

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting

Final Meeting Notes

June 7, 2016

Selah Middle School

6:00-8:00 pm

Attendees

WAAC Members:

Rick Barlin
Kay Clark
Jerry Clark
Karen Zook
Dick Jacobson
Eric Monson
Gail Thornton
Joan St. Hilaire
Betsy Bloomfield
Jim Walkenhaur

WDFW Staff:

Ross Huffman
Scott McCorquodale
Greg Mackey
Lauri Vigue

Welcome and Introductions

Ross Huffman, Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager welcomed everyone and introduced WAAC members and WDFW staff. Lauri Vigue, Planning Project Manager, explained the focus of the meeting is to provide an overview of the wildlife area planning process, timeline, WAAC roles and expectations and Ross would provide a draft list of wildlife area issues developed by internal scoping.

Oak Creek WLA Planning and Process

The primary purpose of this meeting is to introduce the wildlife area management planning process. This is wildlife area plan pilot number four. The goal is to develop a wildlife area management plan for the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. The agency mission and strategic plan were introduced. An overview of Oak Creek WAAC roles and expectations, contributions and responsibilities were provided; as well as the planning team responsibilities. A summary of the purpose of the plan, Framework document, forest planning, recreation strategy were introduced.

The public meeting was held the night before and Ross provided a summary. Greg also gave the status of current forest restoration projects on the wildlife area.

The Oak Creek WLA planning process begun in November 2015; an internal scoping meeting was held in February, the public meeting was held on June 6, 2016; and the first planning meeting will be held on June 29th.

Planning Timeline:

Oak Creek WAAC	June - September 2016 (~2 meetings min)
2 nd Public meeting	September/October 2016
Planning meetings	June – August (~3-4 meetings)
Final Draft Plan	October 2016

The internal scoping process identified the following preliminary issues that will be addressed in the new plan:

- Define vision
- Road management
- Recreation planning
- Forest planning
- Salmon restoration
- Shrub-steppe restoration
- Climate change
- Elk management
- Weed control

Oak Creek WLA WAAC Comments

- Creating an official shooting range on the wildlife area. There are location challenges to be considered.
- Recreation planning: increase hiking expected. There is an untapped resource for non-consumptive recreation. Multi-use trails. A need for volunteers to organize for trail maintenance. Improve signage.
- Maps are needed!
- Promote recreation of all kinds
- Recreation planning balanced with conservation
- Concern with road closures. Roads should be closed strategically.
- Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program open lands statute (active grazing on Cowiche unit). Working lands concept is consistent with the current acquisition.
- Citizen science – there is an ongoing interest and value to the WLA.
- Funding for the wildlife area includes the following sources: PR 75%/Discovery Pass/license sales/capital grants/miscellaneous.

- Address the Cowiche roads impacts from winter floods in the new plan.
- The new plan will be within existing budget and grants??
- Forest restoration – Cowiche - loss of pine trees, a potential salvage logging opportunity for funding? Dead trees provide wildlife value (snags and topping of trees).
- Wise-use (conservation) welcomed/non-use not welcomed (preservation).
- Maintain camping sites, maintain dispersed camping.
- Acquisition for access
- Impacts to trails adjacent to fires
- Climate change – logging on snow reduces ground disturbance impacts. Impacts of fire suppression. Larger trees represent historic conditions. Forest planning adaptive strategy. Connectivity provides habitat for species ranges that are shifting due to climate change.
- Maintain water rights with Cowiche Trust
- There were objectives for bighorn herd in the 2006 plan, what will be the status in the new plan?
- Sheep goat interactions
- Monarch butterfly/milkweed enhancement. Citizen science on Cowiche Unit. Active butterfly surveys being conducted.
- Butterfly netting a new recreation activity
- Rare plant surveys
- Bear Creek Canyon butterfly conservation area
- Rattlesnake surveys ongoing in the Cowiche unit
- Shed antlers – ideas for catching thieves: placing tracking chips in antlers
- Birding mecca
- Increase in litter fires
- Increase enforcement
- Reducing impacts from elk feeding sites.
- USFS road management – MOU motorized trails shared maintenance agreement
- Status of wolves on the wildlife area?

Forest Restoration - Greg Mackey

Greg provided an overview of a planned forest thinning project on the Rock Creek unit. The plan is for a 1,200 acre non-commercial thin over the next 3-4 years. The prescription indicates 8-10 inch diameter trees will be the limit. WDFW applied for a Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) State Lands Restoration grant for this project. We also have a Forest Health Grant/Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation grant for Section 11 (1 acre targeted for funding at time). South Tieton is targeted for a commercial harvest treatment in 2017. Revenue will be generated for this project. Large legacy ponderosa pine trees will be protected. Prescribed fire projects will occur in 2016 and 2017, and will start with 90 acres.

Next Steps

- Planning team develops goals and objectives, draft plan expected in July – August.

- WAAC reviews draft plan (~August)
- Public review draft plan in Fall 2016