



December 19, 2016

Chief Cynthia Martinez  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C. Street N.W., Room 3038  
Washington, D.C. 20240

**RE: Letter of support for Urban Refuge Grant**

Dear Ms. Martinez,

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR) is a valued Commerce City asset. More than 300,000 visitors annually experience the Refuge's natural landscape, observe its diverse wildlife, and understand the history and stewardship of the land. In the next decade, the RMANWR anticipates visitor numbers to substantially increase and is actively working to ensure facilities and resources can accommodate growth. Commerce City has a vested interest in RMANWR continuing to serve as an outstanding natural resource and educational amenity for the nation, the Denver metropolitan region, and our community.

Last year, Commerce City, RMANWR, and a diverse group of organizations formed the GoWild Northeast Metro Coalition, successfully procuring a Great Outdoors Colorado planning grant to connect disadvantaged youth to the outdoors. The Urban Refuge Program aligns well with the Coalition's work with Great Outdoors Colorado. Engaging youth in natural resource conservation, spending more time outdoors and building gentle steps to acclimate youth and families to the natural environment are just some of the program's shared focus areas.

The Coalition was awarded a \$2.7 million grant last week to implement planning grant projects associated with the RMANWR. Matching funds will be needed; the Urban Refuge funding offers an ideal partnership to maximize collective resources and mutual program goals.

The city continues to support RMANWR's implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and is a financial partner to complete much-needed access enhancements through the Federal Lands Access program grant. An increased focus on outreach, engagement, and education of metropolitan Denver youth will only benefit the natural public environment for years to come.

On behalf of the City Council of Commerce City, I urge the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to also support this effort by awarding the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge with Urban Challenge funding.

Sincerely,

Mayor Sean Ford