

Reiter Foothills Recreation Planning Committee
Meeting # 2
April 30th 6:00 to 8:30 PM

Meeting Purpose: Provide an overview of the DNR trust management responsibilities for the State of Washington, provide an overview of planned DNR land management activities, discuss kick-off meeting comments and identify future trends in the Reiter Foothills planning area.

Welcome

Committee Action Items:

- The committee reviewed the April 8, 2008 meeting summary and indicated satisfaction with the format. This format will be used for subsequent meeting summaries.
- Information requests: 1) Estimate for costs of materials per mile for trails of all recreational uses (consider using Forest Service estimates) and 2) Committee requested larger format of the document outlining the Recreational Planning Timeline.

Overview of DNR Trust Responsibilities: Candace Johnson reviewed DNR's multiple roles: the DNR manages agricultural land, aquatic lands, it is a fire fighting agency, and manages about 2 million acres of forest land statewide.

- The DNR Trust Mandate is to provide revenue for the trusts for which DNR manages. Some examples of trusts are the Common School, State Forest, and other.
- Other uses on the state trust lands must be compatible with the revenue mandate.
- Timber Sale Revenue Distribution For Snohomish County (see attached handout distributed to committee)
- The DNR's "Policy for Sustainable Forests" publication was reviewed. This material was distributed at the April 8th meeting.
- Planned Timber Harvests for Reiter Foothills Area were discussed. Harvesting is mostly Low Density Thinning in the area west of Wallace Falls State Park because of management constraints in areas east of Wallace Fall State Park that need to be managed to support Spotted Owl Habitats adjacent to Forest Service lands.

Questions:

- *How many acres does the DNR manage in Snohomish County?*
DNR Response: Approximately 120,000 acres
- *How many acres in Reiter Foothills Planning Area?*
DNR Response: Approximately 10,000 acres
- *Is the harvest amount the same every year?*

DNR Response: The amount can change, the law establishes the percentage to DNR through the legislature, funds are allocated annually to the agency to implement programs.

- *What trusts are in the Reiter Foothills Planning Area?*

DNR Response: State Forest ~90%, Common School ~10%

- *Does Wallace Falls State Park receive any of this revenue?*

DNR Response: No

- *How restrictive is the habitat on public use and recreation?*

DNR Response: This will be an ongoing discussion in our biological suitability review

- *Are there planned timber harvests in the Reiter?*

DNR Response: Virtually all the harvest in the Reiter will be late stand thinnings with the goal of developing a forest with larger tree stands. These will include areas to support spotted owl lands habitats.

- *So there will be no clear cuts, "one size fits all" in Reiter?*

DNR Response: Not exactly, this depends upon a number of management guidelines. The majority of the Reiter Foothills area will only have variable density thinning.

- *Are all the road ownerships in this area DNR?*

DNR Response: The west side of the planning area has private road access constraints to motor vehicles. Deer Flats mainline may have Forest Service and DNR roads. We will look into this and discuss further in the management criteria of the suitability process.

Overview of Land Suitability Process: Randy Kline discussed the Recreation Land Suitability Process; this is the tool the DNR uses to consider issues they must address when they plan for the lands used for recreational planning. Additional environmental analysis is done at site specific trail plan levels. A brief overview was given of the handout distributed at the meeting: Recreation Land Suitability Process, 4/2008 Draft Information (see Section A).

At the Committee's June 10th meeting, DNR biologists will present the biological portion of the suitability analysis. At the July 8th meeting DNR staff will present analysis of the Geology, Soils and Management Considerations suitability criteria.

Question:

- *Has this data already been overlaid on maps?*

DNR Response: DNR is in the process of developing the maps. The DNR is reviewing data now to determine what information is useful for recreation planning purposes

Review of February 12th Kick-Off Meeting Comments: The Committee reviewed the themes DNR prepared, these include: Planning, Education, Enforcement, Access and Trail Use, Camping Facilities, Parking, Staging Areas, Signage, Maintenance, Littering, Erosion, Water Quality. The Committee agreed to add Endangered Species and Fisheries Issues to the comment themes.

Questions and Comments:

- *It would be helpful to have the comments weighted by frequency or see the complete list.*

DNR Response: Staff assembled a verbatim list of comments and sent them out to the attendees of the February 12th meeting. Staff also prepared this list of general themes for this Planning Committee discussion and to support discussion topics regarding planning considerations.

- *Does this list include comment letters received?*

DNR Response: Only the comments from the February 12, 2008 public kick-off meeting were included in the handout provided for this meeting. Letters and email comments received since the February 12th public meeting were not included in the comment list.

- *Is Emergency Management Services and Rescue Services in the planning area going to be considered? The increased need for services may have implications for surrounding jurisdictions.*
- *Does the DNR track the numbers of accidents?*
DNR Response: DNR Region office does not track the number of accidents and often times do not know when accidents occur, as they are often not reported.
- *Does the county track the number of accidents?*
DNR Response: DNR will contact the Gold Bar Fire Department to see if it was possible to get information regarding the number of accidents in the planning area.
- *What are the costs associated with construction, maintenance, enforcement, and protecting the environment and who pays for these costs?*

Committee Discussion: The Committee explored the suggestion of adding funding to the list of topics the Committee will discuss during the planning process. The point was raised that for the committee to make good recommendations, they need to know costs. Some felt that the committee could not address the funding question in this planning process and that the committee needed to set the framework for recreation facility development, not recreation funding. Considerations explored include:

- Funding is not a Committee discussion rather the Committee should focus on the development of priority of planning recommendations during the next six work sessions.
- Planning Committee may recommend something that the legislature would not fund, recommendations need to be practical.
- User fees as a source of funding should be explored, as well as policy and legal issues impacting use of volunteer trail workers to help subsidize costs.
- Cost estimates should include both costs to build and maintain. Walker Valley only has a certain number of acres/miles that can be used for trails; how does that come into play for Reiter? Perhaps DNR could use other ORV areas for cost framework to conceptualize cost per mile or acre.

Action Item: DNR staff will bring general DNR budget information to the next meeting, it will provide an overview of where the money comes from and costs associated with the recreation program.

DNR Outreach to Reiter Foothills Recreational Planning Area Stakeholders: DNR will distribute a user survey this spring to stakeholders who signed up for email contact during the Reiter Foothills Recreational Planning process and attendees at the February kick-off meeting. The survey will also be available on the DNR project website for members of the public. A sample survey from the Western Yacolt Burn Planning Area was distributed to the Committee for review. Members can submit question suggestions to David Way by May 15 for incorporation to the final Reiter survey. DNR staff noted that the Yacolt survey was currently available at

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/RecreationEducation/Events/Pages/amp_rec_western_yacolt_burn_survey.aspx

The Committee asked if the electronic survey site would allow users to take the survey more than once, which could skew the results. DNR staff indicated the web-based survey site (Survey Monkey) can prevent one individual from taking the survey multiple times from the same computer. DNR staff agreed to follow up on this concern.

DNR will also gather information from users in the Reiter through trail counters; some are currently on site. It was noted there is a shortage of counters for use in Reiter planning area this spring.

Identify Future Trends of the Reiter Foothills Area: Committee members discussed the following questions in small groups to identify future trends and how they may affect recreation in the Reiter Foothills Planning Area. Key discussion points are summarized under each question.

Washington's population continues to grow. How do you think shifts in population in the surrounding area and the state as a whole may affect recreational use in Reiter Foothills?

- Despite fuel costs, motorized use is increasing
- Don't expect motorized use to decline

Proximity Impacts

- Close proximity to population centers makes Reiter popular
- As population encroaches closer to Reiter, more and more recreation occurs
- Population goes up, demand goes up
- People tend to recreate closer to home
- Proximity to cities increases use
- Limited areas for ORV use attracts statewide use
- Increased trend toward Natural Resource Conservation Areas or DNR land conversions means less area open for recreation
- Need for broader watershed protections to support population increase
- More facilities and properties would spread out impact
- Puget Sound will see bulk of growth
- Monroe City Limits Park Space: 3.4 acres/1000 people currently; 6 acres/1000 people is 12 year goal
- More people means more uses and competition for different uses

What are trends in passive/active kinds of sports? How is this related to age?

- Biking continues to grow, as technology changes
- The face of the sports is changing due to technology

- Backpacking may be decreasing, tent camping declining
- Day-hiking may be increasing
- Motorized use ages ranges from 25-40 or 50 years of age
- Mountain bikers 35-45 years of age or 50 primarily. A lot more use by youth where there are facilities
- More free time allows more use
- Aging motorized population equals more ORV/ATV use
- What are trends in passive/active kinds of sports? How is this related to age?
- Weekend warriors are the majority of users. Want to get out. Don't really care how things are there, but just want to use it. Maybe users do not actively seek ways to give back or use the area responsibly
- Some understanding of how to use the area, but more education required, including etiquette, location, environment
- Type of facilities may need to change (more population) including signs/expectations
- Can minimize/design trails sustainably
- Age Demographic: baby boomers tend to use RV and Motorized use while young People enjoy extreme sports
- Need for hosting international motorized events, mountain biking events, bmx course, skateboards – all are good for the economy, but facilities needed to do these events.

Recreational equipment for both motorized and non-motorized uses is constantly evolving. How do you think changes or advances in technology (i.e. size and type of equipment or vehicles) may affect recreational use in Reiter Foothills?

- Technology has aided trail design (GPS)
- Engineering has advanced significantly-for all types of use
- Use key people/user groups to provide specific data – that will help design trails, minimize risk and erosion. Design trails for specific uses
- Mountain bike use changes – big bikes, more suspension, disc brakes, etc...
- Expect continued refinements in equipment
- UTV's have a 50 inch wheel base, wider machines increases potential for resource damage
- 2 cycle engines giving way to 4 cycle engines
- Extreme sports – base jumping, off road skateboarding
- Carbon Footprint – cleaner emissions (2 cycle- 4 cycle) – proximity (cost of fuel)
- Noise (getting much better with motorcycles)
- Education aspect for mixed use trails
- Communications aspect for safety
- Impact on the land – tires, suspension, barriers that will stop people
- Electronic user monitoring (gates/control access and conceptualize use)

Many factors affect the distance people will travel. What future trends do you see that may affect the distance people will travel to recreate in Reiter Foothills?

- Fuel costs
- Traffic
- Population growth
- If area becomes ORV park there may be less trail available so it may initially lose visitation numbers. When miles of trail increase the visitor numbers may increase again
- Some may view quality of experience as related to enough miles of trail
- Proximity of area to population is important
- Less time to recreate
- Economy

- Play closer to home
- Widen Hwy 2 may lead to increase access to Reiter
- Time of Travel
- Stay over night (camping)
- Age of people – however, we have an active aging population

There are many examples of successful recreation areas throughout the northwest. What do you like about other recreational areas and, if you know, tell us the names of the areas?

- ORV – Tahuya (wet and muddy), Capital Forest, Elbe/Evans (multiple trails, many miles, camping), on site management
- Mountain Bikes – Tiger mountain (heavy used because of proximity to Seattle), no free ride areas available, some private land (Galbraith), provide away from people in quiet, tight swoopy rolling terrain, free ride stunts, rock gardens, jumps and mix, loop trails
- State Parks – cost to develop and maintain is a challenge
- Eniat (Wenatchee) self-composting outhouses
- Leavenworth – rafting with logistics to support it
- Harry Osborne State Forest – camping, facilities, trail system
- Blewitt Pass – snowmobile, horse camp at Elk Flats
- Camping
- Good access
- Uniquely suited for recreation use
- “Gold Bar Gold Days”
- Remote sited composting toilets
- Tiger Mountain – good plan to reduce user conflicts
- Capital Forest – good plan to reduce user conflicts
- Oregon – dispersed recreation facilities so you don’t have onerous use of limited areas
- Oregon – well marked, larger areas with significantly more trail miles
- Forest Service – user fees, winter park permits
- Anacortes Community Land Trust – good example of multiple uses co-existing in an area
- Multi-use difficult in highly used areas

Recreational areas vary in the type of experience they provide. How is the experience provided at Reiter Foothills unique?

- Proximity and location near population
- Terrain – varied, including rock, forest, open areas, views
- Varied experience
- Lack of similar recreational opportunity elsewhere in area, especially motorized
- Motorized uses have limited areas to recreate
- Wide variety of trails
- Unsupervised
- Proximity
- Scenery
- Size
- This process is a unique experience –chance of success or failure
- Terrain – offers opportunity for mixed use.
- The fact that motorized use is so heavy in this area, presents a unique challenge

Wild Sky Wilderness Update: DNR provided an update on the status of the Wild Sky Wilderness bill; it has passed the House and been sent to the President's desk for final signature authorizing the designation.

Overview of Field Trips: As part of its planning process, the committee will conduct field visits to examine the issues they are studying in monthly sessions with DNR staff. Tour participants will discuss their observations and concerns with fellow committee members and provide an overview at the following committee meeting. A series of tours will be offered to committee members; the objectives are to:

1. Increase awareness of recreational uses and their current impacts to the trails and neighboring lands in the Reiter Foothills area.
2. Deepen committee members' understanding of key issues and concerns their fellow committee members have regarding recreational uses and impacts.
3. Increase awareness of recreational use management strategies currently implemented in the Walker Valley Off-Road Vehicle Area and possibly other DNR managed use areas.

REITER FOOTHILLS TOUR: Committee members will tour several sites within the Reiter Foothills planning area that illustrate recreational use issues to be addressed in the planning process. Sites visited at Reiter will include: areas currently used for parking and staging areas, trails within the lowland portion of the planning area, and water crossings. Committee members have the opportunity to participate in one of the following tour dates: May 10, 2008 (9:00am – 1:00pm) or May 13 (4:00 pm – 8:00 pm).

Action Items: 1) Committee members will be sent meeting location for the tours. 2) DNR staff will organize a tour of Walker Valley to see examples of DNR managed trails and facilities.

SECTION A

DRAFT

Recreation Land Suitability Process

Purpose: Identify factors that could potentially affect recreation planning (i.e. the planning of trails, trailheads, campgrounds, etc.)

Step 1 DNR staff identifies the broad categories of use that occur on the landscape (data gathered through public comment, surveys, workgroups, etc.):

- Hiking
- Non-motorized uses (such as horseback riding, mountain biking)
- Motorized uses (such as motorcycle, ATV, 4x4)

Step 2 In consultation with biologists, geologists, soil scientists and land managers; DNR staff identifies the criteria that could potentially affect recreation planning:

- Divided into three sets of criteria
 - Biological Criteria
 - Geology and Soils Criteria
 - Management Criteria

Criteria include data such as:

Biological

- Wetlands
- Wetland Buffers
- Salmonids and other fish species
- Riparian Areas
- Deer and Elk Habitat
- Sensitive, Threatened & Endangered Species (plants + animals)
- Etc.

Geology and Soils

- Soil Factors
- Potential for Mass Wasting (landslides)

- Slope Stability
- Slope Steepness
- Floodplains
- Soil Drainage
- Etc.

Management Considerations

- Communication Sites
- Rock and Gravel Sources
- Areas with Leases & Easements
- Access Points

- Noise Considerations
- Cultural/Archaeological Resources
- Etc.

Step 3

Overlay the criteria maps to identify areas with potential limiting factors (this is a broad brush approach – site specific analysis will be needed for the actual siting of trails and facilities).

Step 4

Recreation Planning Committee uses the overlay maps in the development of recommended management strategies for the planning area.

4/2008 Draft Information – Subject to Change without Notification