



## Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management

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### **Implementing Adaptive Management in the Proposed Rocky Flats Surface Water Configuration**

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management is currently preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) that evaluates impacts related to breaching dams and restoring approximate stream configurations for creeks traversing the Rocky Flats, Colo, Site.

DOE released the draft EA for public comment in April 2010 and hosted several public meetings to discuss the proposed actions and obtain input on public concerns. Additional information on the *Draft Rocky Flats Surface Water Configuration Environmental Assessment (EA)* is available at [http://www.LM.doe.gov/Rocky\\_Flats\\_NEPA.pdf](http://www.LM.doe.gov/Rocky_Flats_NEPA.pdf).

Based on the comments received and numerous discussions with the public, representatives of nearby communities and state and local governments, DOE is continuing to evaluate the EA and intends to continue the discussion with all parties in order to address concerns and try to reach a mutually agreeable result. DOE intends to make a decision on the proposed action and release a final decision document in the April 2011 timeframe.

During the past several months DOE has reviewed the detailed evaluations considered in the EA and the comments and concerns expressed by some members of the public. Although DOE has concluded that no significant environmental impacts would result from proceeding with the proposed actions, DOE has identified a number of modifications to the proposed mitigation plans to address comments provided to DOE.

DOE believes that implementing an Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) in conjunction with the EA is a positive step forward in resolving any additional public concerns over the proposed action.

#### **What is an AMP and what does it do?**

Adaptive management is used to address unanticipated changes in environmental conditions or subsequent information that might affect the original environmental protections as analyzed in the EA and are of concern to the public. The NEPA adaptive management model adds two steps to a traditional EA. First, ongoing environmental monitoring is required following implementation of any proposed action that includes mitigation under the EA. The second step requires that the action's implementation or mitigation is adapted as appropriate based on ongoing environmental monitoring data. Under this approach, actions are adjusted to foster desired outcomes and reduce undesired ones.

An AMP makes it possible to provide managers with the parameters to make any necessary adaptations without needing new or supplemental NEPA analyses, unless there are substantial

unforeseen changes to the action, or there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts. This approach allows continuous improvement in management effectiveness and in reducing environmental impacts within parameters and processes established by the NEPA-informed decision.

DOE has not as yet formalized guidance on incorporating adaptive management in its environmental assessment process, however, the U.S. Department of the Interior has promulgated guidance on adaptive management and DOE is utilizing their guidance for this AMP. For additional information on adaptive management as implemented by the Interior Department, please visit their website at <http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/AdaptiveManagement/index.html>.

### **How does DOE plan to utilize an AMP?**

Developing and implementing an AMP is a dynamic process. The commitment to develop the AMP would be included in the EA and the AMP will be developed through a transparent public process with engaged stakeholders. DOE has identified a number of potential adaptive mitigation areas and encourages further discussion with engaged members of the public to identify any additional areas of concern and potential mitigation measures. DOE will schedule a number of public discussion meetings with interested parties over the next 6 months to develop an AMP that will alleviate the issues of concern and encourage all parties to reach mutual agreement.