

Reiter Foothills Recreation Planning Committee
Meeting # 8
December 3, 2008 | 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Purpose: The Committee will review the summary of good user experiences and identify and map Committee member's initial ideas for planning recreation opportunities in Reiter Foothills

Welcome:

- Review agenda
- General housekeeping items

Walker Valley Tour – David Way

At the Walker Valley tour, DNR staff will be sharing funding information associated with DNR's recreation program, including motorized and non-motorized facilities. Tour stops will include trailheads, hardened trail features, education and enforcement approaches, gates and restricted access features.

DNR will host the tour on from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday, January 23 and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday January 24. Committee members signed up for the dates they could attend.

DNR Update:

Day-to-Day Management – David Way

The fencing project around Reiter Pond was completed on November 22. Northwest Quad Association provided materials and volunteer labor. This work is temporary until decisions are made regarding the long term recreational use of the area.

Maps- Lisa Anderson

New maps were provided for use during the meeting. In addition to information the committee has seen, the maps display undesignated user routes, historic hiking routes, and trails located in Wallace Falls State Park.

Summary of Good User Experiences

A summary of good user experiences was provided (attachment follows). This summary is a synopsis of the input provided by the committee following their review and discussion of public comments and user group updates. DNR reiterated that the committee goal is to develop recreation recommendations that provide for safe, quality experiences that protect resources and are compatible with DNR's trust responsibilities.

Questions and Comments:

- *Are horseback riding experiences compatible with motorized recreation?*
Committee Member Response: The two are not compatible. Safety can be an issue due to the different speeds at which horseback riders and motorized users travel. Hiking and mountain biking are more compatible with horseback riding.
- *Our responsibility is not to design the recreation experience, but to describe the kind of experience that we feel should be on this landscape and where it might occur.*
DNR Response: This group should recommend the kind of recreation uses DNR should manage for in this area, recommended projects and priorities. For example,

recommendations from the committee could include a proposal for a certain number of miles of trail, for what use, and approximately where. This group will also be charged with identifying the implementation priorities. DNR will make decisions, and then seek funding and begin the detailed design work. It is common for DNR to contract out for the design of facilities such as a trailhead or a camping area. DNR must first seek the appropriate funding and then it can work towards implementing a prioritized list of improvements.

- *How do existing trails enter into the picture?*
DNR Response: The trail information can be used as reference material that describes current uses. The current activities may not be in the optimal location, but may influence committee recommendations if they are consistent with the desired outcomes. The technical detailed decisions will come later. It is important to remember that the routes currently in this area were never planned or designed for the type of use that is occurring.
- *The areas being used now for certain activities is good information to keep in mind regarding the future of the area.*
- *Are the current trail locations grandfathered in?*
DNR Response: No. The specific location of any future designated trails will be made later in the process as DNR considers the Committee's recommendations. As has been mentioned, the existing use has not been planned for at its current location.
- *There is an existing trail missing on the map, it goes up to the Index Wall from the fenced area below the wall.*
- *DNR manages trails, both motorized and non-motorized. Perhaps a good structure for this committee's process would be to examine things within this framework and not draw where they should occur on the maps at tonight's meeting.*
Facilitator Comment: Tonight the Committee will work both on maps and collect the larger big ideas.
- *How are the Committee recommendations related to the adjacent lands and surrounding area and recreational opportunities these offer?*
DNR Response: The context of the surrounding lands must be considered. DNR is continuing to communicate with the adjacent landowners.
- Committee Comment: *This planning area is bound by two state parks and the national forest. If we wanted 20 miles of hiking trail, then two of those miles could be on DNR land that provides access to 18 miles of hiking trail in the national forest.*
- *Can DNR provide information about who owns the adjacent private forest lands? This information would be helpful as we consider trail location and maintenance, and the possibility of DNR acquiring those lands.*
DNR Response: DNR will provide that information at the Committee's January meeting.

Identify Key Issues for Planning Recreational Experiences at Reiter Foothills

The committee was provided the following questions to help prepare for the December 3 committee meeting exercises:

1. *In your view and based on what we have heard from the public, what are the top 5 issues that need to be addressed in the Reiter Foothills recommendations to create safe, sustainable and enjoyable recreational experiences?*

2. *What kinds of special opportunities does the Reiter Foothills area offer to recreation enthusiasts in Washington State?*
3. *How can the Reiter Foothills area connect to recreational opportunities on adjacent lands (e.g., Wild Sky Wilderness, Wallace Falls Park, Sultan Basin public lands)?*

The following information is a compiled list of key issues that the committee identified during this brainstorming process:

Project Recommendations

- Staging areas/parking with year-round access
- Sanitation facilities needed, both for sewage and garbage
- Plan multiple access areas (especially the western half of the planning area) to allow for state land management and to provide alternate recreation access during harvests
- Staging areas should have good clear signage indicating access points, trail heads, trails, allowable uses, opportunities, activities, and regulations
- Family-friendly camping located close to access areas
- Dispersed camping options within the area
- Add an easy access from lower to upper staging area for ORV users

Map/Trail –based Recommendations

- Locate compatible uses together on trails /separate incompatible uses
- Locate compatible uses together at trailheads / separate incompatible uses
- Secure access to upper areas – Sultan Basin access for non-motorized users
- Establish and map 100 miles of 50” trail and 80 miles of wider trail for ORV use
- Establish and maintain 75 miles of non-motorized trails
- Create variety of trails for motorized uses, establishing 10 to 15 miles for jeep only
- Some portions of trails can be multi-use
- Provide for noise buffer between motorized trails and hiking trails

Management Recommendations

- Preserve some area for motorized use
- Address the environmental damage that has occurred in the area
- Address needs of different user groups
- Bring a management presence to the area, including enforcement
- Protect water groundwater quality, particularly for the town of Index – protect from toxic substances
- Protect surface water quality
- Establish dedicated fund to pay for enforcement and maintenance of facilities
- Restore sites damaged by current use
- Plan for safety for all users from recreational shooting
- Pursue joint partnerships for development/management/enforcement given economies of scale and current economic conditions
- Create safe, monitored recreation area, with an enforcement presence

- Coordinate site and signage development to support enforcement and emergency response efforts
- Identify monitoring protocols and track changes and impacts over time to water temperature, sediment loads
- Partner with user groups after the planning stage, these relationships are important for long term success
- Continue DNR work with volunteer user groups
- Develop Youth Conservation Corps approach to education, e.g., develop Sky Valley organization through the schools
- Equalize funding between motorized and non-motorized projects
- Charge user fees to help with costs

Questions and Comments:

- *How much do facilities/trails cost? To construct? Maintain? Enforce?*
DNR Response: We will be providing much of that information at our Walker Valley Tour in January. DNR has looked at issues related to cost. We will share with you some costs associated with different recreation management options that were developed in similar planning efforts.
- *The Legislative monies were for expanding recreation opportunities. Water quality and the environment is the DNR's issue to deal with not the committee's.*
- *Heybrook Ridge is a good example of joint management for recreational uses*

Initial Ideas for Recreational Uses in Reiter Foothills (Mapping Exercise)

The committee worked in small groups to begin mapping the key issues identified during the earlier discussion. Members were also asked to draw general ideas regarding recreational uses and facilities locations onto the maps. It was stressed that this exercise was for brainstorming and not evaluating. The ideas will first be identified on the map, and then the Committee will discuss and evaluate the ideas at future meetings.

DNR will compile the committee's initial maps and ideas and distribute these to committee members. In preparation for the January 28 meeting, committee members will review all the ideas and refine the initial concepts based on consultation with the user communities and towns they represent prior to the January meeting.

Review Action Items and Next Steps:

Information requests for DNR to prepare and provide to the committee

- Adjacent Land Ownership Map with Snohomish County zoning information included
- Recreation capital and management funding/cost information chart

Prior to the January 28 committee meeting, members will:

- 1) Please reflect on the committee goals and review the initial concept ideas that have been shared by fellow committee members.
- 2) You are encouraged to share these initial ideas with your user groups, and collect additional suggestions and input.
- 3) Come to the January 28 meeting prepared to present your thoughts on the top ideas/concepts for safe, sustainable recreation in this area consistent with DNR's trust

mandates. Your brief presentation (3-5 minutes) will be given to fellow Committee members and DNR staff and should be based on the insight you have gained through consultation with the user groups and community's perspectives. .

Question for the Committee:

- *Would you be willing to work until 9 p.m. in the upcoming meetings if necessary to complete work on the recommendations?*

Committee Response: Yes

Dec 3, 2008 UPDATED User Group Experience Descriptions for the Reiter Foothills

Horseback riding

- Protected area for 2-6 hour loop trails that provide elevation changes, scenic views and water and sanitation services. Parking/staging areas with sufficient room for horse trailers.

Birding

- Quiet trails that offer 5-6 hour experience in a variety of terrain for observing sky, cliffs, open areas, trees and updrafts.

Motorcycle

- Loop trails 15-20 miles with elevation gain for a variety of skill levels (curves and water crossings). Trials riders look for technical difficulty in concentrated and steep area. Safe parking areas for trailers and camping for RVs near trails.

Hiking

- Five hour to full day peaceful experience with scenic vistas and destinations along loop trails accessed through native vegetation, natural sounds. Maximize native viewing and listening experiences. Site trails for mushroom hunters to forage off trail.

Quads / ATV

- Provide for a variety of trail types (tight woods, wide open) for a 2-10 hour riding experience @ 1-10 mph for novice to expert riders.

Climbing

- Access safe climbing sites (no falling debris) from short hike with options for variety of difficulty levels and lengths of rope. Provide wag bags, and garbage clean up.

Mountain biking

- Year-round riding options for a variety of skills with good flow, climbs, extended downhill and viewpoints. Cross county riders look for climbs (<8% - <12% and up to <25% on short sections) and 12+ miles of trails with backcountry options. Free riders look for short, steep downhill. Consider downhill racecourse with shuttle access option.

Camping

- Defined camping areas away from staging areas quiet, safe, and private sites (quiet time from 11pm – 9am) with sanitation and drinking water, fire pits, picnic tables, and area environmental educational information.

4x4

- Loop trails with varied terrain for range of skill levels (steep, rocks, extreme sections with bypass, and water/mud options). Plan a variety of trail widths for short wheelbase, oversized and 4x4's. Ample parking staging areas for trailers of all sizes and restrooms.

Fishing

- Access to clean streams with some open shorelines and healthy fish populations. Areas should be free of garbage and stream sedimentation.

Hunting

- Trails, facilities and roads need to clearly identify hunting and no-hunting areas for public safety. Provide hunter education on other uses in the area.

Shooting

- Establish a designated, safe, 50-150 foot level area with good backstop, no cross traffic.