



Recreation Planning Committee Meeting Notes

October 10, 2017 | 6 to 9 p.m.

Deming Library, 5044 Mt. Baker Highway, Bellingham

In Attendance:

Committee Members

Ari Bezona	Doug Huddle	Mike McGlenn
Arlen Bogaards	Eric Brown	Becky Peace
Bert Isaacson	Glenn Gervais	Walden Haines
Bill Lawrence	Kevin Vanderhorst	Chris Tretwold for Wendy
Carole MacDonald - absent	Lance Hansen	McDermott
Dana Johnson	Dan Probst for Mark Harding	Buck Bouck - absent

DNR Staff

Dana Leavitt	Chris Hankey	Kyle Galloway
Jean Fike	Laurie Bergvall	Rick Foster
Tim Stapleton		

Meeting Purpose: To present and review planning options.

Welcome: Chris Hankey welcomed the group, introduced Tim Stapleton and had the group do introductions, went over the agenda and reviewed the September 2017 meeting notes. Last page – comments about horses from Mike McGlenn. 24-7, 365. Arlen Bogaards – looks like I am anti-logging, which I am not. Start the conversation earlier, not later in the process. Don't push for alternative funding for recreation areas.

Thank you to the Rainier Ridge Rams for a clean-up event that occurred the first weekend in October – a great success! Forty-one volunteers signed up and helped. DNR is very appreciative of the volunteer efforts that all the groups do on DNR managed ground.

Presentation of Options: Dana Leavitt presented Options A, B & C to the planning committee. Key points included:

OPTION C

- ONE MOTORIZED ZONE:
 - Sumas Mountain (~4.9 sm/3150 ac. ±)
 - Access from DNR forest road at Highway 542
 - The forest road crosses private property and recreation access needs to be clarified along this access easement; negotiate with property owner to gain recreation access
 - Trailhead interior, adjacent to forest road, within 1 mile of 542
- 3 NON-MOTORIZED ZONES: Red Mountain, Mirror Lake & North Fork
 - Red Mountain (~3.9 sm/2500 ac±)

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- Access from Silver Lake Road, primary at southeast section of the unit onto DNR forest road; secondary may be available at the north end of Red Mountain
- Trailhead located in the southeast portion of the unit adjacent to the forest road from Silver Lake Road, within a mile of the road
- Trail connector to Silver Lake Park; access to the campground, work with County Parks to define
- Mirror Lake (~3.9 sm/2500 ac±)
 - Access from Park Road, directly onto DNR land either by an existing forest road or a new route
 - Trailhead close to access point; terrain is steep in this area, may be a challenge to develop a trailhead there
 - Recreation zone is divided by utility corridor, which DNR stays out of; showing a couple of trail connectors to link the two areas for trails
 - DNR works with the utility companies to stay away from easements, using maintenance roads for trails; avoid using maintenance road from Highway 9 for access
 - Trail connector to the north into N. Lake Whatcom Park, connecting county and DNR trails together using park trails master plan to align points
- North Fork (~8.2 sm/5240 ac.±)
 - North Fork Road and forest road provide full access into the North Fork unit
 - Forest road goes through marbled murrelet habitat to reach trailhead
 - Trailhead is located within the recreation zone
 - This is a high elevation area, with a shorter season, weather allowing for a summer/fall recreation area
- **CONDITIONAL USE ZONE:**
 - North Fork (~3.6 sm/2350 ac.±)
 - Overlay onto marbled murrelet conservation zone
 - Will only be developed if long term strategy allows for non-motorized trails in conservation zones
 - This area avoids the critical habitat in the conservation zone
- **SECONDARY USES:**
 - Picnic/Fishing in the North Fork
- OPTION B**
- **ONE MOTORIZED ZONE:**
 - Red Mountain (~3.9 sm/2500 ac ±)
 - Access from Silver Lake Road onto a DNR forest road
 - Trailhead adjacent to existing forest road, less than a mile into the recreation zone
 - Second access point at the north end of the unit, needs to be researched, and shows up on planning maps; consider using
 - Have to consider adjacency issue to the county park and campground (Silver Lake Park)
 - May want to consider a non-motorized trail cutting through the area for access to both sides of the motorized area
- **2 NON-MOTORIZED ZONES: Stewart Mountain & Mirror Lake**
 - Stewart Mountain ((~3.8 sm/2400 ac. ±)
 - Explore shared trailhead with county parks; expand?
 - Access into recreation zone may be via a trunk trail

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- Two or more trail connectors into N. Lake Whatcom Park aligning with park trails master plan or constructed trails; work with county parks to facilitate
 - Mirror Lake (~3.9 sm/2500 ac. ±)
 - Access from Park Road; DNR land abuts the road; possible to use existing forest road
 - Steep in the area where a trailhead would be, will be a challenge to develop; within a mile of Park Road
 - This recreation zone is bisected by power lines; will provide limited access trail crossings of utility easement; avoid using existing maintenance road for trails; will need to enforce closure of maintenance road
 - Trail connector to N. Lake Whatcom Park on the north end of the area; align with park trails master plan
- ONE CONDITIONAL USE ZONE:
 - North Fork unit (~6.6 sm/4200 ac. ±)
 - Overlays with marbled murrelet conservation zone
 - Will only be available for non-motorized recreation if the long-term marbled murrelet strategy allows non-motorized trails within a conservation zone
- SECONDARY USES:
 - Picnic/Fishing location in the North Fork
 - Picnic/Scenic point location in Stewart Mountain

OPTION A

- 2 MOTORIZED ZONES: Sumas & Red Mountain
 - One single track and one double track
 - Sumas (~5.5 sm/3500 ac ±)
 - Double track area
 - Access from Hwy 542 onto DNR forest road which crosses one private property as it winds its way up into the unit
 - Trailhead located next to forest road inside recreation area, less than 1 mile from highway
 - Red Mountain (~3.9 sm/2500 ac ±)
 - Single track area
 - Access from Silver Lake Road onto DNR forest road
 - Trailhead within 1 mile of road intersection, adjacent to the forest road
- 2 NON-MOTORIZED ZONES: Stewart Mountain & Van Zandt Dike
 - Stewart Mountain (~3.8 sm/2400 ac±)
 - Access from Y Road, through private property – Weyerhaeuser; will need to work on recreational access easement
 - Trailhead located within recreation zone, could move dependent upon access resolution
 - May want to approach Whatcom County Parks for shared access through N. Lake Whatcom Park into DNR recreation zone
 - Create trail connectors to county park
 - Van Zandt Dike (~4.3 sm/2700 ac ±)
 - Access from Mosquito Lake Road on the east side of the unit; may or may not be on a forest road, will need to check location again

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- Trailhead located within the recreation zone, less than a mile from Mosquito Lake Road
- ONE CONDITIONAL USE ZONE:
 - Located in the Van Zandt Dike unit (~2.4 sm/1500 ac. ±)
 - Overlays marbled murrelet conservation zone
 - Will only be available for non-motorized recreation if the long-term strategy allows non-motorized trails within a conservation zone
 - Connects to non-motorized area
- SECONDARY USES:
 - Water access point off Highway 542 near Maple Falls (may end up happening outside of this process, but good to consider at this point)
 - Launch site for paragliding and hang gliding in the southern section of Red Mountain (visited this location on a field trip)
 - Picnic site on the Van Zandt Dike adjacent to a small pond, which needs to be verified as a good location that would draw people

Initial comments and questions

- Initial use areas - are those in addition to the other areas? *Yes*
- Sumas Mountain motorized recreation - what about noise? *It is in the bowl area – some of it you are climbing a south aspect, but for the most part you are deflecting a lot of the noise impact. The noise will go up for the most part.*
- Is there a limited acreage for zones? Is there a maximum acreage you have – because it looks like in Option A you are taking away from motorized recreation. *No.*
- The picnic area up by Canyon Lake – is access covered by the Weyco or Sierra Gate? *That access is all on DNR.*
- Do you want people to hike a mile to the picnic place or do they get to drive in? *We still need to determine that.*
- On any of these areas –do they come out of the DNR timber base – are we no longer going to manage timber? *No, they will be managed for timber.*
- What was the criteria that caused you not to consider Van Zandt Dike for motorized use? *Many years ago there was a proposal to put motorized use there – staff felt for this proposal to be successful it was probably best to not put motorized use there again.*
- Middle Fork why no development on the 38 Road? There is no development on the 38 Road. *In the middle of a lot of elk habitat. The only thing we could see was a trail on the roadway. DNR doesn't do that. There is marbled murrelet habitat on each end of the road, and we are caught in the middle of habitat and felt it was prudent to stay out of there.*
- Similar proposal for Sumas Mountain to have a motorized park – is that not true? *That is true, but we don't see ourselves developing a motorized park.*
- Are you talking about adopting many of the existing trails? *That comes in the next part. We can't say if we will adopt a trail, put it to rest, or bring it up to DNR standards. The first step is inventorying the trails. User groups usually go out and inventory the trails for us. Then we will make a determination. We would then decide what to do – close, restore, repair, re-route, re-open.*
- North Fork and Slide Mountain area for Option A – decided not to put any legitimate recreation there – when there is already recreation there – what happens? *We don't have a good answer there. Jean? That is a tough*

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one. Nothing is totally closed ever. Is that a suitable place? The big picture goal – identify the best places to identify trail development, develop those sites, then can we take out the places where trails are not wanted.

Committee responses to questions

• WHAT ARE THE 3 MOST IMPORTANT IDEAS YOU SEE PRESENTED ON OPTIONS A, B, OR C?

Bill – like the separation of non-motorized and motorized. Like the conditional and seasonal areas.

Glenn – like the separation. Take existing stuff where it is in option A. Accessing where existing mountain bikers are on the North Fork. Like connectivity in Mirror Lake park.

Eric – have combined areas – those two intertwined and tying into existing areas is a good idea. North Fork is important for the mountain biking community

Walden – concur with motorized comments. Motorized not adjacent to county park. Like Mirror Lake parcel. Connectivity with Whatcom County Parks. Ambitious into the future. Look at it holistically.

Doug – think that the choices, the three schemes all make sense. Have no problems supporting those uses all the way through a recreation plan. I think that the areas of state timberland you did not select are almost as important as the ones you did as an exclusatory process. Need to be bought off by the public. Favorable as always.

Chris – I agree with many of the areas I see on the plans. I like that connectivity down to the county park. Water access looks good. If able to choose anything - small scenic picnic areas. Water recreationists don't need big areas – we just need small areas. *(Still need a place to park even if it is for 5 cars – need to continue that conversation).*

Becky – like the idea of a designated scenic paraglider, hang glider site. I like how option B with parcels out the Mount Baker Highway. Then some parcels closer into town. The idea of connectivity.

Dan – I would back up the connectivity in option B. I also like the conditional use areas – look at more and expanded. Motorized recreation is fine.

Arlen – connectivity is great in Option B. Potential connectivity in option C with the community forest. Wish we could get those together. Sumas is great – conflicts on Red. Can we expand Sumas? Would like to see motorized have a lot of opportunity. *(Discussions with the county – their vision is the community forest is more primitive – discouraging expansion).*

Lance – like connectivity with County Park. North Fork area is important to keep on there. Option C is too limited for motorized. Want option A included in there.

Bert – not that familiar with this yet. 3500 acres on Sumas, Walker Valley is 5000 acres, and Reiter is 10000 acres. Not that much of a draw. The other question is people with disabilities. Are they going to be taken into consideration? *(Yes – at the plan level we write that as part of the objectives and strategies)*

Ari – motorized – I like that we have a good option on Sumas for motorized. I am kind of in agreeance a bigger area would be that upper leg on Sumas included on Option A. There is access issues to be talked about on Paradise Valley. Having two access points would be nice. Having Sumas is exciting. Red and Sumas for motorized. Technical for single track. Stuart Mountain a great option for non-motorized. I would like to see the North Fork for mountain biking – downhill.

Dana – Area A for motorized use. Having two places – one used heavily for single track. I would hate for the North Fork not to be used by anybody anymore, especially since it is such a big area. When we went to Van Zandt Dike – not a lot of use except for hunters. North Fork is probably more important than the Van Zandt Dike. Access to the County Park.

Kevin – connectivity is a good thing. Option A is advantageous for motorized. Allows us some room for a pleasurable ride for ATV, single track and 4x4. I am for option A. North Fork is a huge benefit for somebody. Mountain biking is already up there, or at least in the recent past – that area should be considered and not

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discounted in any option. It is funny how we were looking at existing trail networks at the North Fork on plan B – the very north end – there is a network there.

Mike – lower left hand quadrant of option B makes a tremendous amount of sense. Connecting to the park. The area to the north that we developed and used is small – the trailhead. The Weyerhaeuser seed farm is off and on for sale. County parks is interested and DNR is interested. All of that ties together and gets you down to Cub Creek. The Van Zandt Dike – fairly insignificant amount of trails ties you into a larger area. A good idea. I agree with all of these people about the North Fork area. There is legal access. The Sumas area is not big enough. I don't know why you chose 3500 acres. If Walker Valley is 5000 acres, this population is bigger. There is room up there. I am personally not a fan of having motorcycles up on Red Mountain – the roads are steep, windy. Red Mountain a half hour jump over to Vedder. You can get there from the trailhead across the road. That whole chunk is private property. But we have permission to be there. Personally, I would rather you enlarge Sumas and don't do Red Mountain at all.

- **WHAT DID WE MISS?**

Mike – not enough thought of where people are going to park? 15 trucks and trailers, whether they are hauling horses or jeeps. Water access on the Middle Fork.

Kevin – I think on the missed part – Plan A – none of the north fork area included as a possibility. Mixed use on Red Mountain.

Dana – I don't think you missed very much. The amount of area for motorized vehicle. Red has difficulties – two different kinds of use – Sumas larger – could be made larger – can you make it larger? Larger is always better. Definitely the problem with motorized there is nothing out there. Do both of those on either side of the mountain. Two motorized areas make a lot of sense.

Ari – first thing that comes to mind for me – camping. Maybe that is for a later discussion. Many people who enjoy camping. Easy way to create revenue. One thing I would like to bring up. Recreational driving.

Mike - we don't have anything on these maps regarding shooting. Recreational shooting. We all know where at least one of those areas is – again maybe for a later discussion. It is a concern for everybody.

Bert – size of the motorized area.

Lance – North Fork included on Option A. Sumas Mountain is small especially for such a large area. Should be at least 5000 acres like Walker valley. Unless we do Option A with both. Don't see why we can't use north fork for hiking since there are already forest service trails up there.

Arlen – North Fork – could be some low impact recreation in there. Water access. Picnic area in the Middle Fork.

Dan – Baker to Bellingham – proposed trail from Baker to Bellingham – leaves off that trail – leaves off the Pacific Northwest Trail. Middle Fork Road 38, plan to be maintained as a two-wheel drive road. People drive 13 miles up just to go look at Mount Baker then drive back.

Becky – more the concept of a long trail through this landscape – my personal opinion – large area up the North Fork – is it wise to invest infrastructure with the limited access because of the winter time? I feel like Option B does capture the higher value parts of the North Fork.

Chris – connectivity through those areas. Middle Fork area – a lot of pristine secluded areas up there – untouched, unavailable.

Doug – drivable corridors appear to be missing with a destination site. Keep a network of roads open and serviceable for a variety of street legal vehicles. Enjoy a Sunday drive so to speak. The 38 Road – Middle Fork is in peril. Upper 8 miles is in peril and the only reason it is open is because it is state lands and some private – but the road has some environmental challenges and may not survive.

Walden – agree with all the comments on making a little larger area on Sumas Mountain for motorized. Reservations on Red Mountain for equestrian. Our group has spent a lot of time and now they don't ride

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because of the single track use. There needs to be separation on Red Mountain. I haven't heard anything mentioned about the Racehorse drainage. It has incredible roads for driving. Connectivity with the North Fork area. The top of the Slide Mountain is higher elevation. But the two areas combined provides larger area. No consideration for Racehorse that I can see. We didn't take a field trip there, but that was because of the logging. However, this area was totally left out. *(We will look into that – can we address it, if not why, if yes ok)*. Combine Option A and Option B, made more square footage on Sumas. One other thing – it would have been helpful to have some of the existing trails that are on the ground, like the Pacific Northwest Trail east trail so we can see the connectivity.

Eric – Middle Fork missed out entirely – Bellingham to Baker/Pacific Northwest Trail/big loops for 70-mile horse trail. Have some mountain bike loops on Clear Water Creek. Fishing on Clear Water – already trails. Water put-ins for paddlers and boaters. Understand the elk and marbled murrelet. A huge omission. Sumas needs to be larger for motorized. Mountain bikers and hikers have opportunities already, but we are starting from ground zero. Piecing together the conditional use with the rest of the mountain would be smart. Not really hell bent on the Van Zandt Dike, but have access on the south side. Connect into the south side. Rather use South Fork Park for hiking and equestrian – not mountain bike.

Glenn – south of Park Road – down to Anderson Mountain – keeping that into consideration – talking to Skagit County DNR. Trailhead right there - could be serviceable for there – both sides of Park Road. Pacific Northwest Trail wants to connect there. Bellingham to Baker trail would be helpful.

Bill – Sumas should be bigger.

- **IDEA PRESENTED YOU THINK WE COULD LET GO OF RIGHT NOW?**

Lance – let go of C – make the motorized area bigger.

Bert – go with what Lance said.

Ari – picnic and fishing area on Option B on north side of community forest. Something to omit. Maybe kept primitive – there will be trails, garbage. Haven't been there and don't know how to get there. Van Zandt Dike – haven't spent any time there – same goes for Sumas – a lot of hunting activity in those areas. If there is a lot of hunting – then having hikers might not be the best option.

Dan – dropping Option B. Van Zandt Dike – I would give up on that.

Kevin – good points on all three maps, good points that would work on another map. Don't know that the amount of effort for Van Zandt Dike would be worth it. A significant amount of hunting there. If I had to pick one in this plan that would be it.

Mike – take B and throw it out. I don't like Van Zandt – tree tunnel ride. Combine A and C. Throw out Van Zandt. If you aren't going to include Stuart Mountain – then throw out Mirror Lake.

Bill – drop Van Zandt Dike – seasonality of North Fork/Slide – potentially drop out, but not ready to do that yet.

Glenn – don't drop anything

Eric – trails are close to people's population or easy access. No trail network on Van Zandt Dike – it is pretty flat.

Walden – concur with everything that has been said. Do without Van Zandt. Finer points of A and C.

Doug – still looking at a smorgasbord here – history of the investment that the equestrians have been made in Red Mountain – which horse riding has made – of all of these areas – grandfathering in the north end of Red Mountain. Take exception of the notion that in one or more of these areas that we will see such a compelling adversarial position between hunting and recreation? *(No)*. I have great concerns about that.

The options to go hunting are eroding substantially – that sets in granite the highest and best use for recreation and I am prepared for that, but I would not support only hunting on Van Zandt Dike. *(One of the main uses of dispersed recreation is hunting. (A lot more land available for dispersed recreation).*

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Chris – Red Mountain – just horses. Van Zandt Dike – like connectivity. Struggled to drop anything.

Becky – don't have strong dropping points. Red – what is the equestrian use now? North Fork polygon – looks like most use is down. Not much use in the Van Zandt Dike.

Dan – don't drop anything.

Arlen – selfishly I would drop North Fork. Winter rec freaks me out. Not drop anything. Van Zandt Dike - good connectivity. However, not in love with it.

- **Staff Responses**

Camping – funding, staffing, maintenance, recreation immunity, fees (DNR can't charge) - many issues on camping, state parks has no interest in partnering with DNR to manage a DNR site. Camping is not part of long term recreation program.

Shooting – do not think there is a clear path on where we go with shooting. A lot of it is handled in the region. So what we are doing – a good opportunity to put a target range in, in the Capital Forest. Community comes out in opposition in that. Pilot issue. Funding – how does that rank in RCO? Probably not very high.

Working with communities that are facing these issues every month. Working with partner agencies on it.

Doug - RCO has federal funding to deal with shooting to put in shooting ranges. Whatcom County has no shooting ordinance zones. Does the County have the authority to impose an ordinance on state lands?

Public comment

- The disc golf community is disappointed that the plan doesn't identify any locations for disc golf. We had hoped that the plan would incorporate the disc golf community. We feel that disc golf can be incorporated into a working forest and are horribly disappointed that disc golf isn't in this plan. I have a board member who is an arborist for DNR and he feels the same way that working forest be incorporated into disc golf.
- Red Mountain and Sumas – four wheelers and jeeps, they mix pretty good, but none of that is single track. I don't know about building trails on Red Mountain. It is not legal to build trails yet? (*No*). If you limited the motorized access to Red it would destroy it. It is just too small to have jeeps, 4x4 – need to have two different things.
- Water access concerns – Chris did a great job of making sure all that was covered. Thank you.