

LT MURRAY WILDLIFE AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT

The WAAC meeting was held on September 13, 2017, and was attended by the following members: Bill Essman, Craig Schnebly, Marc Eylar, Robert Kruse, Jason Ridlon, Joe Smith, Sam Kayser, and Scott Nicolai. Andrea Nesbitt added comments electronically. WDFW staff included Wildlife Area Manager Melissa Babik, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Noel Winegeart, Lands Operations Manager Ross Huffman acting as Facilitator.

Various members of the Kittitas Field and Stream Club were present.

Melissa Babik opened the meeting, thanked attendees for coming, and asked WAAC members and staff to introduce themselves. She asked attendees for help identifying groups or outreach venues in which to contact for upcoming public meetings. She has prepared a sheet to track outreach opportunities. Ross Huffman reviewed the WAAC roles and responsibilities and agenda.

Meeting Summary:

LT Murray Winter Closure

Ross Huffman discussed the goal to standardize gate closure dates at feed sites across Oak Cr, Wenas, and LT Murray. December 15th is the date WDFW is considering. WAAC members wondered if this would limit the ability to close the gates before December 15th if need warranted and the rationale for not being consistent with DNR's December 8th closing of their lands off Umtanum. Staff explained the Public Access Management (PAM) procedure allows for deviation of a standardized date for emergency situations and that December 15th is the average date the LT Murray has typically closed in the past. Also, WDFW coordinated with Yakama Nation on a date that they would support. Not all WAAC members supported this date. WDFW will continue to work towards standardizing the gate closure.

Quilomene Bay

Ross Huffman presented updates of the Naneum Rec plan of the entire planning area. WDFW:

- Provides green dot maps in paper and online options
- Is working on access agreements with private land owners
- Improved linkages in the Green Dot Road System by incorporating Skookumchuck and Box Canyon roads
- Provides primitive Green Dot experiences
- Will inventory and evaluate Green Dot roads
- Will develop RMAP type of road maintenance
- Will look for opportunities to incorporate Disabled Hunter Access
- Is identifying areas to restore recreational abuse (Quilomene Bay)
- Continues to seek partnerships
- Seeks to improve education and enforcement by marking closed roads and adding kiosks and maps to Parke Creek and Green Gate

Ross Huffman described recreational abuse (hill climbs, off road travel through creek) at Quilomene Bay and asked if the WAAC desired a field trip to the site. The WAAC was not

interested in a tour. Melissa Babik described the work the previous manager did cabling boulders together to block the previous creek crossing and wondered if we would be just chasing the problem by adding more boulder strings. The WAAC discussed if using barriers would resolve the issue, but a conclusion wasn't met. WDFW plans to inventory the damage and look for solutions as there is Grant County PUD funding for a project.

A WAAC member stated that when the Quilomene was purchased it was supposed to be maintained year round for recreationist forever and said they would provide a copy of the agreement for WDFW.

Parke Creek

Melissa Babik gave an update of Naneum Rec Plan implementation for the Parke Creek subarea. The first stage is to look for public access to get legal documents in place. The county is partnering with WDFW on this. The plan calls for improving roads up to interpretive point / hiking trail where a bus can turn around. The WAAC wondered the anticipated interpretive location but WDFW won't begin planning until legal public access is acquired. WAAC members discussed if the county would maintain the private road from cattle guard north and felt that addressing the public easement is a good thing. WDFW will continue working to gain legal public access.

Whiskey Dick Closure

Melissa Babik explained the Blue Dot road management system along Jacknife Ridge Road in the winter and asked for suggestions on how to improve signage/ enforcement of that area to make road access more apparent per a goal in the Naneum Rec Plan.

WAAC members discussed gates and the ease of driving around them in the shrub steppe. They would like to see more enforcement for trespass on the Whiskey Dick closure. Suggestions included installing permanent signage with closure dates on Skookumchuck and Cayuse and enhancing the reader board at Hole in the Wall. A WAAC member offered to assist with ensuring signs were up. Staff will work with Law Enforcement on ways to improve compliance.

Melissa Babik described State Parks plans to enhance the reader board at Ginkgo but maintain the same access. She described a good interaction with the new park ranger and central cascades area manager.

Green Gate Area

Melissa Babik gave an update on the Naneum Rec plan objectives to utilize seasonal use restrictions to balance recreation, establish a target range facility, and manage Green Gate. She described objectives to: protect and manage resources, minimize threats to adjacent lands, and balance recreational experiences. The District Team, Yakama Nation Fisheries, NOAA Fisheries, and DNR discussed erosion issues, road maintenance needs, sediment, mature sagebrush habitat, and weed management. Melissa noted the desire to be good neighbors by not displacing elk, starting fires, or dispersing weeds. She asked for ideas for improvements for ADA access and the

WAAC's interpretation for the non-motorized trailhead at Green Gate. Melissa wondered if the Naneum Rec committee wanted just a trailhead or a separate area for non-motorized use.

The WAAC discussed horseback riding and mountain biking and whether Green Gate would be a non-motorized destination. Some WAAC members recommended that WDFW designate areas for non-motorized use. One member predicted that mountain bike use will increase and recreationalists will start building trails across the landscape if areas aren't designated. The mountain bike WAAC representative asked (via email) for trails in a non-motorized area for mountain bikers and trail runners and thought old roads could be converted to single track. The WAAC supported development of a parking area for non-motorized use, but did not reach consensus of designating non-motorized routes.

Melissa Babik described habitat, landowner constraints, spring enhancement sites, and road/weed conditions. She provided the goals of the Naneum Rec Plan, a map of the Green Gate area, and numerous photos of conditions to the WAAC. Melissa asked the WAAC for creative suggestions on how accomplish our objectives with the conditions described.

The WAAC discussed DNR's stance on closing roads on their ownership and section 36 as part of the hunt by reservation program. WDFW and DNR will work to clarify DNR's position on road management in Green Gate.

Melissa showed photos of ridge top roads with shorter vegetation and highlighted an easier maintenance, less weeds, and reduced fire risk. She presented areas of concern that showed erosion, rutting, high weeds, tall dry vegetation that posed fire risk, and sensitive mature sagebrush. She also discussed concerns to adjacent private lands (fire, weeds, and displaced elk).

The WAAC had concerns about degrading wet areas with continued road use. They discussed road closures, reroutes, and maintenance (rock/water bars). The WAAC noted that road maintenance would invite more recreation further impacting wildlife. Also, it was noted that enforcing closed roads in the shrub steppe is difficult but that if roads were to be abandoned they should be scarified and replanted. WDFW staff and WAAC outlined a route that could be a solution to address management concerns. Several WAAC members supported the Naneum Rec plan to reduce road density to no more than 12 miles of road, one member felt the 12 miles was not fully vetted in the plan. WDFW will continue road management plans and present them at a public meeting in the fall 2017.

Meeting was opened to public comments:

Some members of the public felt there were not issues in the Green Gate and wanted the area left unmanaged. One comment was that road improvement will invite more recreation from Seattle and this person wanted this area left unmanaged for the locals. Another felt that the Naneum Rec plan should be used as a guide for completing concepts to find creative solutions to issues but not

followed to the letter this person felt the 12 miles of road was not vetted. Several felt it was law enforcement's job to keep people on open roads.

Sam Kayser resigned from the LT Murray WAAC.

One member of the public wanted assurance there would be public meetings. Melissa assured her there would be at least one meeting if not more and reminded folks to identify clubs or outreach venues in which to invite to public meetings on the form she created. No one gave input on how to provide more public outreach. One person thanked WDFW for having a public process and asked who makes the decision of management in Green Gate. Ross responded that WDFW regional staff will work with Olympia staff.

One person wondered if the erosion of the roads came from the spring enhancements and would like to see rock put on the roads but the road not closed. No one knew the condition of the roads prior to the spring enhancements.