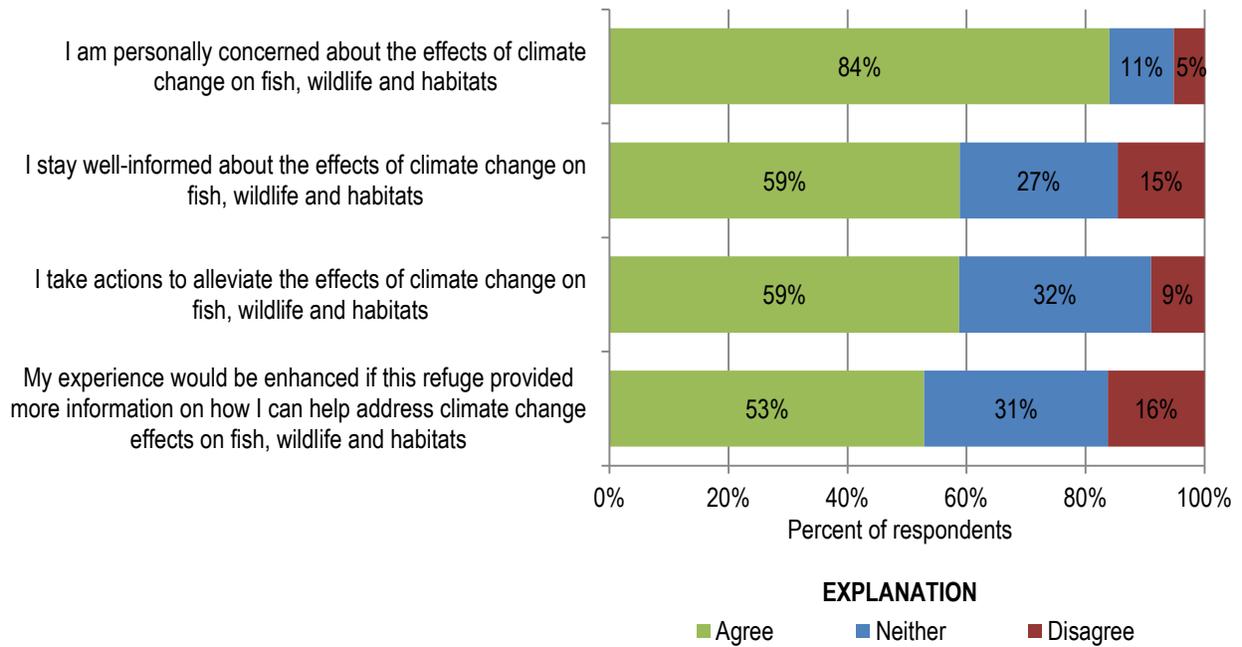
The majority of visitors to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR agreed with the following statements related to their own *personal involvement* with the topic of climate change as it relates to fish, wildlife, and habitats (fig. 14):

- I am personally concerned about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and habitats;
- I stay well-informed about the effects of climate change;
- I take actions to alleviate the effects of climate change; and
- My experience would be enhanced if the refuge provides information about how I can help address climate change effects.

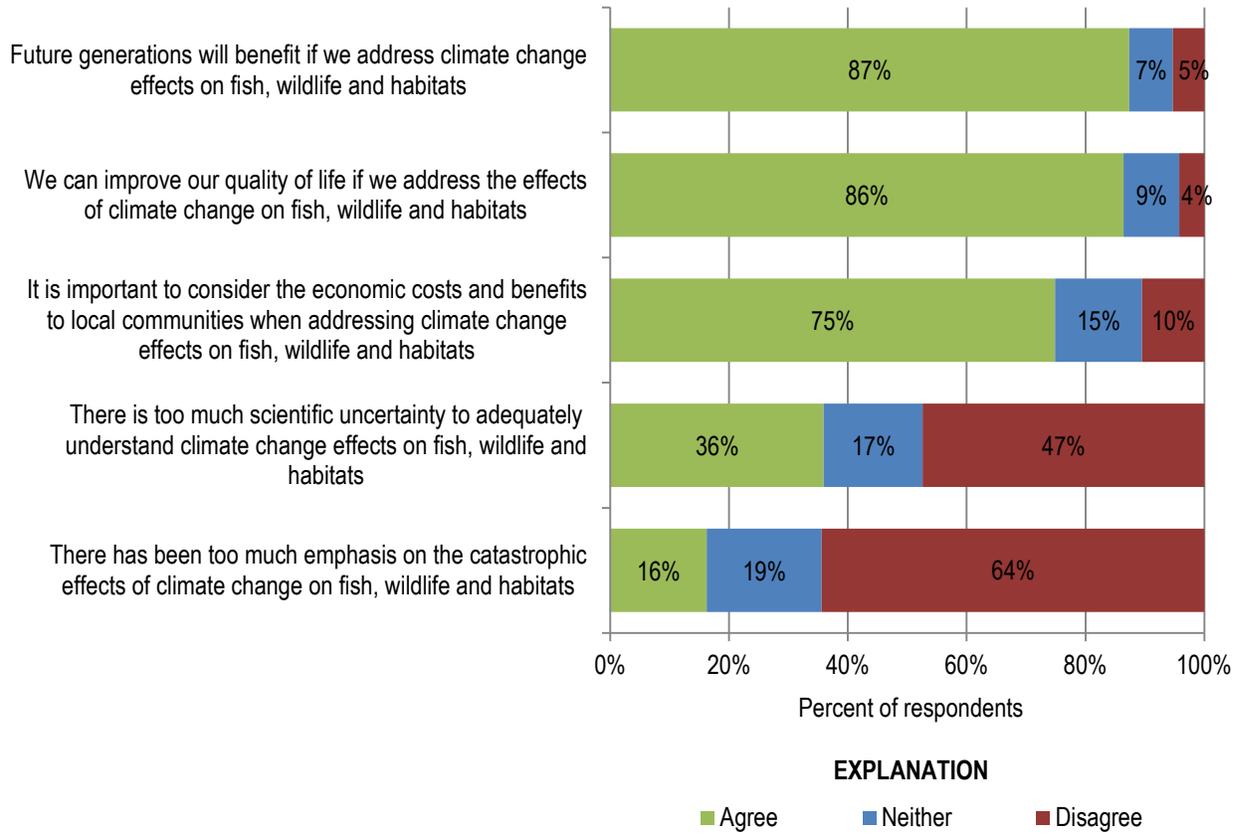
The majority of visitors also agreed with the following *belief statements* regarding climate change effects on fish, wildlife and their habitats (fig. 15):

- Future generations will benefit if we address climate change effects;
- We can improve our quality of life if we address the effects of climate change; and
- It is important to consider the economic costs and benefits to local communities when addressing climate change effects.

Results regarding such beliefs are important to consider when communicating with visitors about this topic, since the majority of visitors (53%) indicated their experiences would be enhanced if Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR provided information about how visitors can help to address climate change impacts on fish, wildlife, and their habitats (fig. 14).



**Figure 14.** Visitors’ personal involvement with climate change related to fish, wildlife and their habitats (n ≥ 189).



**Figure 15.** Visitors' beliefs about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats (n ≥ 190).

## Conclusion

These individual refuge results provide a summary of trip characteristics and experiences of a sample of visitors to Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR during 2012 and are intended to inform decision-making efforts related to visitor services and transportation at the refuge. Additionally, the results from this survey can be used to inform planning efforts, such as a refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. With an understanding of visitors' trip and activity characteristics and visitor-satisfaction ratings with existing offerings, refuge managers are able to make informed decisions about possible modifications (whether reducing or enhancing) to visitor facilities, services, or recreational opportunities. This information can help managers gauge demand for refuge opportunities and inform both implementation and communication strategies. Similarly, an awareness of visitors' satisfaction ratings with refuge offerings can help determine if potential areas of concern need to be investigated further. As another example of the utility of these results, community relations may be improved or bolstered through an understanding of the value of the refuge to visitors, whether that value is attributed to an appreciation of the refuge's uniqueness, enjoyment of its recreational opportunities, or spending contributions of nonlocal visitors to the local economy. Such data about visitors and their experiences, in conjunction with an understanding of biophysical data on the refuge and its resources, can ensure that management decisions are consistent with the Refuge System mission while fostering a continued public interest in these special places.

Individual refuge results are available for downloading at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/754/>. For additional information about this project, contact the USGS researchers at [national\\_visitor\\_survey@usgs.gov](mailto:national_visitor_survey@usgs.gov) or 970.226.9205.

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# National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey



**PLEASE READ THIS FIRST:**

Thank you for visiting a National Wildlife Refuge and for agreeing to participate in this study! We hope that you had an enjoyable experience. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey would like to learn more about National Wildlife Refuge visitors in order to improve the management of the area and enhance visitor opportunities.

**Even if you have recently visited more than one National Wildlife Refuge or made more than one visit to the same Refuge, please respond regarding only the Refuge and the visit when you were asked to participate in this survey for any question that uses the phrase “this Refuge.” Please reference the cover letter included with this survey if you are unsure of which refuge you visited.**

**SECTION 1. Your visit to this Refuge**

1. Including your most recent visit, which activities have you participated in during the past 12 months at this Refuge?  
(Please mark **all that apply.**)

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0% Big game hunting                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50% Hiking  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17% Environmental education (for example, classrooms or labs)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0% Upland/Small game hunting        | <input type="checkbox"/> 3% Bicycling                                      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0% Migratory bird/Waterfowl hunting | <input type="checkbox"/> 36% Auto tour route/Driving                       | <input type="checkbox"/> 21% Interpretation (for example, exhibits, kiosks, videos)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 69% Wildlife observation            | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% Motorized boating                              |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 46% Bird watching                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% Nonmotorized boating (including canoes/kayaks) | <input type="checkbox"/> 18% Refuge special event ( <i>please specify</i> )<br>See Appendix B |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12% Freshwater fishing              |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0% Saltwater fishing                | <input type="checkbox"/> 4% Volunteering                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 3% Other ( <i>please specify</i> )<br>See Appendix B                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45% Photography                     |  |   |

2. Which of the activities above was the **primary** purpose of your visit to this Refuge?  
(Please write **only one activity** on the line.) See report for categorized results; see Appendix B for miscellaneous responses

3. Did you go to a Visitor Center at this Refuge?

- 14% No
- 86% Yes → If yes, what did you do there? (Please mark **all that apply.**)
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 73% Visit the gift shop or bookstore       | <input type="checkbox"/> 2% Pick up/purchase a license, permit, or pass                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 95% View the exhibits                      | <input type="checkbox"/> 69% Stop to use the facilities (for example, get water, use restroom) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 70% Ask information of staff/volunteers    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26% Watch a nature talk/video/presentation | <input type="checkbox"/> 13% Other ( <i>please specify</i> ) See Appendix B                    |

4. Which of the following best describes your visit to this Refuge? (Please mark **only one.**)

<b>Nonlocal</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>All visitors</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> 20%	<input type="checkbox"/> 90%	<input type="checkbox"/> 72%	It was the primary purpose or sole destination of my trip.
<input type="checkbox"/> 24%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 11%	It was one of many equally important reasons or destinations for my trip.
<input type="checkbox"/> 57%	<input type="checkbox"/> 3%	<input type="checkbox"/> 17%	It was just an incidental or spur-of-the-moment stop on a trip taken for other purposes or to other destinations.

5. Approximately how many **hours/minutes and miles** (one-way) did you travel from your home to this Refuge?

<b>Nonlocal</b>	<u>  9  </u> Hours	<u>  3  </u> Minutes	<i>and</i>	<u> 602 </u> Miles
<b>Local</b>	<u>  0  </u> Hours	<u> 31 </u> Minutes	<i>and</i>	<u>  17 </u> Miles
<b>All visitors</b>	<u>  1  </u> Hours	<u> 49 </u> Minutes	<i>and</i>	<u>  10 </u> Miles

6. What type of group were you with on your visit to this Refuge?

11% None, I visited this Refuge alone

*(of those visiting with a group)*

81% Family and/or friends

10% Organized club or school group (for example, Boy/Girl Scouts, hiking club, bird watching group)

0% Commerical tour group

9% Other (*please specify*) See Appendix B

7. Including yourself, how many people were in your group? (*Please answer each category.*)

  4   number 18 years and over

  2   number 17 years and under

8. How did you **first learn or hear about** this Refuge? (*Please mark all that apply.*)

44% Family and/or friends

16% Refuge website

17% Signs on highway

7% Other website (*please specify*) See Appendix B

4% Recreation club or organization

3% Television or radio

12% People in the local community

12% Newspaper or magazine

9% Refuge printed information (brochure, map)

8% Travel guidebook or other book

6% Map or atlas

7% Other (*please specify*) See Appendix B

9. During which seasons have you visited this Refuge in the last 12 months? (*Please mark all that apply.*)

27% Spring  
(March-May)

59% Summer  
(June-August)

60% Fall  
(September-November)

12% Winter  
(December-February)

10. How many times have you visited...

...this Refuge (including this visit) in the last 12 months?   4   number of visits

...other National Wildlife Refuges in the last 12 months?   2   number of visits

**SECTION 2. Transportation and access at this Refuge**

1. What **forms of transportation** did you use on your visit to this Refuge? (*Please mark **all that apply.***)

- |                              |   |                             |                                  |                              |                                       |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 91% | Private vehicle without a trailer                             | <input type="checkbox"/> 9% | Refuge shuttle bus or tram       | <input type="checkbox"/> 1%  | Bicycle                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2%  | Private vehicle with a trailer<br>(for boat, camper or other) | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Motorcycle                       | <input type="checkbox"/> 24% | Walk/Hike                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2%  | Commercial tour bus   | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | ATV or off-road vehicle          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1%  | Other ( <i>please specify below</i> ) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1%  | Recreational vehicle (RV)                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Boat                             | <u>See Appendix B</u>        |                                       |
|                              |   | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Wheelchair or other mobility aid |                              |                                       |

Which of the following did you use to find your way to this Refuge? (*Please mark **all that apply.***)

- |                              |  |                              |   |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40% | Previous knowledge/I have been to this Refuge before | <input type="checkbox"/> 29% | Maps from the Internet (for example, MapQuest or Google Maps) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 33% | Signs on highways                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 17% | Directions from Refuge website                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 22% | A GPS navigation system                              | <input type="checkbox"/> 2%  | Directions from people in community near this Refuge          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7%  | A road atlas or highway map                          | <input type="checkbox"/> 6%  | Directions from friends or family                             |
|                              |  | <input type="checkbox"/> 5%  | Other ( <i>please specify</i> ) <u>See Appendix B</u>         |

2. Below are different alternative transportation options that could be offered at some National Wildlife Refuges in the future. Considering the different Refuges you may have visited, please tell us **how likely you would be to use each transportation option.** (*Please circle one number for each statement.*)

How likely would you be to use...	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
...a bus or tram that takes passengers to different points on the Refuge (such as the Visitor Center)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 18%	<input type="checkbox"/> 9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 30%	<input type="checkbox"/> 36%
...a bike that was offered through a Bike Share Program for use while on the Refuge?	<input type="checkbox"/> 21%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%	<input type="checkbox"/> 8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 35%	<input type="checkbox"/> 25%
...a bus or tram that provides a guided tour of the Refuge with information about the Refuge and its resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> 12%	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 33%	<input type="checkbox"/> 41%
...a boat that goes to different points on Refuge waterways?	<input type="checkbox"/> 19%	<input type="checkbox"/> 8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 12%	<input type="checkbox"/> 34%	<input type="checkbox"/> 28%
...a bus or tram that runs during a special event (such as an evening tour of wildlife or weekend festival)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 35%	<input type="checkbox"/> 40%
...an offsite parking lot that provides trail access for walking/hiking onto the Refuge?	<input type="checkbox"/> 13%	<input type="checkbox"/> 11%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%	<input type="checkbox"/> 36%	<input type="checkbox"/> 30%
...some other alternative transportation option? ( <i>please specify</i> ) <u>See Appendix B</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 18%	<input type="checkbox"/> 82%

3. If alternative transportation were offered at *this* Refuge, would it enhance your experience?

- 36% Yes       16% No       48% Not Sure

4. For each of the following transportation-related features, first, **rate how important** each feature is to you when visiting this Refuge; then **rate how satisfied** you are with the way this Refuge is managing each feature. *If this Refuge does not offer a specific transportation-related feature, please rate how important it is to you and then circle NA "Not Applicable" under the Satisfaction column.*

Importance						Satisfaction					
Circle one for each item.						Circle one for each item.					
Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Very Important		Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
7%	14%	13%	42%	24%	Surface conditions of roads	4%	1%	4%	16%	75%	NA
9%	15%	12%	42%	23%	Surface conditions of parking areas	4%	2%	6%	12%	77%	NA
6%	3%	17%	34%	41%	Condition of bridges	2%	1%	14%	16%	68%	NA
7%	4%	6%	36%	46%	Condition of trails and boardwalks	4%	1%	7%	18%	70%	NA
5%	9%	7%	42%	37%	Number of places for parking	3%	5%	6%	18%	68%	NA
3%	10%	12%	45%	30%	Number of places to pull over along Refuge roads	3%	11%	19%	30%	37%	NA
5%	5%	5%	31%	54%	Safety of driving conditions on Refuge roads	3%	0%	6%	16%	75%	NA
4%	7%	8%	32%	48%	Safety of Refuge road entrances/exits	4%	1%	7%	14%	75%	NA
4%	6%	13%	37%	40%	Signs on highways directing you to the Refuge	3%	7%	11%	28%	50%	NA
4%	5%	7%	39%	44%	Signs directing you around the Refuge roads	3%	10%	10%	36%	40%	NA
5%	1%	9%	33%	52%	Signs directing you on trails	3%	13%	14%	38%	32%	NA
6%	9%	23%	27%	34%	Access for people with physical disabilities or who have difficulty walking	4%	3%	36%	21%	35%	NA

5. If you have any comments about transportation-related items at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below.

See Appendix B

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**SECTION 3. Your expenses related to your Refuge visit**

1. Do you live in the local area (within approximately 50 miles of this Refuge)?

74% Yes

26% No → How much time did you spend **in the local area** on this trip?

*Nonlocals* If you spent one day or more in the local area, enter the number of days: 7 day(s)

*only* If you spent less than one day in the local area, enter the number of hours: 8 hour(s)

2. How much time did you spend **at this Refuge** during your most recent visit?

If you spent one day or more at this Refuge, enter the number of days: 5 day(s)

If you spent less than one day at this Refuge, enter the number of hours: 3 hour(s)

3. Please record the amount that **you and other members of your group** with whom you shared expenses (for example, other family members, traveling companions) spent in the local 50-mile area during **your most recent visit** to this Refuge. *(Please enter the amount spent to the nearest dollar in each category below. Enter 0 (zero) if you did not spend any money in a particular category.)*

Categories	Amount Spent in <u>Local Communities &amp; at this Refuge</u> <i>(within 50 miles of this Refuge)</i>
Motel, bed & breakfast, cabin, etc.	
Camping	
Restaurants & bars	
Groceries	
Gasoline and oil	
Local transportation (bus, shuttle, rental car, etc.)	
Refuge entrance fee	
Recreation guide fees (hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc.)	
Equipment rental (canoe, bicycle, kayak, etc.)	
Sporting good purchases	
Souvenirs/clothing and other retail	
Other <i>(please specify)</i> _____	

See Report for Results

4. Including yourself, how many people in your group shared these trip expenses?

2 number of people sharing expenses

5. As you know, some of the costs of travel such as gasoline, hotels, and airline tickets often increase. If your total trip costs were to increase, what is the maximum extra amount you would pay and still visit this Refuge? (Please circle the highest dollar amount.)

\$0	\$10	\$20	\$35	\$50	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$150	\$200	\$250
11%	33%	29%	8%	7%	1%	4%	1%	1%	3%	3%

6. If you or a member of your group paid a fee or used a pass to enter this Refuge, how appropriate was the fee? (Please mark **only one**.)

100% Did not pay a fee (skip to Section 4)

*Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR does not charge an entrance fee. This question does not apply.*

7. Please indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following statement. (Please mark **only one**.)

**The value of the recreation opportunities and services I experienced at this Refuge was at least equal to the fee I paid.**

*Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR does not charge an entrance fee. This question does not apply.*

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#### SECTION 4. Your experience at this Refuge

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1. Considering your visit to this Refuge, please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each statement. (Please circle one number for each statement.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
Overall, I am satisfied with the recreational activities and opportunities provided by this Refuge.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 43%	<input type="checkbox"/> 48%	NA
Overall, I am satisfied with the information and education provided by this Refuge about its resources.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 3%	<input type="checkbox"/> 34%	<input type="checkbox"/> 61%	NA
Overall, I am satisfied with the services provided by employees or volunteers at this Refuge.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 26%	<input type="checkbox"/> 67%	NA
This Refuge does a good job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 3%	<input type="checkbox"/> 27%	<input type="checkbox"/> 67%	NA

2. For each of the following services, facilities, and activities, first, **rate how important** each item is to you when visiting this Refuge; then, **rate how satisfied** you are with the way this Refuge is managing each item.  
*If this Refuge does not offer a specific service, facility, or activity, please rate how important it is to you and then circle NA "Not Applicable" under the Satisfaction column.*

Importance					Refuge Services, Facilities, and Activities	Satisfaction					
Circle one for each item.						Circle one for each item.					
Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Very Important		Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
1%	9%	5%	41%	43%	Availability of employees or volunteers	2%	3%	1%	18%	77%	NA
2%	3%	5%	39%	51%	Courteous and welcoming employees or volunteers	1%	3%	3%	11%	81%	NA
2%	2%	2%	33%	62%	Knowledgeable employees or volunteers	2%	2%	3%	17%	75%	NA
2%	1%	6%	41%	51%	Printed information about this Refuge and its resources (for example, maps and brochures)	2%	2%	5%	20%	72%	NA
1%	2%	4%	51%	41%	Informational kiosks/displays about this Refuge and its resources	2%	1%	4%	24%	70%	NA
3%	2%	11%	42%	42%	Signs with rules/regulations for this Refuge	1%	3%	8%	27%	60%	NA
1%	1%	8%	44%	47%	Exhibits about this Refuge and its resources	1%	1%	3%	19%	76%	NA
1%	5%	11%	40%	43%	Environmental education programs or activities	1%	2%	16%	24%	57%	NA
2%	2%	3%	34%	58%	Visitor Center	1%	1%	3%	10%	85%	NA
1%	1%	5%	34%	60%	Convenient hours and days of operation	3%	2%	7%	18%	70%	NA
1%	2%	2%	25%	71%	Well-maintained restrooms	1%	2%	3%	13%	81%	NA
0%	5%	10%	36%	50%	Wildlife observation structures (decks, blinds)	1%	9%	13%	33%	44%	NA
2%	6%	17%	32%	43%	Bird-watching opportunities	0%	4%	17%	33%	46%	NA
1%	2%	5%	28%	65%	Opportunities to observe wildlife other than birds	5%	5%	5%	33%	52%	NA
2%	4%	12%	31%	51%	Opportunities to photograph wildlife and scenery	2%	6%	13%	27%	52%	NA
54%	6%	27%	5%	8%	Hunting opportunities	7%	3%	64%	7%	20%	NA
24%	9%	26%	23%	18%	Fishing opportunities	2%	5%	44%	17%	33%	NA
2%	1%	7%	33%	58%	Trail hiking opportunities	1%	2%	11%	38%	48%	NA
16%	10%	36%	23%	15%	Water trail opportunities for canoeing or kayaking	6%	6%	59%	11%	19%	NA
9%	9%	27%	33%	21%	Bicycling opportunities	3%	9%	46%	22%	20%	NA
9%	8%	38%	27%	18%	Volunteer opportunities	1%	1%	48%	17%	34%	NA

3. If you have any comments about the services, facilities, and activities at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below.

See Appendix B

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**SECTION 5. Your opinions regarding National Wildlife Refuges and the resources they conserve**

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1. Before you were contacted to participate in this survey, were you aware that National Wildlife Refuges...

...are managed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

81% Yes

19% No

...have the primary mission of conserving, managing, and restoring fish, wildlife, plants and their habitat?

89% Yes

11% No

2. Compared to other public lands you have visited, do you think Refuges provide a unique recreation experience?

87% Yes

13% No

3. If you answered "Yes" to Question 2, please briefly describe what makes Refuges unique. \_\_\_\_\_

See Appendix B

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There has been a lot of talk about climate change recently. We would like to know what you think about climate change as it relates to fish, wildlife and their habitats. To what extent do you disagree or agree with each statement below? (Please circle one number for each statement.)

Statements about climate change	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am personally concerned about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	4%	1%	11%	40%	44%
We can improve our quality of life if we address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	3%	2%	9%	41%	45%
There is too much scientific uncertainty to adequately understand how climate change will impact fish, wildlife and their habitats.	19%	28%	17%	27%	9%
I stay well-informed about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	2%	13%	27%	43%	16%
It is important to consider the economic costs and benefits to local communities when addressing the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	2%	9%	15%	52%	23%
I take actions to alleviate the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	1%	8%	32%	43%	15%
There has been too much emphasis on the catastrophic effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	30%	35%	19%	9%	7%
Future generations will benefit if we address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	4%	2%	7%	35%	53%
My experience at this Refuge would be enhanced if this Refuge provided more information about how I can help address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	5%	12%	31%	42%	10%

## SECTION 6. A Little about You

**\*\* Please tell us a little bit about yourself. Your answers to these questions will help further characterize visitors to National Wildlife Refuges. Answers are not linked to any individual taking this survey. \*\***

1. Are you a citizen or permanent resident of the United States?

99% Yes  1% No → *If not, what is your home country?* See Figure 2 in Report

2. Are you?  48% Male  52% Female

3. In what year were you born? 1962 (YYYY)

4. What is your highest year of formal schooling? (Please circle one number.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20+
(elementary)					(junior high or middle school)			(high school)				(college or technical school)				(graduate or professional school)			
					1%			10%				48%				42%			

5. What ethnicity do you consider yourself?  7% Hispanic or Latino  93% Not Hispanic or Latino

6. From what racial origin(s) do you consider yourself? (Please mark **all that apply.**)

- 5% American Indian or Alaska Native  3% Black or African American  95% White  
 3% Asian  1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

7. How many members are in your household? 3 persons

8. How many members of your household contribute to paying the household expenses? 2 persons

9. Including these members, what was your approximate household income from all sources (before taxes) last year?

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2% Less than \$10,000  | <input type="checkbox"/> 11% \$35,000 - \$49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21% \$100,000 - \$149,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3% \$10,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18% \$50,000 - \$74,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9% \$150,000 - \$199,999  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5% \$25,000 - \$34,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 22% \$75,000 - \$99,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9% \$200,000 or more      |

10. How many outdoor recreation trips did you take in the last 12 months (for activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc.)?

14 number of trips

**Thank you for completing the survey.**

**There is space on the next page for any additional comments you may have regarding your visit to this Refuge.**

## Comments?

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See Appendix B for Comments

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT: The Paperwork Reduction Act requires us to tell you why we are collecting this information, how we will use it, and whether or not you have to respond. The information that we collect in this survey will help us understand visitor satisfaction with and use of National Wildlife Refuges and to make sound management and policy decisions. Your response is voluntary. An agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. We estimate it will take an average of 25 minutes to complete this survey. You may send comments concerning the burden estimate or any aspect of the survey to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, MS 222-ARLSQ, Arlington, VA 22203. OMB CONTROL #1018-0145 EXPIRATION DATE 6/30/2013

## Appendix B: Visitor Comments to Open-Ended Survey Questions for Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

### Survey Section 1

Question 1: "Including your most recent visit, which activities have you participated in during the past 12 months at this Refuge?"

Special Event	Frequency
Barr Lake Volunteer Event	2
Big Buck Photo Tour	1
Bike-the-Refuge	1
Birding tours/owls tours/big buck tours	1
Birds of prey	1
Boy Scouts	1
Dedication Anniversary Oct 20, 2012	1
Derby Days	1
Fall Festival	1
Fall Open House	1
Fishing derby	2
Go Wild camp	1
Harvest Event: hayride, special bird show	1
Open house	1
Photo tour	1
Promotional Photography Contest for postcards for the refuge gift shop	1
Refuge Week	1
Rocky Mountain Arsenal events - Refuge Day; Big Buck Photo Shot	1
Saturday Open House Special Event	1
Special open house activities on Oct. 13, 2012	3
Talk on creepy crawly things	1
Wildlife camp	1
Wildlife Photo Tours	1
Wildlife Refuge Day	6
Wildlife Refuge Day, Wildlife Photo Tour	1

Other Activity	Frequency
Just visited the refuge	1
My 6 year old daughter visits the Arsenal NWR weekly as part of her summer camp	1
Refuge tour bus	1
Visiting Mile High Youth Corps Crew	1
Visitor Center	2

Question 2: "Which of the activities above was the primary purpose of your visit to this Refuge?"

*Primary activities are categorized in the main report; the table below lists the "other" miscellaneous primary activities listed by survey respondents.*

Other Miscellaneous Primary Activities	Frequency
Curiosity	1
Find buffalo	1
Just to see what you have	1
My initial visit was to determine what was there.	1
Visit	1
Visiting Mile High Youth Corps Crew	1
Wildlife tour	1

Question 3: “Did you go to a Visitor Center at this Refuge?”; If Yes, “What did you do there?”

Other Visitor Center Activity	Frequency
Attend education program	1
Barr Lake State Park Volunteer monthly meeting	1
Big buck tour	1
Check out binoculars	2
Child attended camp	1
Children's Activity Area	4
Colorado Parks and Wildlife meeting	1
Craft activities	2
Educational	1
Orientation by one of the Volunteers	1
Photography tour	1
Stay warm (cold and rainy that day)	1
To vote for my picture submission in the Amateur Photography Contest	1
Volunteer	1
We used the classroom for a picnic.	1
Wildlife Tour	1

Question 6: “Were you part of a group on your visit to this Refuge?; If Yes, “What type of group were you with on your visit?”

Other Group Type	Frequency
Another teacher from my school	1
Barr Lake State Park Volunteers	4
Boy Scouts	1
Colorado Parks and Wildlife volunteers group	1
Denver zoo volunteers	1
Kids fishing derby	1
Mile High Youth Corps	1
Office Outing	1
Other visitors that day	1
Photography Class	1
Photography tour	1
Senior Living Community (Keystone Place at Legacy Ridge)	1
Taking grandson to camp	1

Question 8: "How did you first learn or hear about this Refuge?"

Other Website	Frequency
A 'things to do while in Denver' website	1
City-Data.com	1
CO bird website	1
Denver Go Kids	1
Fishing blog	1
Googled "National Wildlife Refuge Colorado".	1
Internet search of things to do	1
kidspages.org	1
Mile high on the cheap - Last Year	1
Recreation opportunities in Denver	1
Searched internet for gardens/parks to visit while in area on business, Google maps	1

Other Ways Heard about This Refuge	Frequency
Denver Museum of Natural Science - exhibit about bison	1
Denver Post articles	1
Denver Zoo	1
Hotel brochure	1
I am a retired FWS employee from this refuge.	1
I work for the FWS.	1
Internet travel ideas	1
It's a block from my house	1
Por la maestra de mi hijo (My son's teacher)	1
Pro Bass Shops	1
Refuge Stamp Book	1
Through work at my former place - Denver Museum of Nature & Science	1
Tourist brochure in hotel room about Denver area	1
Work activity	1

## Survey Section 2

Question 1: "What forms of transportation did you use on your visit to this Refuge?"

Other Forms of Transportation	Frequency
Hay ride	2

Question 2: "Which of the following did you use to find your way to this Refuge?"

Other Ways Found This Refuge	Frequency
A zoo volunteer arranged the trip.	1
Auto tour	1
Called refuge because maps and guide book gave bad directions.	1
CO bird website	1
Directions in newspaper	1
Hotel concierge	1
Map from refuge Visitor Center	2
Map function on the Smartphone	1

Question 3: "Below are different alternative transportation options that could be offered at some National Wildlife Refuges in the future...please tell us how likely you would be to use each transportation option."

Other Transportation Option Likely to Use	Frequency
Bike paths	1
Electric 'GO' cars - quiet and environmentally-wise: charge with solar panels	1
Hay ride for adults	1
I would love to be able to mountain bike without having to have a guide.	1
My own bike	2
Power hang glider	1
Private car	2
Trolley	1
Walking	1
We are up for anything, as long as it would accommodate a toddler and 6 year old.	1

Question 6: "If you have any comments about transportation-related items at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below."

Comments on Transportation-related Items at This Refuge (n = 36)

Thanks so much for turning Rocky Mountain Arsenal into this beautiful wildlife refuge. I am an over 60 Denver native and I know Rocky Mountain Arsenal very well. I hope more hiking trails will open soon as there is so much more to see and enjoy.

A bus on the refuge would be nice if parking gets overcrowded and driving becomes congested.

Biking is prohibited at Rocky Mountain Arsenal, but I think at least road cycling that would have minimal impact on wildlife should be considered as it is a wonderful, quiet, and safe place for riding.

Directions to Visitor Center, parking, trails, are unclear.

For some reason I was having a hard time matching the map up to the actual route of scenic drive. The wildlife drive itself was easy and straightforward but I was not sure that the map matched the route exactly, so we just followed the signs along the way.

I am very satisfied with the handicapped bridges.

I live close to the refuge and the new entrance has doubled my drive time. I want local access to the south gate. I at least want to be able to use it as an exit.

I saw some tour buses parked outside the Visitor Center but I was given no information about tours and there were no signs or anything explaining the tour buses. I would have enjoyed taking a tour since this was our first time to our neighborhood wildlife refuge. They should have more signs or more people informing guests of what's available.

I wish you had more roads through the refuge to see more animals.

I would like to see an off road bike path and more bike paths.

I'd love to ride my bicycle at the refuge without having to have a guide to follow.

Indication as to what wildlife you might see in different areas would help.

It seems a lot of the area in this refuge is closed off to visitors as well as inaccessible by car or bicycle. I understand the limited car traffic to maintain the wildlife but unsure why bicycle is not allowed.

It would have been nice to know one of the entrances was closed.

Nos hubiera gustado subimos a ese trencito o bus que paseaba a le gente pero por el tiempo que tenia nos no tuvimos oportunidad pero que agradable se veia. (We would have liked to take the bus that was picking up people but because of time, we didn't have the opportunity to do so, but it was nice to see.)

Please open more trails.

Please update online directions. They were incorrect (point to old entrance). Not correct; not pleased. The staff at the Visitor center wasn't too Concerned.

Road signage at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal is confusing. It is difficult to tell what road you are on. A few small signs at junctures would help tremendously, since the map assumes you know what road you are on, but they are not marked. I ended up adding 4 miles to my hike by parking in the wrong lot. Otherwise, a great experience.

Some roads were closed, which prevented us from seeing everything.

The bus or van drivers and "tour guides" are usually volunteers. They all do excellent work!

The roads were nice.

The signage near the refuge is small and infrequent. If I didn't already know where I was going, finding the refuge would be a challenge. The refuge is just now opening for greater access. It will be interesting to see how far it evolves.

There is not enough wildlife and I could not get near the buffalo.

There were no speed limits posted (I think). I was pulled over by a ranger for no real good reason and made the visit to the refuge a bummer. But cops got to be cops.

Trails need to be better marked, with distances for folks who can get around but not for long distances.

Trams or other vehicles are not important options for us, but having an accessible bike path would be great.

Transportation is great. We love taking the bus and having a guide.

Transportation provided by the refuge was very noisy. Use of an electric vehicle would allow a quieter approach to animals and enhance the wildlife viewing experience. During my recent bus tour, the noise from the bus scared away birds perching near the roadway. My biggest disappointment with the experience was vehicular noise.

Very enjoyable. Some remaining construction debris (plastic pipe, etc.) should be removed.

We could not go as many places as we wanted because the roads appeared to be blocked to thru traffic. The tour bus was full and that was our goal. When they went on out into the refuge we had to stop. We wanted to see it all.

We did not see any signs directing us on the path, back to the Visitor Center or the parking lot. We were a bit nervous to get lost.

We had a great time on our tour at the refuge. Claude was a very nice man and a terrific tour guide.

We travelled in a car caravan to tour the refuge therefore we "followed the leader." The maps provided at the Visitor Center were of marginal value.

We used online driving directions as well as a GPS and almost didn't make it to the refuge because we got so lost. I am new to Denver, and couldn't find the main entrance because of the stadium in front. The roads were confusing, and there were not enough signs directing which way to go, especially since the directions online as well as on the GPS led us to the wrong entrance.

Would like to see more parking in the upper parking lot by Lake Ladora.

Would love if you would open access to more areas.

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## Survey Section 4

Question 6: "If you have any comments about services, facilities, and activities at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below."

### Comments on Services, Facilities, and Activities at This Refuge (n = 61)

I've been waiting over two years to see the bison herd and they are supposed to be moved to the Visitor Center and they are still not there because of a missing fence. This should be a priority for public draw. The education will not accept the help of a Cub Scout Den (three boys) to help come up with the different Cub Scout rank requirements. She promised that this would be done this fall and not only is it not done but did not acknowledge that they were willing to volunteer and help.

1. Fix directions and signage. 2. I couldn't go to the refuge and see bison.

1. Stay open until sundown for fishing. The fishing rules say 6pm but you close at 4pm? 2. Open up the third lake. 3. Please allow float tubes, even at the expense of wading. 4. Please open up the south gate for locals!

As a 70-year old resident of Colorado, I found it very informative.

Could use more restrooms. Could list best hours and seasons for possible wildlife viewing.

Excellent facility! I am very impressed with our guide (Reba Drotar); she was helpful and informative. They have a beautiful Visitor Center and it is very family friendly.

Great husband and wife volunteer team.

Great job!

Hunting and camping is needed.

I am not able to volunteer at this time. Perhaps in the future.

I am very impressed with the Visitor Center. I visited 2 days in a row and will be back! Great job with Refuge Day on 10/13/12. Thank you.

I am very satisfied. I love the handicapped bridges. Good job on the design. Happy, happy.

I love it. I can take my grandkids and it is free. Thank you.

I love walking the refuge, but I think more signs for the trails would be helpful as well as longer summer hours for evening walks.

I really like the kids classroom that is well-stocked and user friendly. My 6-year old girl had a blast.

I think the hours for fishing should be extended past 6pm, to 7pm or later.

I was disappointed that bicycle riding is not allowed of refuge road system when it appears able to support bicycles.

I wish for more blinds from which to observe and photograph wildlife closer together so as to walk, if wanted, from one to another.

I would like to see more trails and canoe rentals for the water trails.

I would love to participate in more volunteer led bird and wildlife watching/photo opportunities. I understand getting knowledgeable volunteers is the challenge.

If there could be a real time tracking display to locate buffalo within the refuge, that would be incredibly exciting and attractive (a sort of GPS).

It is an excellent visit each time we come. We will come again.

It seems like there is only limited access in this refuge and there use to be more points of access to explore various areas. It is a very limited use area because of limited access.

It was a very beautiful facility.

It was a very nice day and I enjoyed the facilities. You need more animals.

It would be helpful if the website informed people that the Visitor Center was closed and no indoor bathroom facilities were available there.

Longer evening hours during the summer would be nice.

Mule deer bow hunts for excess animals should be allowed by permit only.

Need more tour trips.

Need to open more trails.

On the weekends, the Ranger needs to be checking out the fishing areas a lot more. There's been a lot of illegal fishing going on.

Please open more trails and observation blinds and decks.

Please open trails for mountain biking.

Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR is only open for fishing 0600-1800 Tues, Sat and Sun. It would be nice to have later hours at least once or twice during the year, especially during the summer. The regulations are spot on and encourage a very good opportunity to catch trophy fish. The ranger that checks for fishing licenses is very thorough and professional.

Services and facilities are great.

Simply put, I make the trip to hike the trails in the wooded areas to see the great wildlife there and get photos. Most all the trails in the wooded areas are now closed. I would be more inclined to find a new destination rather than return to this refuge just because of the trail closures.

Staff was very helpful, friendly, and informative. Speed limit was exceedingly slow around refuge for such a vast/large area to travel - we cut our visit short because of that.

The Go Wild camp was a big success for our grandson. Many thank you's to the dedicated group of rangers who led this activity!

The lakes need to be freed of debris. Fishing bridges could use some protection from the sun. This refuge needs camping for RVs and tents. I would like to drive our car on an area where we can sit and watch buffalo.

The ranger stopped us for no real good reason in my thinking. This was embarrassing. Why should some place like this need a cop? It is a waste of money having a cop.

The volunteers were amazing! They were extremely friendly and knowledgeable and made our visit to the Arsenal that much better. I loved the photo contest as well.

There are not many areas to fish along the banks of the lakes for kids, a lot of cattails.

This is a great place!

This particular refuge, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge in Denver, Colorado, seemed to be in the 'process' of becoming a place of discovery and/or education. The gentleman who was the ticket seller and Visitor Center worker was extraordinarily polite, helpful, and knowledgeable about the place, so he was great. We were there on a weekday and there were very little visitors. We saw only one family taking the opportunity to go fishing. Perhaps the refuge could offer informative signage along the main routes and occasional refuse bins for garbage. We noticed that there were not that many places in shade to sit down and rest. Rustic wooden benches, large flat boulders, or other solutions for 'natural' seating could improve the receptive atmosphere of the reserve.

This was a great opportunity for our families to experience wildlife with their children.

Todo me agrado pero no me gustaría que se pudiera cazar en ese lugar solo admirar la belleza de la naturaleza y la creacion de Dios cuidada por ustedes. Dios los bendiga. (Everything was great, but I don't like that you can hunt here -- admire the beauty of nature and God's creation that we must take care of. God Bless.)

Too much of refuge is closed to public.

Unfortunately, we had a only a limited amount of time to visit. We did not see much wildlife except for the deer leaving the area. We were a little disappointed.

Very disappointed that the wonderful exhibit in the old Visitor Center is no longer available to the public. Also prefer the location of the old center to the new center.

Video feed of nesting Bald Eagles.

Volunteers were very knowledgeable and pleasant.

We had a blast! Everyone had a smile on their face and made us feel at home. We will come back for sure.

We had a very nice afternoon to be with nature and at the same time didn't have to go far from town and the main reason that we were in town was because we were spending the weekend visiting with family members.

We love the wild rides and we even got to see burrowing owls. Awesome.

We would like the trails that were closed to reopen to walk and see wildlife. The south gate and the other area where the other lake is to see the wildlife is also closed. It is always enjoyable to see. I would like to see the bison a lot more. I heard they were

supposed to move them down toward the Visitor Center more. They are so neat to see.

We would love to see more hiking opportunities at Arsenal and a bike entrance off of Havana or other Southern entrance point. It is hard to bike from Stapleton up to the new entrance off of Quebec.

Would help if trails are named/marked.

You need a better map of trails!

You recently discontinued the Wednesday bus tour. I work with mildly mentally-disabled and looked forward to the Wednesday tour.

## Survey Section 5

Question 3: "If you answered "Yes" to Question 2, please briefly describe what makes Refuges unique."

Comments on What Makes Refuges Unique? (n = 133)

A minimum of exotic attractions, yet solemn beauty.

A nearby wild place to visit near an urban setting.

A wild place to hike close to home.

Ability to view wildlife.

Access to wildlife through bus tours, car tours, and hiking trails makes it unique.

Accessible, protected, and diversified.

All of the wildlife available for viewing.

An excellent place to see natural wild habitat and plants and animals giving excellent educational opportunities for children and adults.

Animals come before people.

Better learning opportunities since they are usually very specific to the area.

Catch and release fishing.

Conservation

Conservation of land and animals more so than public trails.

Controlled environment with knowledgeable people answering questions

Darnos la oportunidad de relajarnos con la naturaleza, escuchando las aves, el agua, viendo insectos, plantas, y saber que tan importante son para el mundo naturaleza y aprendamos a cuidarla recordandonos cuando la vemos. (It gives us the opportunity to relax with nature, hearing the birds, the water, seeing insects, plants and knowing that they are so important for the natural world and learning to remember to care for it when we see it.)

Each one is different from the others, and each one provides insight into its own surroundings.

Eagles, owls, and always love to see bison.

Everything inside and out appeared clean and well-maintained.

Fantastic close-in urban experience. Wonderful accessibility for school groups and camps. Great wildlife experiences and short easy, flat hikes for kids. We would love to see more hiking in the Arsenal and easier access at a southern entrance. Fantastic and knowledgeable staff.

Fishing and wildlife.

For wanting to turn the land back to the way it was.

Gives an opportunity to observe wildlife and birds at your own pace (and free of charge).

Good catch and release fishing opportunities.

Good quality interpretive facilities.

Historical context of Rocky Mountain Arsenal at Visitor Center was excellent.

I believe the focus on wildlife and the fact that NWRs seem to be less crowded than national parks allows for a very pleasant educational experience.

I have not gone to other places but I've heard from many people that you guys offer a lot more than other places.

I like that it's in the city and on the prairie. It's very accessible and inexpensive.

I like that there is the ability to view and learn about wildlife in a more natural habitat. A habitat that is more natural to the wildlife that lives there without a large human presence.

I like the emphasis on outdoor education, through live programs, signs and exhibits.

I loved learning about the grasslands and importance of that habitat.

I taught an environmental education class that was a week long. Each day we went to a new place to learn and observe nature. Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge was amazing. The things we saw were great. We saw more and better quality than anywhere else we went.

I think it is rare to find the peace and tranquility to watch nature in the city.

I think it is really terrific that somebody who comes from the city can come to the refuge and see the animals in their habitat.

I was dropping off my kids in the morning and picking them up. I did not get the opportunity to check the place out. I have plans to do that soon.

In the case of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal site, such close proximity to a major urban area.

It gives the public a chance to see wildlife as it is in the "wild" up close without going too far out of the city limits. It helps people connect to nature.

It is a contained wildlife area very close to the city. It is much more accessible than the mountains, and still has a unique collection of wildlife (bison, coyote, prairie dog, etc).

It is a large area with lots of different opportunities.

It is history that is valued and preserved. A dedication to maintain the land "as it was" makes it unique. It offers convenient wildlife viewing.

It is less commercial than a National Park allowing more chance to have a personal experience.

It is less developed and very natural. It is a joy to visit.

It is more informational than parks.

It is nice to take my grandkids somewhere quiet, nice, and free. Thank you!

It is nice to visit and to see how clean it is and how the military stuff was disposed of to make it a nice refuge for the people to come and enjoy.

It is open so I saw buffalo and deer along the road and I liked the floating boardwalks to hike over and around the lake.

It is unique because I think many people are unaware that right in the middle of the city is a place where people can see a lot of wildlife (deer, buffalo, owls), a lot of huge animals right in the city without having to drive to the nearest National Park. This could be a really popular thing to do if there were a little more publicity.

It is very nice.

It is very well maintained and has a knowledgeable and cheerful staff.

It offers a look at a wildlife facility from an "insiders" perspective. It gave information about its past and present uses.

It's a piece of the natural world that is being saved to help wildlife survive and give us a place of beauty in nature and not more buildings and cities which in the long run helps the environment and all of mankind. If we allow all our refuges, parks, forests and other natural areas to be turned into cities we will die as a species.

It's important to the ecosystem. We need to save the wildlife.

It's maintained in it's natural state. Let nature/wildlife progress in their natural course of life

It's more engaging and encourages interaction and education, along with promotions to connect with the public.

It's unique in that this NWR is located in the open prairie whereas other NWRs that I have visited are in forested or heavy vegetated areas. Being from the east I was fascinated by the prairie dog colonies seen from the road.

Its goal is to preserve, not just showcase beauty like National Parks.

Its history makes it unique.

Just the fact that it is a safe refuge for birds.

More educational than others.

More protection of these habitats that produce more wildlife and educated experts to be selected for in providing the best environment for the wildlife makes it unique.

More relaxed atmosphere with room to roam.

Multi-use spaces. Hunting, birdwatching, hiking, biking, water-use, fishing activities are all very fun!

My wife and I enjoy getting out of town and spending it in a wilderness with wildlife around and being able to watch nature in action.

National Wildlife Refuges have the primary purpose of wildlife conservation, unlike most public lands, to whom conservation may be important, but not top on their list of priorities. The "feel" of a National Wildlife Refuge is equalizing, for lack of a better word...it is one of the few places we go to that seems to place wildlife on an equal level, perhaps even higher than, humans (which we need more of in this world).

National Wildlife Refuges provide quite a different 'feel' to the visitor: most people are used to municipal parks (a small scale) or National Parks (larger scale) and so are accustomed to the type of 'reception' that these places provide (for example, Visitor Center, ample parking, ample restrooms, food, gift shops, fees, tons of tourists and visitors, etc.). National Wildlife Refuges seem more out of the way, have less 'rules', appeal to the person who wishes for quiet space away from the masses of humanity, provide a spot to escape from the vagaries of infrastructure such as having to look at pipes, drainage, fencing, signage, etc. For this reason, people seek wildlife refuges to have a chance to spend quality time just sitting in nature without the hassle of trying to accommodate the human element.

Native of area. I did not know much of the history of the area. The Cold War use of the area.

New focus on conservation with public enjoyment together.

Not crowded, quiet, easy access, no fee haven for wildlife and hiking visitors.

This place is really special because they re-created the prairie and re-introduced the original animals and so on. It is also very unique because there's this beautiful prairie, and the skyline of downtown Denver can be seen in the distance. A great example of the co-existence of modern life with wildlife. I hope it works.

Often national wildlife refuges are places that have been damaged in the past and then are turned around to be places that can be enjoyed again by wildlife and people.

Opportunity to observe wildlife in their natural habitats.

Opportunity to see birds that I normally do not see otherwise.

Pike fishing

Please do catch and release only with barbless hooks, artificial flyers and lures. The state should make a rule of catch and release only for about 5 years so the population of the fish would grow and more fishermen would buy licenses.

Preserving and making it possible for people to enjoy and learn about wildlife and connect with nature makes it unique.

Preserving nature close to the city makes it unique.

Pristine to a degree and fairly not crowded.

Provides a valuable service in preservation.

Refuges are tucked into far more habitat areas than parks. They provide a unique peak into natural environments otherwise missed.

Seeing nature as it is, magnificent and beautiful, makes it unique.

Some species are not easily accessible/viewed except in the setting of a National Wildlife Refuge.

Sometimes state refuges do not have facilities.

The "wildlife first" mission of the NWRs makes refuges unique (compared to other public lands) and this mission should be maintained while providing new opportunities for the recreating public to experience the NWRs.

The brand new Visitor Center was very nice. I loved learning about the land and how much work was done to destroy then re-grow the refuge. It wasn't busy at all when I went (Sunday morning/afternoon) which provided a serene environment. The grounds were very clean and well kept.

The buffalo herd (at the Arsenal), the amount of open land, the history of the places, the variety of wildlife.

The care of the land and that it is very clean makes it unique. I am pleased and love the open spaces.

The catch and release rule and the barbless hook rule.

The combination of natural conservation and accessibility to view wildlife and natural settings.

The conservation mission is not like National Parks or National Forests.

The conservation of biological resources.

The education.

The educational activities for kids are great and also the history provided at the Visitor Center is good.

The effort to restore a site that was totally abused, polluted, and obliterated from its original state makes it unique. To hear the disregard for the site by the government and its other users was disgusting and alarming. To hear the government's efforts to remediate to any point was encouraging. I would have liked to see soil and air quality test results for the area in recent times. It would be a good indicator that the site was actually safe to be in by the public without protective devices.

The fact that the land was contaminated at one time and is cleaned up makes it unique.

The fact that the refuge was poisoned by the plants and factories that were there and now it can be a safe haven for wildlife (even though I wouldn't eat a fish caught there). PS. The refuge shouldn't charge a separate fishing license fee - you already have to have a Colorado fishing permit to fish there.

The fact that this land was a weapons arsenal makes it unique.

The focus on fish and wildlife management allows them to fulfill multiple goals for multiple species and include recreation as appropriate.

The hiking and birding opportunities are so convenient to our home in Aurora. This is about 20 minutes from our home.

The history of the local area (the arsenal and relocation of many families I've known) makes it unique.

The location in proximity to a metropolitan city.

The ranger in the gift shop was extremely knowledgeable and helpful and provided excellent guidance of where to go in the refuge and what to see.

The opportunity to experience wildlife in a safe setting makes it unique.

The opportunity to see wildlife in natural habitats makes it unique.

The protected environments for waterways, woodlands, and prairies raises chances of seeing wildlife, especially birds. Refuges are reminders of existence beyond concrete and asphalt. Going to a refuge flexes the rhythm of our days. What we see and hear, even what we don't see or hear on a refuge, feeds memory and then imagination and finally connections.

The refuge system's first priority is conservation of wildlife as compared to the National Park Service whose first priority is the visiting public.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR is unique to me in particular due to reclaiming an old military base into a wildlife refuge by bringing different animals species back into the area.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal offers good opportunities for freshwater fishing in Denver.

The size, history, and opportunities available.

The transformation from farmland to military occupation to a wildlife refuge, and all done very successfully.

The type of wildlife found on the refuge is different than I have experienced at other locations.

The unique history and active restoration is very interesting.

The wildlife and the proximity to local visitors makes it unique.

The wildlife viewing is usually great. I personally don't like to come out during hunting days since I am a wildlife photographer.

Their mission and the vast knowledge and information shared with the visiting public. Love it!

Their mission for conserving and managing wildlife and their habitats for the general population to enjoy without out a great expense to them makes it unique.

There is a good history involved and it is a great learning experience.

There is lots of good information about the refuge and its wildlife.

There is more information provided.

They allow people to view animals in their habitats at a safe distance for the animals and the viewing public.

They are important in preserving wildlife and plant life. They provide excellent educational learning experiences.

They give access to information on local wildlife. There are many sighting opportunities and are generally less crowded than National Parks.

They give back to nature.

They protect animals in their natural habitat, providing the balance that God intended them to have in an unthreatened environment.

This is an "urban refuge" at its best! You guys have done a great thing to allow us to enjoy this space again. It has a cool mix of outdoor recreation and history. I love it!

This refuge has migrating Bald Eagles. The land has been "renewed" from the arsenal it was.

This refuge provides a free opportunity for our family to birdwatch, and see other animals such as bison, deer, etc., within the Denver metro area. It is easy to get to, and free so we use it a lot. It is a great facility in the city.

To see the RMANWR now compared to what it was in the past (chemical weapons etc) is absolutely amazing. It is also in an urban area, so many people have the opportunity of viewing wildlife in their natural habitat.

Very specific to nature and the environment that is literally in my back yard. Easy access for my kids and me.

Very unusual because its on a former Super Fund site.

We were able to see protected wildlife roaming around.

Wildlife is available to studied, appreciated, protected, photographed, and cared for.

Wildlife is first priority.

Wildlife is protected and preserved in its natural habitat and the protection and preservation is regulated.

You can take your time, feel relaxed, and see nature as it should. It is close to my house. You can see different animals.

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Additional Comments (n = 37)

"It was awesomely awesome!" per my 11-yr old grandson.

Again, more volunteers who care about informing the public about fun things to do there and more signs and publicity about the refuge, etc. is needed. Maybe at least they could hand you an informational brochure when you first walk in to the Visitor Center.

As my husband travels for business, I join him and visit all outdoor, environmentally dedicated areas in each area. I live at the Jersey Shore among estuaries, wetlands, flyways, etc.; it is a part of my life.

Beautiful Visitor Center. Met very nice staff and volunteers.

Enjoyed my time there and the education provided about the ecosystem at the Visitor Center. Saw many prairie dogs, waterfowl, and one deer. The bison were hiding that day.

Excellent facility and wildlife viewing opportunities in an urban environment. Greatly appreciative!

Hope the refuge will add more contests and promotions for adults, to encourage and draw more attention to the cause. The Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR does an excellent job with interactions and educational opportunities for kids!

I enjoy our visits each time to the refuge and plan on making it a regular routine throughout the years to come.

I enjoy the Arsenal and was pleased to see the new Visitor Center. Refuge Day is a nice gathering /experience. I usually make sure friends know it is happening and bring guests.

I live in Texas; at the time of my visit I was staying in Boulder.

I love the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and I can't wait to explore it in spring, summer, and fall. Thanks for all that you do!

I love to fish there, but since you are open for fishing on Saturday and Sunday, you need to change your weekday from Tuesday to Wednesday and here is why: The fish get stressed out in those two days and need more than one day to rest, it's better for all.

I started visiting this refuge because there are great locations to hike and show my children wildlife while being able to take some great photographs. Now that the trails in the wooded areas are being closed down more each year, and being replaced with trails in the grass lands areas I will take my family to different locations to be able to teach and enjoy what our family likes to do.

I was doing a birding "Big Year," hence so many trips out in nature.

I'm glad Rocky Mountain Arsenal has been/is being converted into a refuge. I look forward to continuing efforts towards its environmental improvements. Keep up the good work! Thank you.

It was lots of fun.

It would be nice to be able to view the bison without having to go on the bus tour.

Keep up the good work!

Loved the 2-day free program for children this summer. Plus a fishing class for kids would be great.

More shaded areas for sitting or having lunch, more benches or seating for people

More trails and campsites would be fun. Thanks!

No sabemos sobre este lugar que existia pero ahora que lo conocemos. Fue una experiencia agradable y sentimos que estabamos fuera de la ciudad por esa experiencia tan tranquila y acogedora. Gracias por conservar lo Dios los bendiga y los mantendremos en nuestras oraciones para que sigan conservado ese gran lugar y que Dios provea los recursos. Gracias. (I didn't know this place existed, but now I am familiar with it. It was a pleasant experience and we feel that we were away from the city through this calm and welcoming experience. Thank you for conserving what God has blessed and we will continue to pray to keep conserving this great place and that God provides the resources. Thanks.)

Please open some trails for mountain biking. East Denver has no mountain biking of any type. Help us, you're our only hope.

Please open the south gate to locals, at least as an exit. It takes me twice as long to get there now. A season pass for fishing would be smart.

Thank you for your good work, tax money well spent!

Thanks for turning this into such a beautiful and natural place.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center is nicely done, but it was obvious that budgetary constraints limited its size and therefore the abundance of exhibits. Compared to the Neil Smith Wildlife Refuge in Iowa, the RMANWR was too small and lacking a high wow factor. I support investing more in our federal public lands to conserve natural resources.

The staff is great and the programs offered to young people for free are outstanding. My grandson went to a two day camp and has also participated in photography and the bus tours.

This is a great refuge because it is basically inside a (our) major metro area (Denver). The staff/volunteers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. It has Bald Eagles during the winter months, which is awesome!

This refuge would become a very popular spot with many families if it had longer hours and camping. It is so close to the city, and many people would frequent it if it had more events, especially over the weekends. Volunteers/staff could give fireside classes on the refuge, climate, fishing and many other topics. I have a 3 year old granddaughter that I'm wanting to acclimate to fishing, camping, and wildlife and this very close spot would be great for her and us. She and her dad (our son) took on the June Fishing Derby. They both had a blast. Thank you for that. She even caught a fish. Keep up the good work!

Very good place to view wildlife, fish and learn. Thank you!

Visiting Rocky Mountain Arsenal was highly surprising to me. I had no idea that the federal government used this area for what we might consider today to be a toxic waste dump. It is depressing to know that we as humans feel we have no impact on our surroundings; this is just an ignorant view of society. All creatures impact their environment. Once we begin to start teaching in our schools that the well-being of ourselves is directly tied to how we treat the space around us, the better. I wish that all the wonderful people who are part of the FWS system and who help make parks and refuges possible could spend their time enjoying what was here in the first place, rather than having to desperately work so hard to clean up the poison messes left behind by corporations (like BP and Exxon), careless government projects (like putting nuclear waste in the ground), and other selfish endeavors.

We came to the refuge to see wildlife. All we saw was a sick raccoon, prairie dogs and some ducks on the lake. The deer and buffalo were in an area not even accessible. The tour bus left 30 minutes prior to us getting there. I feel like that was not even mentioned in the brochure because we would have been there for the tour had we have known. I know this is a new facility and it's more about preservation than tourism, but I feel like I wasted my time finding the place.

We had a really nice time! Thank you!

We loved it. We have family in Colorado and plan to visit the refuge again whenever we are there.

We were in Denver for a family wedding and the visit to the refuge was the only time we had to do anything else. We were glad to find it so close!

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