

## Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting Advisory Committee

June 22, 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  
Craig O'Brine

Norm Peck  
Scott Robertson  
Robert Schafer  
Tanya Stanley  
Rachel Voss

#### **Facilitators**

Elizabeth McManus and Andy Chinn, Ross Strategic

#### **Agency Representation**

Cindi Confer-Morris, WDFW  
Aaron Garcia, WDFW  
Ross Huffman, WDFW  
Mike Livingston, WDFW  
Nathan Longoria, WDFW  
Scott McCorquodale, WDFW  
Jody Taylor, WDFW  
Bob Weaver, 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.

## WDFW Presentation – Clarification around WDFW Vision and Goals

Mike Livingston, WDFW Region 3 Director, provided clarifying points on the WDFW's Vision and Goals (as outlined in the "[Issue Paper](#)"), particularly regarding why WDFW convened the Advisory Committee.

In 2011 WDFW identified several challenges at the Wenas Wildlife Area and began working with the standing Wenas Advisory Committee (WAC) to address these challenges; however, by 2016 WDFW realized that more concerted work was needed to gather feedback on how to improve conditions for shooting and reduce the potential for conflict between shooting and other forms of recreation at the Wildlife Area, which is why the Wenas Target Shooting Advisory Committee was formed. Mike clarified that WDFW is committed to providing shooting opportunities on the Wildlife Area and it is not the Agency's objective to end target shooting. WDFW's wants to improve target shooting opportunities and predictability, ensure safety, increase the perception of safety among users who may have concerns, and address concerns of neighboring landowners. The Agency's Issue Paper attempts to describe a clear set of goals for this effort. Mike added further clarity around WDFW's goals:

- One of the goals is for any changes at the Wildlife Area to be supported by the local community, by which the Agency means those people that have the greatest interest in the Wenas Wildlife Area – mostly the local communities but also users of the area from other parts of the state; the Agency recognizes that building community support is an iterative process.
- The Agency's goal is to reduce risk to wildlife area users and neighbors; however Mike clarified that the Department does not have a specific amount of risk reduction in mind. Overall the Department is looking for the Committee's advice on what amount of risk (of various sorts) is acceptable. It is likely the Committee will need to talk about and distinguish between "real risks" (if any) and the perception of risk by people who may be surprised by or less familiar with shooting practice.
- Related, WDFW's goal is for more predictability for all Wildlife Area users; it is looking for advice from the Committee on what amount of predictability is important/ desirable and how best to provide it.
- The WDFW habitat protection goal is related to wanting to reduce the amount of habitat that is impacted overall, even as the Department recognizes that all recreational uses (including shooting) will continue to have habitat impacts. WDFW does not have a target for the quantity of habitat impact (i.e., number of locations or acres) allowed.
- Financial attainability and manageability means something the Agency could get to over time; it does not signal that recommendations must be implementable within current WDFW funding. New/ additional funding could be requested/recommended.

- Overall, the WDFW goals signal the general direction that the Agency would like to move toward but they are not attached to specific numeric or other targets. The Agency is looking for Committee advice on how best to reach and balance its goals for the Wildlife Area.

Captain Weaver, WDFW Enforcement, added that it is important from an enforcement perspective that if the Committee were to decide to recommend new rules or regulations, the recommended rules and regulations be clear and easy for the public to understand, which also makes them easier for WDFW to enforce.

Committee members had the following discussion on WDFW's goals:

- **Acceptable Impact on Public Lands.** Since each form of public use on the Wenas has at least some impact, what can WDFW say about what is considered an "acceptable" level of impact?
  - Mike acknowledged that all recreation has impacts and the goal is not "no impact." He explained that the Agency does not have quantitative goals for the amount of impact appropriate for different types of recreation.
- **Wenas Wildlife Area Management Plan.** The update to the current Wenas Wildlife Area management plan is in progress and should be available by mid-July. WDFW will provide the plan and past updates to the Committee. *[7/10 Post meeting note: they are posted on the Committee dropbox site, available [here](#).]*
- **Clarification of Rules and Standards.** If the Committee recommends new rules or regulations for the Wildlife Area, WDFW enforcement asks that the recommended rules or regulations be clear and concise so that they are fair to the public, easy to understand, and enforceable. It is not assumed that the Committee will recommend rules or regulations; this is up to the Committee. After discussion, a change was made to the language of this goal to clarify it.
- **Steel Targets.** There was a discussion about steel targets and whether they are legal for use on the Wildlife Area. WDFW will clarify its position on use of steel targets for the Committee at or before the July meeting.

#### Next Steps

- Facilitators will circulate the most recent Wenas Wildlife Area management plan.
- Facilitators will circulate a compiled list of all existing rules that apply to the Wenas Wildlife Area.
- Facilitators will update the language on the WDFW goal on rules and regulations in the Committee Charter and Ground Rules to match the clarifying change made during the meeting.

#### Draft Advisory Committee Charter and Draft Ground Rules

Elizabeth noted several changes to the draft Advisory Committee charter and Ground Rules in response to Committee Member comments after the June meeting. These are:

- The Charter and Ground Rules were revised to clarify that consideration of the WDFW mission and goal statements are requests to the Advisory Committee and meant to signal how the Department will review Committee recommendations. The Committee will determine its recommendations (if any).

- The Charter was also revised to provide more information on perspectives around the term “target shooting” (this was put into a footnote).

Committee members had the following discussion:

- The draft revision to the discussion of the term “target shooting” was further edited to reflect that not all Committee Members may share the same understanding of legal issues associated with the Second Amendment, that the purpose of the Committee isn’t to resolve legal issues, to correct a typo, and to include existing definitions of target shooting from State WACs.

### Decisions

- The Committee adopted the Charter as amended.
- The Committee adopted the Ground Rules as amended.

### Next Steps

- Facilitators will circulate the final Charter and Ground Rules. *[7/10 post meeting note: done on 6/23 and available at the Committee dropbox site [here](#) and [here](#).]*

## Information Needs

### Fire and Trash

The Committee reviewed draft information sheets on fires and trash removal at the Wildlife Area.

Committee members had the following discussion on the information sheets:

- The spike in fires at the Wildlife Area in 2011 and 2014 was due to a variety of factors, including prevailing weather conditions.
- Road conditions are a significant factor affecting response time of fire crews called out to the Wildlife Area.
- Research on historical fire activity in and around the Wildlife Area shows approximately a 30 year cycle for major fires.
- WDFW does not track the number of acres of cheat grass growing on the Wildlife Area (a major source of fuel for fires).
- There is a fire break that follows the edge of the elk fence, to protect private land, but WDFW does not put in or maintain fire breaks at every site where shooting occurs.
- There was a fire break at the Sheep Company shooting site for many years but it has not been maintained for some time. It could be prudent to have fire breaks in common concentrated shooting areas like Sheep Company or Cottonwood.
- Some fires will happen at the Wildlife Area that are beyond human control.
- Has WDFW conducted a cost-benefit analysis comparing cost of fire response and restoration against the additional cost of enforcement that might otherwise prevent such fires from occurring?
  - This analysis has not been done. Because fire occurrence is unpredictable it is difficult to perform such analysis.
- The information on fire dates and the relationship to fire dates and the seasonal time of use restrictions in the written materials were not clear. They need to be corrected and redistributed. *[7/10 post meeting note: A revised fire information summary sheet clarifying was*

*distributed on 6/23 and is available [here](#). Since the time of use restrictions were initiated, most fires occurred “outside” the restricted times (i.e., when shooting was allowed). Only one shooting-related fire occurred during the restricted times.]*

- How were fire causes noted in the written information determined?
  - The fire causes were determined in different ways; in some cases the person who started the fire called it in. In other cases the DNR or local fire teams investigated. Notes on how the fire cause was determined are in the detailed data, available to Committee Members [here](#).
- The Committee would like access to the individual fire reports.
  - WDFW will provide the individual fire reports for Committee member review. [7/10 post meeting note: the first set of these are on the Committee dropbox site, available [here](#); more will follow, DNR is sending them.]

### **WDFW Budget**

Mike Livingston provided an overview of WDFW’s budget for the Wildlife Area. The presentation described funds used to purchase the Wildlife Area, revenue sources that support Wenas operations, and the 2015-2017 operating budget for the enforcement program and the wildlife program.

Committee members had the following discussion on budget information:

- On weekends it seems like it takes a significant amount of time for WDFW enforcement to respond, probably because enforcement is dispatched from Kittitas County. The Yakima Sheriff’s office also responds; Washington State Patrol is also a responding agency for complaints.
- It seems like the Wenas Wildlife Area would benefit from an Eyes in the Woods program.

### **Wenas Wildlife Area Use Information**

Elizabeth noted that information compilation on user activity at the Wildlife Area is underway and Committee assistance will be a valuable piece of that effort.

Committee members had the following discussion on user activity:

- It will be important to gather users’ demographic information.
- Shooting activity at the Wildlife Area increases in the October-November timeframe (to coincide with hunting season and hunters sighting in their firearms) but generally shooting occurs year-round.
- Concentrating on the shooting “hot spots” at the Wildlife Area will result in moving shooting to other areas.
- User data will provide better understanding of where overlap in use occurs.

### **Next Steps**

- Facilitators will revise the fire summary sheet to correct the error on fire dates related to the time of use restrictions.
- Facilitators will circulate available fire investigation reports and the base fire data.
- Facilitators will distribute the WDFW budget presentation.
- Facilitators will draft a survey to gather feedback on recreation at the Wildlife Area and will circulate it with Committee members for review.
- Facilitators will distribute materials provided by the group “Trash No Public Land”.

## Public Comments

There were no public comments offered at the meeting. Between the May and June meetings 11 comments were submitted on the Committee website. These Comments were distributed to Committee Members and are available [here](#).

## Future Meeting Dates and Topics

Elizabeth reviewed the handout on future meeting dates and Committee work flow.

## Recording Volunteer Hours

Aaron Garcia (WDFW Hunter Education Program) provided Committee members with information on how to track volunteer hours related to Committee work.

[Meeting adjourned]

## Meeting Materials (available [online](#))

- Meeting agenda (distributed in advance)
- May meeting summary (distributed in advance)
- Key themes from one on one conversations (distributed in advance)
- Revised draft Charter and Ground Rules (distributed in advance)
- Future meeting dates and topics (distributed in advance)
- Information sheets on fire and trash (used at the meeting, available online)
- WDFW PowerPoint (used at the meeting, available online)
- Public comments from online form (used at the meeting, available online)