

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Commercial Photography and Filming Special Use Permits Information

Updated June 2024

Background

Rocky Mountain Arsenal is one of over 560 national wildlife refuges managed in a system that extends from the Alaska tundra to the Florida Keys, including all 50 states, several U.S. Territories, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 defined protecting and managing wildlife as the purpose of national wildlife refuges and the identification of six “priority” public uses known as the Big 6: hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, environmental education and interpretation.

About 950,000 visits are counted at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR) each year. The goal of visitor services management at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR is to provide high-quality, wildlife-oriented experiences for visitors to the refuge.

Why do we issue Commercial Photography and Filming Special Use Permits?

At this time the Fish and Wildlife Service has resumed managing commercial filming and still photography in the National Wildlife Refuge System according to laws and regulations in 50 C.F.R. 27.71 (and 43 C.F.R. Part 5). This enables a national wildlife refuge manager to require a special use permit for commercial filming, and to collect and retain cost recovery charges associated with processing permit requests and administering the permit. It also protects the natural habitat and species at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR by ensuring permit holders have the necessary knowledge of Refuge regulations.

Who needs a Commercial Photography or Filming Permit?

According to federal law, all commercial filming on lands and waters managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service requires a permit. Commercial filming is defined as the film, electronic, magnetic, digital, or other recording of a moving image by a person, business, or other entity for a market audience with the intent of generating income. Examples include, but are not limited to, feature film, videography, television broadcast, documentary, or other similar projects. Commercial filming activities may include the advertisement of a product or service, or the use of actors, models, sets, or props.

Permit Requirements and Fee Schedule:

1. All interested individuals or organizations are required to submit a one-time application form annually (Form FWS Form 3-1383-C) for Commercial Services. This form can be found at www.fws.gov/forms/3-1383-C.pdf or by contacting the refuge at rocky_mountain_arsenal@fws.gov

2. A \$50 processing fee must accompany the completed form. A check should be made out to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This covers the cost incurred as a result of receiving, processing, and regulating the permit request.
3. Applicants may complete the application portion in person or electronically and submit to the refuge for review. The final issued permit will include stipulations specific to the requested activity and location. Please allow no fewer than 2 weeks for a request to be processed.
*Applications for Fall permits (October 1st- December 31st) must be received by September 1st for consideration.

Completed applications and processing fee should be sent to:

*Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR HQ
6550 Gateway Road,
Commerce City, CO 80022*

4. Applicants will be informed by September 15th if their permit is tentatively approved. Applicants will need to submit refuge use fees shown in the table below.

	Photography and Filming Permit
Price of Commercial Photography/Filming Permit:	Refuge Use Fee: \$100 per day This fee assumes no additional considerations are needed. Resource impact may require additional fees if staff or maintenance time is required.
Price of Photography Guiding Permit:	Refuge Use Fee: \$100 per day + Refuge Guiding Fee: \$15 per person/per day (no more than 4 guided individuals allowed) This fee assumes no additional considerations are needed. Resource impact may require additional fees if staff or maintenance time is required.

5. The permit application is required with each annual request.
6. Special conditions for Fall Deer Rut permits: Requests for special use permits at Rocky Mountain Arsenal increases during annual deer rut season. To ensure resource protection and quality customer service, Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge is moving toward a set application schedule for Fall 2024.
 - The application for photography permits between (October 1st and December 31st) will open June 1st of each year and closes September 1st.
 - The Refuge will administer 4 photography permits per day from October 1st through December 31st. These permits will be determined based on a first come/first served

basis in 2024, with the potential for moving toward a lottery system in future years if necessary.

- No more than 7 days during the October 1st through December 31st season may be requested on any permit application. Applicants may be granted additional dates if there is availability.

Permit Criteria

Only filming and photography activities that are consistent with the purposes of the refuge will be considered. Below are criteria we expect permit holders to follow when on Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge:

1. All permit holders will follow federal, state, local, and refuge regulations regarding alcohol, illegal drugs, and firearms while on refuge property.
2. Permit holders are expected to follow established trails and roads, adhere to refuge hours, and operate under the conditions of the Special Use Permit.
3. Permit holders will always be considerate of other refuge visitors and refuge staff.
4. Permit holders will protect the natural resources of Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. This includes committing to “Leave No Trace” principles, leaving trails, lakes, and facilities in better condition than they were found.
5. Permit holders will take care to not harass wildlife on the Refuge. Harassment of wildlife is defined by any action that modifies the behavior of an animal. This includes flushing wildlife, blocking an animal’s movement corridor, changing the direction that an animal is moving, or causing a freeze response in an individual animal.
6. Permit holders will be required to stay in their vehicles while accessing bison pasture areas.

Definitions

Commercial Organization: *An organization that uses the national wildlife refuge for economic gain.*

Economic Use: *Any activity involving the use of a national wildlife refuge or its resources for a profit.*

Commercial Guide Permit: *A Special Use Permit issued by the refuge to an individual, business, or organizations for a particular commercial recreational use.*

Recreational Use: *Any activity relating to recreation on the refuge.*