Naneum Plan Summary

Background
In 2012, the Washington departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) began developing a recreation and public access management plan for 230,000 acres of state-managed forest lands and wildlife habitat in central Washington. With the help of a 15-member recreation planning committee, the agencies completed the “Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation and Access Plan” this fall.

The plan identifies the recreation and access objectives and strategies the agencies will use for the next 10 to 15 years to provide recreational opportunities in the Naneum Ridge State Forest, managed by DNR; and the Colockum Wildlife Area and the Quilomene and Whiskey Dick units of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area, managed by WDFW. In all, the planning area covers 360 square miles from the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains to the Columbia River between Ellensburg, Vantage, and Wenatchee.

Currently, 270 miles of roads, called Green Dot roads, enable public access to camping, hunting, wildlife viewing, and other recreational activities in the planning area. The only existing developed recreation facilities are 90 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in the northern portion of the planning area and the Yo Yo Rock boat launch on the Columbia River.
Planning committee members reflected a wide range of recreational interests, including mountain biking, motorcycle and 4X4 use, hiking and camping, horseback riding, hunting and fishing, snowmobile riding and backcountry skiing. The committee also considered potential impacts of recreation on neighboring residential areas, farming lands and operations, family recreation opportunities, and the quality of wildlife habitat and the overall environment.

Recreation objectives and priorities
The plan identifies approximately 50 recreation and public access objectives and 20 high-priority projects, whose development will depend on the availability of funding for construction, maintenance, operation and enforcement. The plan’s implementation also will reflect input from the public, DNR and WDFW conservation priorities, and the logical sequencing of related projects.

Key objectives
- Providing and maintaining the Green Dot road network throughout the planning area. As directed by the Legislature, WDFW will ensure a net increase of Green Dot roads on its lands in Kittitas County.
- Collaborating with Kittitas County officials to evaluate options for providing public road access from the south to the Naneum Ridge State Forest.
- Providing and maintaining safe and sustainable recreation trails throughout the area. The plan calls for both agencies to consult with user groups and the public in developing trail plans.
• Providing trail opportunities for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking in the forested portions of the Naneum Ridge State Forest and the Colockum Wildlife Area, including a north-south trail in the northern and western sections of the planning area.

• Providing off-road trail opportunities for motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, and 4X4s, following consultation with user groups and the public.

• Managing roads in the Whiskey Dick unit to minimize the wintertime disturbance of elk and to reduce the potential for elk damage to nearby private property. Motor vehicle access will be restricted in the winter in the south and central sections of the unit, as it has been for several years, but will be expanded on the eastern perimeter.

• Improving road and trail linkages to public land west of the planning area, including the Wenatchee National Forest.

• Developing a non-motorized winter trail system and a new non-motorized parking area in the Stemilt Basin area.

• Continuing to provide snowmobile access in the planning area – preserving the existing trail maintenance agreement with Washington State Parks.

• Developing a target shooting range in the Green Gate area of the Quilomene wildlife unit. WDFW plans to pursue partnership opportunities with local governments and non-profit organizations to design, develop, manage and maintain the facility.
Priorities for action
Implementation of the management plan will occur in three phases, depending on the availability of funding and other factors listed above. The top priorities include planning and developing public road access from the south into Naneum Ridge State Forest; establishing a winter non-motorized trail system; developing a target shooting range; providing access for hunters with disabilities; planning a sustainable road network; and restoring areas damaged by past recreational use.

For more information
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The full plan is available at: http://www.dnr.wa.gov/RecreationEducation/Topics/RecreationPlanning/Pages/amp_rec_naneum_rec_planning.aspx.