

WDFW Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting Project

Background

Easy access from Ellensburg and Yakima makes the Wenas Wildlife Area a popular destination for the public, and several recreational activities are more popular than ever. Increased use can present challenges for land managers who strive to accommodate multiple forms of recreation. At the Wenas Wildlife Area, increased recreational target shooting has created several challenges, including safety concerns, soil compaction, invasive weed encroachment, accumulation of target shooting debris, and damage to private and public property. Wildfires created by target shooting are a particular concern. In 2014, a single wildfire ignited by target shooting burned almost 9,000 acres of public and private property and required costly suppression and habitat restoration. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is working to address these challenges while preserving the opportunity for target shooting in the wildlife area. WDFW has conducted public outreach to understand the perspectives of residents, wildlife area users and the Wenas Wildlife Area Advisory Committee. WDFW is conducting a thorough process to develop a community-supported and sustainable outcome.

Vision

WDFW will continue to offer target shooting opportunities for hunters and other responsible shooters, while conserving wildlife habitat, providing safe recreational opportunities for the diversity of users of the Wenas Wildlife Area, and providing for the safety of adjoining land owners.

Goals

WDFW will provide recreational target shooting on the Wenas Wildlife Area that:

- Is supported by the local communities
- Reduces risk to wildlife area users and neighbors
- Improves habitat protection
- Reduces wildfire risks
- Is financially attainable and manageable
- Provides predictability for all users
- Adheres to clear and concise standards

Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting Advisory Committee Charter

May 2017

I. Background & Problem Statement

The 105,000-acre Wenas Wildlife Area is in Yakima and Kittitas counties, includes WDFW, DNR and BLM lands managed primarily by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Recreational target shooting has long occurred on the Wildlife Area and is expected to continue. Use of Wenas Wildlife Area by other recreation users (motorized, nature watching, hunting, etc.) also is expected to continue.

An increase in target shooting in recent years has caused several challenges including wildfires, concerns over public safety and private property, littering, and damage to wildlife habitat. Previous proposals to address target shooting generated concerns by the public. As a result, WDFW is initiating a new effort in which a stakeholder advisory committee will provide recommendations on the best way(s) to provide for target shooting on the Wildlife Area, while addressing challenges listed above.

II. Purpose and Objectives

WDFW convened the Wenas Target Shooting (WTS) Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for how WDFW can best provide recreational target shooting on the Wenas Wildlife Area. The recommendations must meet WDFW's mission: "To preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems, while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities" and must also: (1) be supported by the local communities; (2) reduce risk to Wildlife Area users and neighbors; (3) improve habitat protection; (4) reduce fire risks; (5) be financially attainable and manageable; (6) provide predictability for all users; and (7) adhere to clear and concise standards.

III. Membership

The WTS Advisory Committee is intended to represent broad recreational and neighbor interests in the Wenas Wildlife Area, and is comprised of 20 members representing: neighbors and affected landowners, hunters, target shooters, horseback riders, mountain bike riders, hikers, wildlife watchers, bird dog trainers, motorized users, and others. Government agencies including WDFW and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will participate in the Committee as Ex Officio participants. Local elected officials also may (at their discretion) participate as Ex Officio participants. Ex Officio participants serve as resources to the Target Shooting Committee.

WDFW sent a broad invitation asking stakeholders to apply to participate in the WTS Committee. WDFW selected Advisory Committee members from among the applicants based on the following:

- Active user of the Wenas Wildlife Area
- Acceptance of the basic problem statement and Committee purpose and objectives

- Interest in developing a sustainable solution to recreational target shooting management at Wenas Wildlife Area
- Past experience with collaborative processes
- Ability to represent a broader user group constituency
- Willingness to participate in regular Committee meetings

IV. Expectations of WTS Advisory Committee Members

Advisory Committee members agree to reach out to their broader community of interest and strive to represent their community's perspective. Direct participation of all Committee members is essential to success. For that reason, members are asked to make every effort to attend in-person meetings and participate in conference calls. Committee meetings will be in person and are expected to be monthly, May – December 2017, in the late afternoon or evening in the Ellensburg or Selah area. There also will be 2-4 public listening sessions in the Ellensburg and Selah Areas for Committee members to hear input from the broader community.

All Advisory Committee members are expected to participate throughout the duration of the process. If a member must leave the process before it is finished, he or she is asked to provide a written statement indicating the reasons for leaving.

State agencies and local elected officials participating as Ex Officio members are present as resources to the Advisory Committee to offer perspectives and answer questions. They are not part of the Target Shooting Committee consensus. (I.e.

Advisory Committee members will work with the Committee facilitator to develop ground rules for meeting conduct and participation. Draft ground rules will be provided by the Committee facilitator as a starting place for discussion.

V. Open Meetings

Meetings will be open to the public and at each meeting a time will be set aside for public comment. Observers will otherwise not participate in the deliberation of the group. Meetings will be announced on the WDFW website. The WTS Advisory Committee's recommendations will be made available for public comment.

VI. Advisory Committee Recommendations and Consensus

The WTS Advisory Committee process will include a set of facilitator-assisted collaborative discussions at a series of regularly-scheduled meetings, as well as between-meeting work, and drafting (and review/comment/revision) of group documents. The goal of the Advisory Committee is to provide consensus recommendations to WDFW. For purposes of the Committee's deliberations "consensus" means that all members of the group can at least "live with" a recommendation, even if it is not their first (or even their preferred) choice.

Consensus will be evaluated through a variety of other techniques, including one-on-one conversations with Advisory Committee members, straw polling during meetings, and other methods. Throughout the process there will be documentation of Committee deliberations in meeting notes, a draft Advisory

Committee report, and other documents (if needed). The primary purpose of these documents is to summarize Advisory Committee deliberations, explore and describe emerging and final Committee consensus, and keep track of remaining issues. Final consensus recommendations will be included in an Advisory Committee report.

In the event the Committee does not reach consensus on an issue the full range of member perspectives and opinions on that issue will be described in the Committee report. So called “minority/ majority” reports will not be developed, rather there will be one report which describes consensus recommendations and, to the extent consensus is not reached, describes the full range of Committee perspectives on the non-consensus issues.

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Wenas Wildlife Area

Wenas Target Shooting Advisory Committee – Ground Rules

1. All Advisory Committee Members have equal opportunities to participate; committee members agree to work together, treat other members with respect, and work together to help ensure one another's voices are heard and to avoid individuals dominating the conversation.
2. Advisory Committee members agree to work within the framework of the process and not work behind the scenes to undermine the process.
3. Advisory Committee members agree to the basic premise of the effort – development of recommendations for how WDFW can best provide recreational target shooting on the Wenas Wildlife Area consistent with WDFW's mission to "preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems, while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities" and agree to work in good faith toward this outcome. Members will strive for honest and direct communication, allow open discussion and the right to disagree, and look for opportunities to find common interests, agreements, and solutions. The underlying effort emphasizes joint problem-solving rather than attempting to change other peoples' values.
4. Discussions will stay within the objectives and scope of the Charter and remain focused on providing recommendations that meet WDFW's mission and: (1) are supported by the local communities; (2) reduce risk to Wildlife area users and neighbors; (3) improve habitat protection; (4) reduce fire risk; (5) are financially attainable and manageable; (6) provide predictability for all users; and (7) adhere to clear and concise standards. Advisory Committee members agree this is an effort to solve a specific local concern and not a forum to debate broader legal and social issues.
5. Advisory Committee members agree to attend meetings.
6. Advisory Committee members agree to stay current with information provided to the group and come to meetings prepared to participate fully, including in discussions of whether they can agree to the specifics of emerging and draft Committee recommendations.
7. Advisory Committee members agree to focus on clarifying their own needs and interests, providing objective, fact-based comments and alternatives during discussions, and to refrain from personal criticisms.
8. The facilitator is a neutral third party with no stake in the outcome of the project. Ross Strategic will structure meetings to support a respectful atmosphere and the development of trust among members.

9. Advisory Committee members and/or the facilitator may request a caucus break at any time during a meeting. In order to keep the flow of meetings on track, individual caucus breaks may not exceed 15 minutes.
10. Meetings are expected to start and end on time.

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Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting Advisory Committee Proposed Meeting Schedule

Meeting 1: May 17th, 6 – 8:30 pm, Selah Civic Center

Meeting 2: June 20 or 22 (Ellensburg or vicinity)

Listening Session 1: June 27 and/or 28 (Yakima/Selah or vicinity)

Meeting 3: July 18 or 20 (Yakima/Selah or vicinity)

Meeting 4: August 15 or 17 (Ellensburg or vicinity)

Meeting 5: September 12 or 13 (Yakima/Selah or vicinity)

Listening Session 2: September 25 and/or 28 (Ellensburg or vicinity)

Meeting 6: October 17 or 19 (Ellensburg or vicinity)

Meeting 7: November 13 or 14 (Yakima/Selah or vicinity)

Meeting 8: December 12 or 13 (Ellensburg or vicinity)