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SENATOR ALLARD REQUESTS GAO INVESTIGATION INTO ROCKY FLATS CLEANUP

Wants independent verification that cleanup will meet stringent environmental standards

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-Colorado) on Monday asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct an assessment of the cleanup project at the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology site, a former nuclear production facility.

The GAO has previously conducted assessments of the Rocky Flats closure project in 1999 and 2001 at Senator Allard's request. Since his election to the U.S. Senate in 1996, Senator Allard has successfully worked to roll back the target date for the cleanup to be completed from 2070 to 2006.

“We need independent assurance that the cleanup is on time, on budget, and that the site meets the stringent environmental standards outlined for the contractor when the project began,” said Senator Allard, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, which oversees Department of Energy nuclear cleanup projects.

“Will the Rocky Flats cleanup achieve a level of protection of public health and environment consistent with applicable environmental laws?” the Senate wrote in a letter addressed to GAO Comptroller General David Walker requesting the new study.

“I request that the GAO:

“Assess whether the cleanup will meet or exceed the requirements and goals of the RFCA (Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement) for the physical condition of the site by the end of 2006; and

“Evaluate whether the site cleanup will achieve a level of remediation sufficient to enable transfer of the site to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a national wildlife refuge as required by the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act, Public Law 107-107,” the Senator's letter continued.

Rocky Flats is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and manufactured components for nuclear weapons for the nation's defense until 1992. The current mission of the plant is closure - environmental cleanup, waste management and decommissioning – by December 2006. The industrial complex of more than 100 buildings is located in the center of about nine square miles of undeveloped land 16 miles northwest of downtown Denver.