



Lake Mary Education Center Proposal for GAOA Funding



Presented to:

United States Fish and Wildlife Service - September 2020

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

September 11, 2020

Aurelia Skipwith, Director
Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Skipwith:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Friends of the Front Range Wildlife Refuges I present this proposal to allow the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) to reach its highest and best purpose. You have 90 days to report to Congress how you intend to fund accounts, programs and projects. We have a premier urban refuge project idea: the **Lake Mary Education Center**.

America's public lands can help bring people together. Respect for nature and for each other can be advanced by the GAOA and with this proposal for a diverse urban environment we aim to achieve just that.

We believe the Lake Mary Education Center would provide unique opportunities for the youth in our communities as well as visitors from around the world. We wish you great success in your endeavors. You have a rare opportunity to restore much-needed public lands.

Sincerely,



Rene Bullock, President
Friends of the front Range Wildlife Refuges

CC: Noreen Walsh, Region 6 Director



OUR RESOLUTION OF INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Whereas: Situated in Adams County, Colorado the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR) was created by PL 102-402 (1992) and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). And

Whereas: The purpose of the RMANWR, as one of eight urban refuges in the Service, is to connect the public to wildlife and wildlife's natural habitat. And

Whereas: Friends of the Front Range Refuges (FFRWR), one of 800 such organizations, is incorporated as a 501c3 organization to support the RMANWR. And

Whereas: FFRWR sees an immediate need to provide additional educational opportunities to the 90,000 monthly visitors to the RMANWR. And

Whereas: The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) was enacted into law (PL 116-152) on August 4, 2020, and funds maintenance of national wildlife refuges and emphasizes construction at such refuges through the use of GAOA funds. And

Whereas: FFRWR believes it to be in the best interest of the RMANWR to apply for GAOA funds to renovate an underutilized FWS contact station attached to the popular Lake Mary trail and accessible fishing facility to provide additional educational opportunities to the public. And

Whereas: FFRWR manages a Generation Wild coalition grant from Greater Outdoors Colorado to connect diverse populations of students to the refuge.

Therefore be it Resolved: That the FFRWR Board, on its own initiative and with no official consultation, will draft and present a concept proposal to the USFWS to apply for GAOA funds to turn the underutilized USFWS contact station into the Lake Mary Education Center.



LESSONS OF COVID



In the COVID spring of 2020 at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR), hundreds of thousands of locals discovered one of the best places in the country to view wildlife, to fish, to hike and to return to nature.

Americans love and need nature, demonstrated by long lines waiting at our gates, full parking lots at trailheads and families lining up to fish. Yes, we love our refuges and we also need to maintain and repair them. Just in time, the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) was enacted and will bring federal dollars to do just that.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) uses state lottery dollars to connect underserved youth to nature through its “Generation Wild” projects. The Generation Wild Northeast Metro Coalition and My Outdoor Colorado give youth from Aurora, Commerce City, and the Denver neighborhoods of Northeast Park Hill, Montbello, Westwood and Cole easy access to outdoor education, fishing, and jobs both close to home and at the refuge.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) understands that access to all citizens is critical. That is why it pays special attention to urban refuges, like RMANWR, where tourists, thousands of locals and underserved youth can see and learn about nature.

Using GAOA funds to invest in public lands is vital. But if 400,000 people visited RMANWR last year, close to 1,000,000 will visit this year and a great number of Generation Wild youth visit always, the refuge needs resources to meet this urban demand. It is a smart investment.

Guest Editorial: Kate Kramer, Treasurer FFRWR



HISTORY & BACKGROUND - Contact Station and Egli Homestead

The USFWS Contact Station, formerly U.S. Army Officers Club Building 383, was built c. 1970-1971. The 6000 square foot “Butler Building” design with swimming pool was used for military social, recreational, civic, and business purposes.

After passage of the refuge law in 1992 use of Building 383 was split between the Army and USFWS. As an interim visitor’s center the exhibits told the Army’s story and introduced visitors to wildlife habitat. It hosted Refuge Days and other events, maintained a discovery room and held wildlife-related public meetings. When a new visitors center opened in 2011 the facility became the Contact Station, a secondary visitors center reserved for infrequent classes and functions. Otherwise it sits empty, off limit to visitors who park in the deteriorating lot to walk the 100-yard trail to Lake Mary. For more history on Building 383, please go [here](#). For more information on the opening and dedication of the visitor center, please go [here](#).



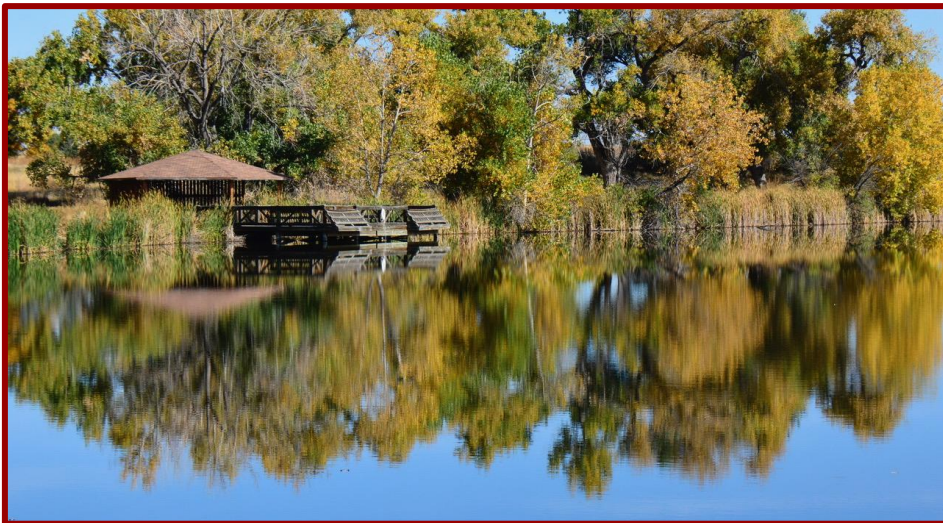
The Egli Homestead was settled in 1912 by Swiss immigrants Gottlieb and Rose Egli. They raised eight children there until July 1942 when the U.S. Army evicted them and compensated them with \$65,000 for their 1,000 acres but with no credit for that season’s corn and alfalfa crop. Across from the Contact Station, the homestead with house, garage and windmill is the last remaining farm on the 19,000 acres and is on the Colorado State Historic Register.



HISTORY & BACKGROUND - Lake Mary

Lake Mary was dug for and named after the daughter of a past Rocky Mountain Arsenal commander. This popular fishing destination hosts five species of fish in its 8.4 acres. Surrounded by a 0.6-mile trail it features boardwalks, piers and docks accessible to all. It lies next to the 54-acre Lake Ladora. The fee-based fishing season runs from May to November, three days a week. This is a catch-and-release only event and attracts thousands of visitors each season.

For more information, please refer to our website [here](#).



WHY? Reason #1



1. Lake Mary Education Center will comply with the 2015 Record Of Decision to the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Fits the relevant "Goals" (refer to pg. 3):

- Protect and interpret cultural resources
- Improve and maintain infrastructure and operations
- Develop suitable access and transportation option
- Provide inclusive, accessible wildlife dependent education and interpretation

Addresses the following "Issues" (refer to pg. 4):

- Expand public use facilities
- Connect people to nature
- Improve outreach and partnerships



Combines "Preferred Alternative C" elements (refer to pgs. 5-6):

- Renovate facilities to increase the quality of fishing experiences
- Explore nontraditional ways to educate visitors about environmental topics
- Make use of the Contact Station to provide interpretive programs and venues for teaching
- Provide a new Environmental Education Center to offer high-quality experiences
- Restore the Egli farmstead

To refer to the Record of Decision of the 2015 Final Environmental Impact Statement, please go [here](#).

To refer to the 2015 Final Environmental Impact Statement, please go [here](#).

WHY? Reason #2

2. RMANWR enjoys partnerships and financial support that should be counted as local matches.

Great Outdoors Colorado Generation Wild Grant. This \$2.7 million coalition grant serves diverse neighborhoods adjacent to RMANWR and provides programmatic venues for education and outdoor recreation. If you build it, they will come. For more information on the GOCO program, please go [here](#).

Adams County Open Space Grant (2020) Awarded to FWS, this \$84,319.82 grant improves the Lake Mary parking facilities to accommodate the handicapped with ADA and paratransit design elements. Completion expected in time for 2021 fishing season. Please see the announcement [here](#). To view the agreement, please go [here](#).

Friends of the Front Range Wildlife Refuges.

Besides managing the GOCO grant, the organization makes annual contributions to replace fishing equipment. It provides transportation for refuge field trips for youth from schools in low-income areas. It also has a dedicated financial account to stabilize the Egli House farmstead. To view our partnership agreement with Region 6 USFWS, please go [here](#).

For more information, please go to our website [here](#).



WHY? Reason #3

3. Maintenance Backlog of USFWS Assets: Congressional Intent.

[P.L. 116-152](#) addresses and funds the maintenance and construction backlog of public land assets, including those of the USFWS. Section 200401 defines those assets as **“real property or grouping of structures, landscapes, trails or other tangible property.”**

Lake Mary Education Center follows the intent by grouping Lake Mary, the Egli Farmstead and USFWS Contact Station (formerly Bldg. 383).

It also qualifies as backlog. U.S. Real Property records from 1982 catalog Building 383 and its equipment. Note is made that **“the estimated useful life of the building from August, 1982, with minimal maintenance and no building use change, is 25 years.”**

Please refer to the building 383 document [here](#).



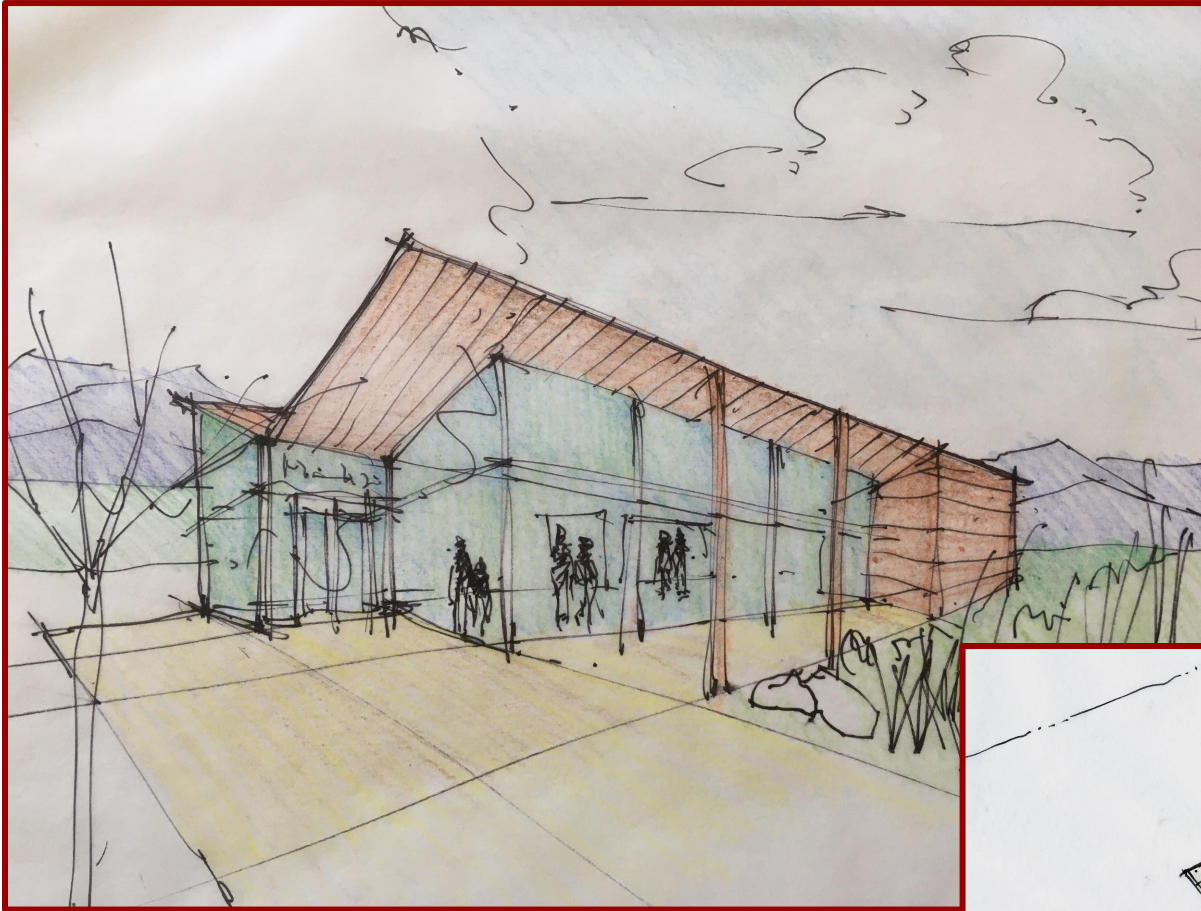
THE VISION: PROPOSED DESIGN ELEMENTS



1. Exterior materials and details will be designed to fit well with the standing seam copper cladding of the Pat Schroeder Visitors Center and the FWS HQ building one mile to the west.
2. Priority given to incorporating passive and active solar energy features into the building design.
3. Building orientation, window placement designed to capture mountain vistas to the west and high plains prairie vistas to the east.
4. Increased parking with lighting and accessibility conforming to the ANSI standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
5. Improvement in layout and ease of use will be made to the foot trails to Lake Mary.
6. Higher-efficiency and new plumbing will be provided for the water and sewer infrastructure.
7. Installation of new high-speed internet for nontraditional multi-modal learning capabilities.
8. Improved ingress and egress driveways for safety and convenience will be provided. The planning of the new driveways and entranceways will accommodate a circular drive for food truck concessionaires to serve visitors.
9. High-quality design of interpretive signage, wayfinding and security fencing for the Egli Homestead.
10. The overall interior design goal will be to provide a relaxed and refreshing environment for learning.
11. A key cultural emphasis of the new interior exhibit space will highlight the rich Native American history at the refuge. This will be developed in partnership with the USFWS Eagle Repository facility.
12. Installation of COVID-appropriate indoor food service facilities.

***Suggested cost for total improvements and development is estimated under \$5 million.**

THE VISION: RENDERINGS



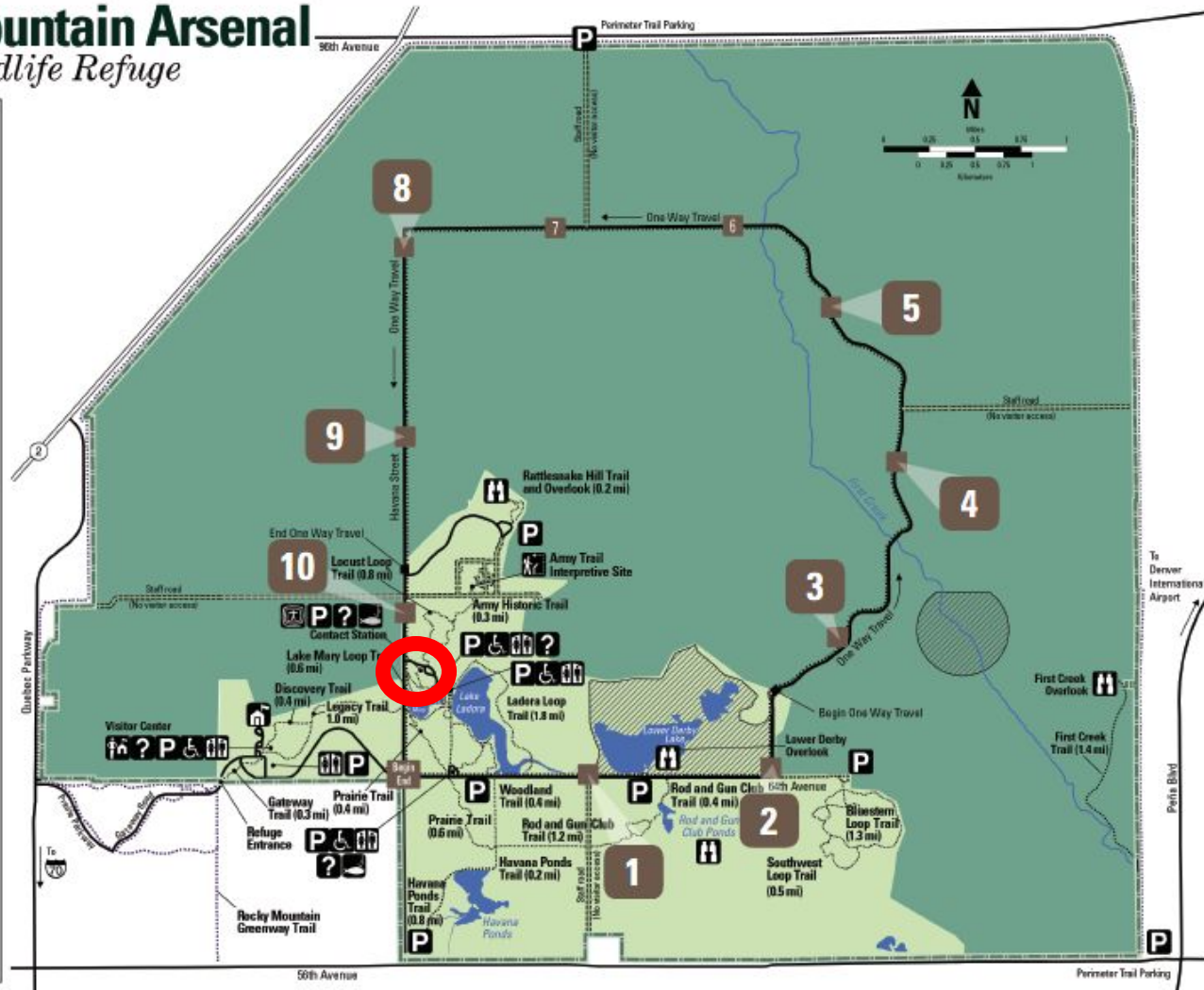
"I care to live
only to entice
people to look at
nature's
loveliness."
John Muir





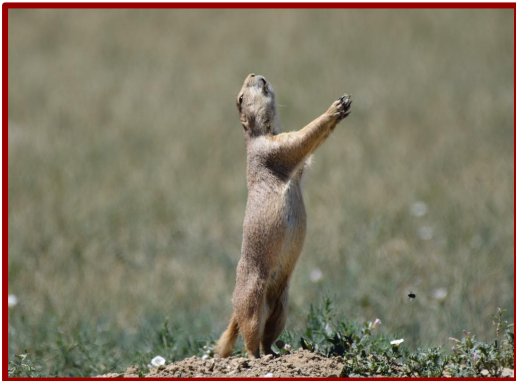
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

- Refuge boundary
- Wildlife drive and mile markers
- Other visitor road
- Gravel road
- Staff road (No visitor access)
- Hiking trail
- Perimeter Trail
- Lake / wetland
- Stream
- Floating boardwalk
- Sensitive wildlife habitat area (Closed to all entry)
- Bison and prairie restoration area
- Visitor and environmental education area
- Accessible facilities
- Visitor center
- Contact station
- Refuge headquarters
- Historic interpretive site
- Information kiosk
- Wildlife viewing site
- Restroom
- Fishing fee station
- Parking



CONCLUSION & FINAL REQUEST

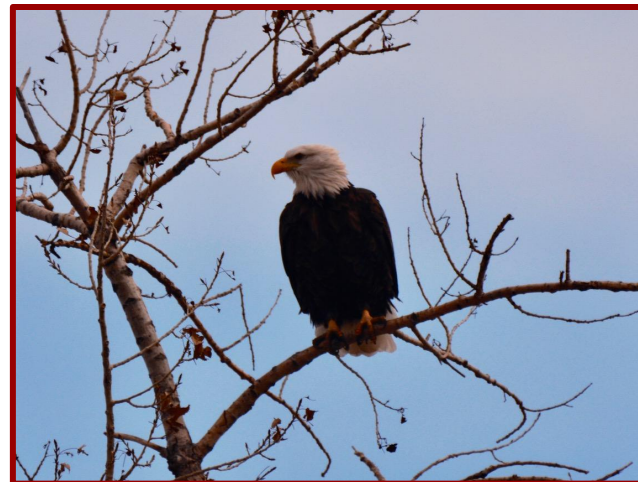
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a historic opportunity to make our public lands a better place for our youth, families and communities. With smart investments in projects such as this as well as educational programs it will restore our heritage and build a connection to nature.



Lake Mary Education Center is a smart investment, one paid back by the wide cross section of America who will benefit for generations to come.



This unsolicited and unofficial proposal is an idea, like a seed. Friends of the Front Range Wildlife Refuges is planting this seed in hopes it grows for the enjoyment and education for all who visit. Please refer to page 15 for a list of supporters.



CREDITS AND RECOGNITION



Board Members of the Friends of the Front Range Wildlife Refuges

- Rene Bullock: President; Executive Director, Commerce City Chamber of Commerce
- David Pocs: Vice President; LPL Financial Advisor
- Rachel Crouch: Secretary; Executive Director, Bluff Lake Nature Center
- Kate Kramer: Treasurer; Generation Wild Grant Manager
- Kip Cheroutes: Aide to former U.S. Rep. Pat Schroeder, sponsor of P.L. 102-402
- Maria Carabajal: South Adams County Fire Protection District
- Gary Beasley: Field Interviewer for non-profits
- Carolyn Boller: Retired
- James Jacobs: Higher Education, Colorado Mesa University
- Kyli Kehler: Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck
- Patty Lee: U.S. Army (civilian)
- Kate Madden: Counsel

Photos courtesy of James Jacobs and Kate Kramer.

Architect Rendering courtesy of David Lynn Wise, AIA.
Akron, Colorado native. David has volunteered his services
at the refuge for decades.



****Special thanks to the FWS staff who have gone above and beyond the call of duty during many trying times. They are heroes.**

LETTERS OF SUPPORT



1. U.S. Rep. Perlmutter
2. U.S. Rep. Tipton
3. City of Denver, Councilman Herndon
4. City of Denver, Councilwoman Gilmore
5. City of Commerce City
6. Bluff Lake Nature Center
7. South Adams County
Fire Department

