



Recreation Planning Committee Meeting Notes

March 14, 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
Carole MacDonald	Lance Hansen	Wendy McDermott
Dana Johnson	Mark Harding	Buck Bouck - absent

DNR Staff

Glenn Glover	Kyle Galloway	Laurie Bergvall
Dana Leavitt	Chris Hankey	

Meeting Purpose: The committee learned about the Pacific Northwest Scenic Trail System, continued with brainstorming ideas, and engaged in an issue sorting exercise.

Welcome: Glenn Glover welcomed the group and did introductions, went over the agenda and reviewed the February meeting notes, which were approved with changes as noted on the 2/21/17 minutes.

Public Comment: Carpool opportunities from Bellingham? Yes – Becky will arrange. Representative from Whatcom Disc Golf.

Pacific Northwest Trail (PNT) Presentation – Jeff Kish: National Scenic Trail (NST) – National Trails System Act from 1968 designated the first two national scenic trails. PNT goes from Montana to the Washington coast. Starts in Glacier National Park. Goes through three national parks and seven national forests. Does not go through this planning area. PNT does not dictate the rules, they are a guest on the land. Pacific Northwest Trails Association is the official designated partner of the USFS and the PNT. There are 1200 miles of trail between the two terminuses. They do building, maintaining, outreach, and outdoor education with lots of partners. PNT allows hiking, equestrian along most of the trail, and mountain biking where allowed by local land managers. PNT designated by Congress in 2009. Local land managers determine allowable recreation uses. NST status does not prohibit motorized use on existing motorized routes. NST status brings additional resources to manage trails. NST status does not take away the decision authority of local land managers on the PNT in their area.

Committee Member Recreation Presentation:

Wendy McDermott representing the conservation community and American Rivers, discussed the Nooksack Wild and Scenic River proposal. It's a proposal to designate the Upper Nooksack River as a Wild and Scenic River System. Referring to the upper forks of the River. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 – free flowing condition...benefit of future generations...Protects and enhances outstandingly remarkable values, protects river's

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Washington State Department of Natural Resources

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free-flowing character and prohibits federally-licensed dams. Establishes a ¼ mile protected corridor on both sides of the river. Requires a Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP). Requires an Act of Congress. Builds partnerships among landowners, tribal nations, governments and the public. Encourages basin-wide management. State and local governments maintain land use and regulatory authority, except if someone wanted to build a dam. Why the Nooksack River? Many outstanding remarkable values, all 5 species of Pacific Salmon, steelhead and bulltrout; Bald eagles, elk, bear, mountain goats and more. World-class recreation. Wild and Scenic Rivers doesn't preclude recreation. A very flexible management tool. Three classifications: wild, scenic, or recreational.

Brainstorming Exercise

Multiple Use:

- Disc-golf

Multiple Use Trails:

- Multi-use works well in Eastern Washington – comes down to everyone knowing you are going to run into multiple users, wait for other users going up and down hill, awareness is a big thing
- Have multiple use in some of these areas, be needed in this landscape
- Good signage is important, right of way signage is important, especially on multiple use trails; on mountain bike trails, the signage is very good; signs are used on Blanchard and Walker Valley – used to differentiate the different uses, for example single track versus ATV
- Limited shared use, with a seasonal demarcation, horse/foot traffic/ higher elevation used in the winter time by snowmobiles
- Site lines and designs are very important with multiple use – proper layout and design are very important
- Bikes have to go downhill fast, must have spots that are wide enough to pass for horses for example – passing zones
- Climate considerations – multiple use trails will take more of a beating than single use trails
- Lower populations a lighter footprint on the trails
- Multiple use trails way out on the landscape will see less use by everybody, versus a trail located by Mirror Lake
- Dispersion is important from the trailhead to accommodate different types of groups
- Multiple uses can be accommodated by self-regulating the direction of use

ATV Trails:

- Need areas to go – 50-60 miles, not 10-20 miles
- People want hill climbs and mixed skill levels on the trails
- Needs to be loops so you don't have to turn around and come back
- Have some of each – for example on Sumas have a trail that goes along the length of the Mountain and have trails that go off from that trail – can be great for single track, too
- Need to have turn-outs, not directional trails
- Would a clover leaf work for ATV trails? – could create better flow and less obstruction
- Don't mind being on 4x4 trails – that expands the area of multiple use
- A gravel pit would be great, too – keeps people happy for an hour or two
- Directionality – skill levels – didn't want to put that on the trail – because of the liability

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- It would be a nice feature to have directionality – some are that way just because of their design – mindset is a lot different if you don't have to think about a head-on collision
- Motorized trails have a lot of impact on the trail-bed, what is the ethic on those trails
- Vision is user maintained for these trails built in Whatcom County, with outside sources, hopefully
- Trails with tree roots exposed, those trees are still alive; trails that have been around for 20 years, the impact has been extremely minimal
- DNR will only be able to build out a trail network if it comes with the funding that needs to be maintained. Volunteers need staffing and trails need to be maintained

Winter recreation:

- Motorized and non-motorized have their desire to be segregated from each other
- Want a snowmobiling route established because usfs access has been closed
- Interest in a new route for Nordic skiing and snowshoeing – ridge crest trail on slide mountain or racehorse creek basin for a loop route
- Is there designated areas for DNR lands
- Grooming for snowmobiling and snowshoeing – groom some and not others
- Elevation is important
- A lot of snowmobiling leads to back country snowboarding and skiing
- Most DNR land is too low to do snowmobiling – only a few places where you could develop these areas – Slide Mountain, Racehorse Creek basin
- Assess the area for three months of use and the cost effective approach to develop something
- Incursions into wilderness areas can be a problem for snowmobiling, but shouldn't be a problem in this planning area
- Our planning area is relatively low suitability for winter recreation – better areas to go in Whatcom County and other areas in Washington

Hunting and Fishing:

- Recreation plan shouldn't infringe on hunting and fishing
- Important issue for the tribes as well
- Access is important for the tribes; wear orange when recreating during hunting season
- Education will be important
- GMU map shows you where you can hunt

Camping:

- Hike, bike, or horse in
- Very small footprint; dispersed camping
- Pulling impossibly large trailers into the North Fork Road, seen the aftermath of this camping
- DNR need to be able to regulate the camping
- DNR doesn't charge for camping
- Difficult for DNR to regulate
- Use regulations for DNR managed lands
- Should we build into the plan campsites or developed campsites where they fit into the general recreation plan – understand the concern about the litter factor and turn-arounds for combination vehicles

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- North Fork – a mess after a weekend of road camping
- Camping at a destination point after riding 15-20 miles, then ride some more, then end up where you park;
- At Walker Valley camp in the parking lot
- Eastern WA have primitive cabins, warming huts and primitive pit toilets
- Live up a road half a mile long – find fines a really good deterrent - \$2000 fine for littering, signs that say regularly patrolled
- Enforcement component incorporated into the plan
- Degree to which we enforce will determine who successful we are with the plan and how successful we are with funding
- Specifically there is no authorized use on the landscapes in Whatcom County so there are no stewards on the landscape, but if we start getting authorized use on the landscape we will see decline on the unauthorized use

Issue Sorting Exercise

The committee broke into 4 groups to work on the document handed out by Dana. The groups worked on identifying the top two issues from each “bucket list.” The groups were divided as follows:

- Group I – Eric Brown, Becky Peace, Lance Hansen, Bill Lawrence, Glenn Gervais
- Group II – Doug Huddle, Walden Haines, Mike McGlenn, Chris Tretwold
- Group III – Mark Harding, Wendy McDermott, Carol McDonald, Kevin Vanderhorst
- Group IV – Ari Bezona, Arlen Bogaards, Bert Isaacson, Dana Johnson

The teams worked through the rest of the meeting and requested additional time at the April committee meeting to finish the issue sorting. It was agreed to complete the exercise in April and have a group discussion of the issues then.

End of Meeting:

Meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.