

L. T. Murray Wildlife Area Advisory Committee input

The WAAC meeting was held on September 20, 2018 and was attended by the following members: Joe Smith, Craig Schnebly, Scott Nicolai, Marc Eylar, Bill Essman, Robert Kruse, Andrea Crawford, Bill Wilson, and Tina Short. WDFW staff included Melissa Babik, Ross Huffman, and Noel Winegeart.

Several members of the public were present.

WDFW staff opened the meeting, thanked attendees for coming, and asked WAAC members and staff to introduce themselves. Then a staff member reviewed the WAAC roles and responsibilities and agenda.

Meeting Summary:

LT Murray Winter Closure

WDFW staff discussed the goal to standardizing opening and closing dates for all elk feeding sites in Region 3. The goal is to close gates on December 15 every year, and reopen on May 1. In the case of an early winter, there may be an emergency closure. WDFW is working with DNR to include the closure dates as part of the lease agreement. This level of change will require SEPA and thus will not take place this winter. WDFW plans to install permanent signs before next winter.

State Parks Road Management

A WAAC member brought forth their concern that State Parks has plans to close the through road within Ginkgo Petrified Forest within the next few years. Another WAAC member shared concerns because the road accessed their private property. WDFW staff has no knowledge of plans to close the road but will reach out to the new State Parks staff.

General Funds and Budgets

A WAAC member wanted to see more money spent on stewardship and wondered if the WAAC should send a letter to the Fish and Wildlife Commission or the Director requesting allocation for more stewardship funds for the LT Murray. Discussions ensued about taxing sporting good sales or money being available through a WA Wildlife Recreation Program. It was acknowledged that the LT Murray is receiving more non-wildlife oriented recreation from the west side and a mechanism for other users to help fund stewardship is lacking. WDFW staff is engaged in the "Central Cascade Recreation Coalition", which promotes recreation across all public lands and addresses the need for sustainable funding to manage motorized trails and maintain hiking trails. The challenge is finding ways to offer non-wildlife oriented recreation that is compatible with fish and wildlife management.

Milepost 22 Fire

WDFW staff gave an update on the milepost 22 fire on the Whiskey Dick WLA in mid-June. The fire burned around 7,600 acres. LT Murray staff put in a request for \$150,000 for restoration of dozer lines and draws. A WAAC member pointed out the fire burned some old barbwire and it would be a good opportunity for volunteer engagement to remove the wire.

Green Dot Road Management System at Green Gate

WDFW staff gave an update on entering the Green Gate sub area of the Quilomene into the Green Dot Road Management System. WDFW is collaborating with the Sage Land Heritage Program to develop a parking area and interpretive kiosk. WDFW staff submitted a State Lands Restoration grant to seed and decommission 12 miles of non-green dot roads.

Thinning

WDFW staff gave an update on the 2017 thinning of 800 acres in Hutchins and approximately 200 in Taneum. Plans are underway to burn approximately 500 acres in Hutchins this fall or next spring. WDFW thinned approximately 490 acres in Robinson canyon. Partners are using a helicopter to put 2,000 logs from the Robinson Canyon thinning project into an 8-mile stretch of Manastash Creek. 500 logs from Robinson are going up to the Swauk and the other 1,000 are going down to Umptanum Creek on the Wenas WLA. Staff has worked around the hunting seasons so as not to affect hunters. One WAAC member expressed concerns about the bare ground and new roads post thinning operations. WDFW will close all the logging roads, burn all the slash piles, reseed old landings and roads, and treat weeds in the thinning units.

Teaway Valley Unit

WDFW staff gave an update on the restoration activities on the Teaway Valley Unit. WDFW staff demolished old buildings and debris, built a parking lot, removed a fish passage barrier, installed 1.5 miles of boundary fence adjacent to private property, and installed a kiosk. Staff is working with partners to secure funding for the restoration of a 43-acre ag field, removal of fish passage barriers, and the enhancement of the adjacent floodplain.

Quilomene Bay

WDFW staff developed a project to convert 15 acres of fire prone invasive weeds to native vegetation at Quilomene Bay. WDFW will perform a prescribed burn this fall and initiate weed control in the spring of 2019.

Forest Planning

WDFW staff began planning efforts for forest health projects on the LT Murray. WDFW plans to treat 35% of the forested acres in need of treatment over the next 10 years. One WAAC member

was concerned about how reopening old logging roads would affect ground water movement. WDFW staff will be cognate of RMAP with the old logging roads.

Volunteer

WDFW staff discussed volunteer work on the LT Murray. The Ruffed Grouse Society and the Kittitas field and Stream Club collaborated to repair Jackknife ridge road. The Backcountry Horseman are mapping nonmotorized trails on the LT Murray. Master hunters and other volunteers assisted with removing trash and barbwire from the wildlife area, moving staff into the new office, and building a kiosk at the Teanaway Valley Unit.

Weeds

WDFW staff is working with the Kittitas Noxious Weed Board to create a weed management program. WDFW aeriually sprayed 45 acres of whitetop this year using Central Valley Helicopter. Staff is setting up test plots to determine best herbicide for treating *Ventenata dubia*.

LT Murray Task Force

WDFW staff are engaging volunteers in a task force to discuss stewardship with hunters and campers. One WAAC member was concerned about liability for WDFW. Volunteers will be signed up as WDFW volunteers for liability and employ safety measures.

Conversation

WDFW staff requested ideas from the WAAC on ways to protect overwintering wildlife from illegal shed hunting trespass within the winter closure. WAAC members suggested more presence from enforcement and volunteers and an increase in the fine amount from \$150 to \$1500.

DNR alerted the WAAC that they have a new law enforcement officer and discussed when and where campfires are permitted on DNR lands. DNR staff also hoped to increase awareness among user groups regarding the upcoming TREX prescribed burning operations this fall and next spring. One WAAC member was concerned about the smoke during hunting seasons.