



## Morning Star Trails Planning



**Morning Star Trail Planning Committee  
Meeting #4 Notes  
May 16, 2017  
6:00 to 8:45 PM**

**Meeting Purpose:** Understanding Morning Star's unique qualities: geology, soils, riparian areas, wildlife habitat and sensitive plant considerations in trails planning.

**DNR Staff in attendance:**

Paul McFarland - Northwest Region Conservation Program Manager, and Morning Star Trail Planning Project Manager

Jason McMillen – Natural Areas Recreation Maintenance Steward

Barbara Simpson – DNR Parks Planner, Landscape Architect

Curt Pavola – Natural Areas Program Manager

**Committee in attendance:**

Ken Masel –Washington Trail Blazers (Absent)

Rad Roberts – Member of American Alpine Club, WA Climbers Coalition, Cascade Climbers (Absent)

Chris Hagen –YMCA BOLD and GOLD Program Director (Absent)

Marc Bardsley –North Cascades Conservation Council

Thom Peters – Alpine Lakes Protection Society

Holly Zox – Morning Star Volunteer Site Steward

Matt Speten – Morning Star Volunteer Recreation Steward

Matt Jensen – UWild Adventures Program

Gary Paull – US Forest Service Wilderness and Trails

Ruth Milner – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Julie Sklare –City of Everett Watershed

Kathy Johnson –Pilchuck Audubon Society

Phil Roberts - NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Mike Schutt –Snohomish County PUD

Mike Town –Sierra Club and Friends of Wildsky

Kim Brown –Washington Trails Association (Alternate for Andrea Imler)

**Welcome:** Welcome Kim Brown, Andrea Imler's alternate. WTA

**Approval of Meeting 3:** Unanimous approval

**Physical Characteristics Presentations:**



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**Habitat Plants: Holly Zox** - Sensitive and rare plant species in the Morning Star NRCA.

Sub Alpine area is 500' lower in Morning Star

Morning Star Sub Alpine and Alpine Areas have more in common with those In British Columbia and Alaska.

Rare Plants are found throughout the NRCA, near or adjacent to the trails in many locations

*Twin Falls* – No rare Plants (Black Lily) may or may not have been impacted by humans

*Beaver Plant Lake* – Black Lily was nearly eradicated from 2005 Beaver flooding, and has not recovered. The few remaining plants are located at far end of lake, where boardwalk was removed.

Bog Orchid – rarest plant in Snohomish Co. (present in Morning Star)

*Cutthroat Lakes* – No rare plants known at present, but there was a historic occurrence. Likely significant impact to rare plants associated with numerous social trails.

Bald mountain trail includes rare species. Copperbush, Black Lily, Choris's Bog Orchid

*Boulder Lake* – Boulder Lake includes sensitive wetlands, and may have a rare sphagnum. This area has the least use. As such, plant species are better-protected here. Includes Choris's Bog Orchid.

*Grieder Lakes* – Big Greider includes sensitive wetland with rare plants near the log jam at Upper Grieder. Includes Choris's Bog Orchid.

*Vesper and Gothic Basin* - Alpine plants that are rare, Alaska Harebell, Cooley's Buttercup.

Question: Are the sensitive and rare plant species known and mapped? Rare Care has mapped and surveyed rare plants in the area.

Natural Heritage has all the coordinates to the rare plant areas in the NRCA.

Question: Trees, the uniqueness of the forest at Ashland Lakes Jan Henderson, fire ecology three major fires 1300, 1500, and 1700's in western Washington; the Ashland Lakes area is one of the only areas in Western Washington that never burned during these fire events. (Possible interpretive signs for the Ashland Lake Areas speaking to the uniqueness of the area.)

**Habitat Wildlife: Ruth Milner** - Wildlife presentation.



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Hunting in Morning Star – (hunting is a conditional use, subject to site specific management planning process.) DNRs approach in Morning Star is to allow hunting in the NRCA, based on zoning concept: Given fact that hunting occurred for many years prior to establishment of the NRCA, and it being a very large landscape, hunting has not been prohibited in the NRCA. This could change as part of a management planning process.

Landowners have the right to deny access to hunting on their property within the Game Management Unit.

(Pets should be on leash) \* *Unless in areas of hunting, bird hunting, and designated hunting area.* Statewide mgt plan reference to allowing dogs off leash in designated hunting areas is outdated and illustrates need for site-specific management plan. There is no longer hunting allowed with dogs for game animals in Washington.

WDFW administers rules that regulate hunting and trapping where they are allowed. It is a landowner decision whether or not to allow these activities on their property.

Question: Would posting of no hunting be appropriate? Response: restricting hunting would be outside the scope of this process, and would be subject to management planning process. DNR WACs related to public use already prohibit hunting/shooting along trails, or in close proximity to campgrounds and other recreation facilities.

Species designation program. Morning Star area has Mountain Goat habitat. Wildlife is harder to map and keep track of. Animals move in and out of Morning Star on a regular basis.

Pitman Robertson Act – funding for hunting from firearms and ammunition sales.

Congressional funding to the states – State Wildlife Action Plan non game funding. Grant funding that all 50 States compete for.

Question: Would animal sightings dictate what land DNR would reclassify to NRCA? No, natural areas designations are driven by habitat and features. But the thinking is that, with one (habitat) comes the other (wildlife).

Climate Change and Morning Star – the inter connectivity of the plants, insects and the animals. Morning Star, and its wildlife, are very susceptible to climate change, both within, but also across elevation ranges/habitat types, as species move around seasonally.

American Pika – This critter is very sensitive to climate change.

Bats – White Nose Syndrome a relatively new, and very disturbing phenomenon affecting a variety of bat species in Washington. Not well understood as yet.



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Grizzly Bear – Recovery Zone includes Morning Star.

**Soils: Phil Roberts** - <https://soilseries.sc.egov.usda.gov/osdname.aspx>

Soil Mapping – Morning Star has a variety of complex soil types in a range of elevations. Many factors affect soil forming, including parent material, topography, organisms (both plant and animal), climate and time.

Soil Mapping did occur in the 1980's, but the data is out of date and may not be accurate.

In Morning Star the land that used to be working trust land was mapped in the 1980's there could be data available from the timber sales archives from the area.

NRCS is embarking on a soil mapping project that, when completed, will provide valuable data to land managers for a variety of activities, including recreation facility planning. This work won't be complete in time to inform this process, but will help inform future, site-specific trails management efforts that come from work now being done by the committee.

**Additional homework:** DNR staff created a table of categorized landscape-level needs/wants gathered from the written public survey responses, and input provided by this committee. The assignment is to prioritize these needs/wants, within the scope of the trails planning process, consistent with the statewide management plan. Committee members were also asked to begin thinking about specific initiatives/projects that would help achieve the landscape-level needs/wants.

**Next Meeting (Meeting 5) is June 20, 2017, 6:00pm to 8:00pm**