

Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting Advisory Committee

August 15, 2017 – Hal Holmes Center, Ellensburg
Meeting Summary

Committee Members in Attendance

John Baranowski
Lee Davis
Bill Essman
Tim Funkhouser
Bret Hollar
Keely Hopkins

Jim Lydigsen
Debby McCandless
Steve Miller
Clay Myers
Craig O'Brine
Norm Peck

Mark Pidgeon
Scott Robertson
Robert Schafer
Tanya Stanley
Rachel Voss

Facilitators

Elizabeth McManus and Andy Chinn, Ross Strategic

Agency Representation

Cindi Confer Morris, WDFW
Ross Huffman, WDFW

Larry Leach, WDNR
Nathan Longoria, WDFW

Scott McCorquodale, WDFW
Dave Whipple, WDFW

Welcome and Introductions

Elizabeth McManus welcomed meeting participants and reviewed the meeting agenda. Committee members, WDFW staff, and members of the public introduced themselves.

Wenas User Survey

Committee members affirmed that they are distributing the Wenas use survey to their respective groups and encouraging people to fill it out. The survey is open until September 15th.

Draft Recommendations from Small Groups

The Committee discussed the product of small groups, approaches to managed sites, education and outreach, and enforcement along with draft recommendations put forward by the small groups. The purpose of the Committee's discussion was to understand and refine the thinking and draft recommendations. Future meetings will have time to evaluate if and where there is Committee consensus.

Managed Sites – North

The managed sites – North small group recommends two designated sites (North Durr Road and East Umptanum) at the north end of the Wildlife Area to include: backstop and range separation berms, benches and tables, marked parking areas, and signage at encouraged sites & main roads. The group also recommends designation of unsafe areas for shooting and other shooting safety changes (e.g., aligning WDFW and WDNR regulations).

Managed Sites – South

As one of its criteria the managed sites – South small group decided to look at sites within the Selah Fire District. This narrowed the number of sites, one of which was the Buffalo Road location. Because the Buffalo Road site has some terrain issues, the group recommends that the site be limited in use to shotgun, handgun, or shotgun only. The group recommends moving the site up the road, closer to WDNR land, with direction of fire to the northwest where there are high, natural berms. The site will need some work, as it is not naturally level for parking.

The subgroup recommends that the Sheep Company Road site be designated for rifles and handguns, with multiple firing distances up to 1,000 yards. The Cottonwood location, as currently configured, is not a good shooting location and should be set aside for consideration for now.

The subgroup considered bullet traps at the managed locations, noting that the cost of a commercially sold bullet trap should be compared with the cost of importing a significant amount of dirt to the proposed managed shooting sites for the necessary improvements.

Committee members had the following discussion and made the following comments related to the managed sites draft recommendations:

- There is a large amount of uncertainty related to the risk of fires from shooting activities, and whether different types of firearms or ammunition are more likely to cause fires under various conditions. Proper site preparation will help minimize fire risk from shooting.
- The subgroup believes that shooting at the North end of the Wildlife Area is only safe to a maximum distance of 400 yards.
 - Long-distance shooters typically look for distances much greater than 400 yards.
- Over the long term, bullet traps are a good idea; the benefit at Buffalo Road is that since the subgroup is proposing moving the shooting activity to an undisturbed area, a bullet trap will be cheaper than modifying the site with dirt and doing lead cleanup after several years.
- The Committee is going into too much detail by talking about range design and bullet traps; it would be more useful to talk about what the goal of a managed range is.
- Development of managed sites will be a multi-year, phased process; however, there are other draft recommendations that can be identified as nearer term actions.
- The basic concept of the managed sites draft recommendations is: For anyone wanting to shoot at the Wenas, this approach will make it obvious where to park and what direction to shoot, in order to promote safety and avoid confusion.
- WDNR noted that the Attorney General has advised WDNR that the recreational liability immunity goes away when the Agency tells people where they can shoot.
- During the (previous) process of WDFW proposing developed shooting ranges on the Wenas, the Attorney General advised WDFW that recreational liability immunity would not apply if:
 - The Agency charged a fee for the public to use the ranges
 - Agency staff controlled the activities at the ranges
- WDFW has a minimally developed shooting range in the Methow Valley and has not had liability issues there. More information on how liability works for the Department may be needed.
- The Committee requested information in early meetings to shed light on the size and scope of the public safety problem. The information provided to-date has been at the summary level; specific reports would be more useful. If the Committee is going to recommend restrictions around shooting, then there has to be justification as well as an explanation of why there are

restrictions on the Wenas and not on other WDFW lands.

Outreach and Education

The Outreach and Education subgroup's operating assumption is that most people are interested in doing the right thing but more information is needed for people to do so. Several types of information are needed: When, What, and Where. Subgroup draft recommendations include developing educational materials for wildlife area users, increasing staff presence, supporting a Region 3 outreach liaison position, using multiple communications methods, developing and posting signage, developing a map of Wildlife Area uses, supporting an Eyes in the Woods program at the Wenas, and supporting and expanding the use of volunteers. The subgroup also provided several examples of educational materials developed by other agencies.

Committee members had the following discussion related to the education and outreach draft recommendations:

- The current signage at the Wildlife Area only says what the public is NOT allowed to do; it would be nice to have a "Welcome" sign (or something positive).
- The outreach liaison position could be either a paid WDFW staff or a volunteer; there are pros and cons to both approaches. (And different Committee Members support different approaches to this.)

Enforcement

The enforcement subgroup focused on optimizing existing enforcement resources, limiting the recommendations around new resources, and making a direct connection between enforcement and outreach/education. Subgroup recommendations include enhanced coordination, support for Eyes in the Woods for the Wenas, alignment of WDNR & WDFW regulations, support for an outreach liaison for Region 3, adding at least one enforcement officer for Region 3, and developing a mobile application for reporting illegal behavior.

Committee members had the following discussion related to the draft enforcement recommendations:

- Sheriff's office dispatch centers are not set up to use mobile reporting systems; one of the challenges is verifying the credibility of reports without talking to an individual or individuals.
- A recommendation around data and record-keeping will be important to determine which actions are working and which are not.
- If there are specific recommendations that the Committee feels should be turned into regulations, those should be called out.
- Funding for the liaison position could be done through an RCO grant.

Next Steps

- Ross Strategic will develop a combined draft of all the draft recommendations for Committee review.
- Committee members can forward any example educational materials to Andy or Elizabeth for posting.
- Ross Strategic will draft a summary of the information provided to the Committee for Committee review.

Public Comments

There were no public comments offered at the meeting. Between the July and August meetings there were no comments submitted via the public comment form on the Committee website.

[Meeting adjourned]

Meeting Materials (available [online](#))

- Meeting agenda
- Draft Enforcement recommendations
- Draft Outreach and Education recommendations
- Draft Managed Sites - North recommendations
- Draft Managed Sites - South recommendations

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