

Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting Advisory Committee

October 19, 2017 – Kittitas County Fairgrounds – Armory Building
Meeting Summary

Committee Members in Attendance

Lee Davis	Debby McCandless	Norm Peck
Bill Essman	Steve Miller	Mark Pidgeon
Jim Lydigsen	Clay Meyers	Robert Schafer

Facilitators

Elizabeth McManus and Andy Chinn, Ross Strategic

Agency Representation

Cindi Confer-Morris, WDFW	Larry Leach, WDNR	Scott McCorquodale, WDFW
Aaron Garcia, WDFW	Nathan Longoria, WDFW	Melinda Posner, WDFW
Ross Huffman, WDFW	Mike Livingston, WDFW	Bob Weaver, WDFW

Welcome and Introductions

Elizabeth McManus welcomed meeting participants and reviewed the meeting agenda. Elizabeth reminded Committee members that the primary goal of the meeting was to move the draft recommendations forward and try to resolve outstanding issues. Bill Essman noted that he visited the East Umtanum site on Monday, 10/16 and saw the new sign that WDFW had put up at the site. He thanked WDFW for the new sign.

Draft Recommendations

Committee members worked through the draft recommendations, beginning with managed sites. A summary of Committee comments and questions that arose around specific recommendations is below.

Managed Sites (Recommendations 16 and 17)

One of the public comments from the October listening sessions prompted the Committee to memorialize the criteria by which the proposed managed sites (also known as “improved sites” or “concentrated shooting sites”) were identified. Criteria included:

- Starting with the current roster of heavily used, user defined sites
- Selecting sites where limited improvements (e.g., enhanced or new backstops, side berms, firing lines, benches) could improve safety
- Considering and specifying types of firearms and directions of fire based on site conditions
- Prioritizing locations with good access, where response times by public safety officers/fire can be faster (steered away from more remote locations)
- Recommending fire risk reduction measures (vegetation clearing and management, etc.)
- Potential and actual conflicts that have occurred at the sites and how that conflict could be minimized
- Proximity to homes

The Committee is also interested in recommending two sites in the North and two site in the South. So far the Durr Road site in the North and the Sheep Company Road site in the South are solid recommendations, but the Committee is less comfortable recommending East Umtanum and Buffalo Road sites, for various reasons.

- The East Umtanum site is located in map Section 31 (WDFW ownership) and target shooters at that site will stay within that section.
- Several Committee members commented that regular users of the East Umtanum site are generally more considerate about cleaning up after themselves and there are more trash problems and conflicts associated with the Durr Road site. Some Committee members were concerned that even limited improvements at East Umtanum would draw more people to the site and increase the impact for neighbors. In light of this, Committee members suggested modifying the recommendation for East Umtanum to support minimal improvements and make more improvements to the Durr Road site.
 - One Committee member expressed preference for a secondary site in the North, with backstops and a gravel parking area.
- Over the years there have been more shooters in the Umtanum East and Durr Road areas. The goal is to offer these individuals safer places to shoot.
- For Buffalo Road, a simple approach would be to make the Buffalo Road site shotgun-only, with a developed parking area and a maximum of 10 shooting positions.
 - The proposed solution at Buffalo Road could involve relocating the user-defined cutoff trail to Skyline Trail.
 - Any recommendation at Buffalo Road will require vetting with people that live in the area. Homeowners would likely be willing to accommodate a slight increase in noise, if safety concerns were addressed.

During the September Committee meeting, WDFW posed the question: What should be the response when a new area starts to see heavy use (effectively becoming a concentrated shooting area), with associated impacts on the environment?

- This type of situation has occurred along North Durr Road over the years. There was a single concentrated shooting area and now there are 4 – 5 areas that are impacted.
- If WDFW adopts the WDNR rules, there are enough rules and regulations to cover safety and security issues. Trash problems can be addressed by volunteer groups.
- WDFW will need to continue to use an adaptive management strategy as issues continue to emerge. For example, re-examining the outreach and education efforts and making adjustments as needed.
- Many recreational uses have an impact on the environment, not just recreational shooting.
- From a business plan perspective, the Sheep Company site must be developed sufficient to meet future demand. If the site is underdeveloped, then all of the problems identified by the Committee will continue.
 - Many recreational shooters have reported that they are not comfortable using Sheep Company because of behavior problems there.
 - Based on anecdotal evidence, if Sheep Company were properly signed and there was appropriate outreach and education, recreational shooters would know what expectations are in place there.
- There is significant lead contamination at concentrated shooting sites and to-date the Committee has decided not to address it.
 - If the Committee is going to recommend enhanced shooting sites it also should address

- the associated environmental impacts, including lead.
- Larry noted that WDNR has spent a large amount on mitigating lead contamination and it would be better for the Committee to address it.

Signage (Recommendation 4)

The Committee also discussed how to handle signs at the wildlife area that notify the public when and where shooting is unsafe, as a means of conveying the information that some of the places that have historically been used for target shooting are unsafe.

- The Committee should not endorse putting up signs in all unapproved locations (this follows with the analogy of putting up signs along a river warning users that it's dangerous to enter – if one such sign goes up, then the question will arise of why signs were not put up everywhere). It is more appropriate to put up “do not enter” (or similar language) signs in proximity to known shooting areas. The Committee does not want to create the expectation that anywhere that is not posted is safe, and anywhere that is safe is posted.
- For certain areas, like the Umtanum Falls Parking area, appropriate signage might include a message such as “Warning: Discharge of a firearm in this area could result in an unsafe act. Mixed recreation use area.”

Outreach and Education Liaison (Recommendation 9)

The Committee discussed the recommendation for an outreach and education liaison, and whether that individual should be a WDFW staff member or a volunteer. Committee members also discussed the liaison position relative to the recommendation for an enforcement position.

- WDFW suggested that the Committee recommend both positions as priority; the enforcement position will require more time and training to accomplish, whereas the outreach and education liaison will have more flexibility in hiring.

Enforcement (Recommendation 12)

Committee members asked WDFW enforcement to comment on recommendation 12 (continued/increased coordination between enforcement agencies).

- WDFW enforcement currently coordinates with other local law enforcement agencies, but there is always a possibility for improvement in communications between agencies. Consistency in rules and regulations is the most helpful area in which the Committee can make recommendations for WDFW enforcement.
- Outreach and education are major complimentary components to enforcement; actual enforcement is a relatively small part of the response to issues at the wildlife area.

Support for Dispersed Shooting (Recommendation 1)

The language around recommendation 1 has been difficult to finalize. The idea behind the recommendation is that the dispersed shooting, in compliance with applicable rules, can continue. There should be more attention to reducing conflicts and increasing safety, and dispersed shooting should not be prioritized above other uses.

Pace of Implementation

WDFW requested Committee feedback on the appropriate pace of implementing recommendations, given that there will be unforeseen issues that arise that will either slow the pace of implementing certain recommendations or cause WDFW to pivot to implementing other Committee recommendations.

- Committee agreed to talk more in-depth about phasing during the November meeting and get WDFW feedback on suggested phasing.
- WDFW is developing cost estimates for Committee recommendations, where possible, and will share their initial findings with the Committee.

Next Steps

- Ross Strategic will draft and circulate revised language for Committee recommendations based on the suggestions provided during the meeting.
- Ross Strategic will circulate an online straw poll for reaction to the recommendations.

Public Comments

- As one of the homeowners on Overlook Road, I have seen people shooting in all directions and we do not like the noise.

[Meeting adjourned]

Meeting Materials (available [online](#))

- Meeting agenda
- Draft Committee recommendations
- Draft October listening sessions summary