



Recreation Planning Committee Meeting Notes

January 10, 2018 | 6 to 9 p.m.

Deming Library, 5044 Mt. Baker Highway, Bellingham

In Attendance:

Committee Members

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

DNR Staff

Dana Leavitt	Chris Hankey	Rick Foster
Jean Fike	Hyden McKown	Kyle Galloway
Glenn Glover		

Meeting Purpose: Present and review planning concepts and have follow-up talks on the initial option maps.

Welcome: Glenn Glover reviewed the agenda with the committee and had DNR staff introductions. The October meeting notes were reviewed with no objections and accepted.

Planning Update: Glenn presented information to the committee on external planning issues directly related to the planning effort.

- DNR recreation is controlled by Whatcom County ordinances on trails, and trailheads. Permitted uses include trailheads, parking areas and trails.
- Excluded uses of note – off road vehicle parks, we did not think this would apply to what we are planning. We did however, miss some information of importance – trails are only defined as non-motorized.
- DNR has met with Whatcom County Planning development to get clarification. By definition, a motorized trail is an off road vehicle park. Therefore our planning work is constrained by that ordinance.
- We have asked Whatcom County planning and development what the options are. We have suggested an ordinance code amendment. We have asked for the language of the ordinance to be amended to allow for motorized recreation.

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- The most recent version of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan identifies discusses issues related to motorized recreation in the county; the county has a desire to find a way to provide for motorized recreation between DNR and Forest service efforts.
- The DNR has a trust mandate, as well as a direction by the Legislature to consider multiple use. This allows DNR to review and incorporate recreation where it can be done in an environmentally sustainable way and accommodating for social factors, noise, etc.
- The proposed change to the zoning ordinance suggests that motorized recreation be allowed under the conditional uses in the Commercial Forestry zoning district; the county would have tight control over the process.
- Without this change, we cannot develop motorized recreation in Whatcom County.

Glenn invited questions from the advisory committee:

Wendy McDermott - has the county provided a timeline for their review of your proposal?

Glenn - The County compiles amendment requests at the end of the year and will possibly review them in February.

Mike McGlenn – is public comment allowed at those meetings?

Glenn- Yes, it will be on the people of Whatcom County to determine that outcome.

Public Comment: There were approximately 50 members of the public at the meeting. Twenty-three people provided comments. The comments are attached as a separate document to the notes.

Response to Options A, B, & C: Dana spent several minutes providing feedback on comments from the presentation of the initial options last October.

- The conditional use areas are a new part of recreation planning.
- Trails, moto and non-moto would be determined exactly where there location is further down the road. This plan does not get down to that level of detail.
- Daniel Probst emailed everyone today. There are lot of constraints on connectivity between the North and Middle Fork areas. We have some tribal considerations. And a variety of other considerations, such as the 38 road and stability. Connectivity is a very ambitious objective.
- Secondary Sumas access may be constrained by private property.
- Forest Roads are maintained logging roads. 4x4 is accessible for those roads, but the DNR cannot maintain and upgrade those roads to accommodate a sedan. That is not something the Region can do.
- Disc Golf – This would be better for rural or urban environment. You have to clear land to make fairways. There would be damage to the landscapes and the trees. Half acre to an acre for one hole. Seems out of sync with what we are trying to do with the rec plan at this time.
- We are not proposing any designated campgrounds as discussed last October by DNR staff.
- Winter Use – we would go back to the objectives and strategies and see where it fits. It will be addressed, but not included in the concept map.

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Presentation of Concepts: Dana Leavitt presented Concepts D & E to the planning committee. Key points included:

CONCEPT D

- ONE MOTORIZED ZONE: Sumas
 - Sumas (~8.1 sm/5200 ac ±)
 - Single track and double track
 - Access from Hwy 542 onto DNR forest road which crosses one private property as it winds its way up into the unit
 - Need to clarify how access will work for recreation usage
 - Trailhead located next to forest road inside recreation area, less than 1 mile from highway
- ONE NON-MOTORIZED ZONE: Red Mountain
 - Red Mountain (~3.9 sm/2500 ac±)
 - Access from Silver Lake Road, primary at southeast section of the unit onto DNR forest road;
 - 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
 - Trail connector to private trails on the west side of the unit
- TWO CONDITIONAL USE ZONES: North Fork & Mirror Lake
 - North Fork unit (~3.5 sm/2220 ac. ±)
 - Overlays with Marbled Murrelet conservation zone
 - Access from forest road connected to North Fork Road
 - Only becomes viable if non-motorized recreation trails are allowed in conservation zones or the area is not designated as a conservation zone
 - This area avoids the critical habitat in the marbled Murrelet polygon
 - Trailhead would be identified at the time the area becomes viable for recreation
 - Mirror Lake (~3.9 sm/2500 ac. ±)
 - No feasible location from Park Road for access, so Mirror Lake has been changed to a conditional use
 - Conditional on one of two actions taking place:
 1. Access and trailhead defined as part of recreation zone
 2. Trail access from N. Lake Whatcom Park trails are sufficient to connect this recreation zone to allow development of a trail system

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- 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 adjacent to private property and along Highway 9
- Trail connector to N. Lake Whatcom Park on the north end of the area; align with park trails master plan
- **SECONDARY USES:**
 - Water access point off Highway 542 near Maple Falls (may end up happening outside of this process, need to confirm status and determine how to make a part of the plan)
 - Launch site/scenic overlook for paragliding and hang gliding in the southern section of Red Mountain

CONCEPT E

- **TWO MOTORIZED ZONES:**
 - Sumas Mountain (~8.1 sm/5200 ac ±)
 - Access from DNR forest road at Highway 452 near the Beer place
 - 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
 - Recreation zone covers central and northern portion of Sumas
 - 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, 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
- **TWO NON-MOTORIZED ZONES: Mirror Lake & North Fork**
 - 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 that align with park trails master plan
 - North Fork (~8.2 sm/5240 ac.±)
 - North Fork Road and forest road provide full access into the North Fork unit

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- 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
- SECONDARY USES:
 - Picnic/Fishing location in the North Fork
 - Picnic/Scenic point location in Stewart Mountain

Initial comments and questions:

Dana Johnson – Concept E, Red Mtn. We had talked about shared use between horses and motorized. Is that concept off the table or still up for discussion? Still up for discussion.

Eric Brown – Mr. McFarland, is there access to Canyon Lake? No. Brown – so that would be the only access in.

Walden Haines– Slide mountain non-moto trailhead. Looks like the trailhead is up the mainline. Why is there not more real estate at lower elevation so we can utilize more of that landscape year round? *Dana - Marbled murrelet habitat.*

Mike McGlenn - If you put a trailhead at 4,000 feet you cut off two months of the season. It would make sense at a lower elevation.

Wendy McDermitt – Sorry to the moto community that the county ordinance does not allow for moto rec. AWA still supports the water access site on all concepts for the small DNR zone that connects to the 542.

Ari Bezona – There are ways of closing off illegal motorized trails. Might take a while to build respect, but Walker Valley is a good model. It works there.

Lance Hansen – None of your concepts include the PNT trail from here to Montana or the Bellingham to Mt Baker trail. I think we need to include those. *Dana - We can address that in the future. We need multi agency cooperation to determine those routes, which we are still working on. Doesn't make sense to include those at this point. The Bellingham to Mt Baker Ultra Run may require a special use permit.*

Eric Brown - Water access on 542 should be on both plans.

Glenn Gervais – Connect Mirror Lake and Stewart Mountain.

Mike McGlenn – Dan Probst’s idea of the through trail aligns with BCH priorities. By opening the 38 road, we can take some load off the Schreiber’s Meadow trailhead and put it on this side of the mountain.

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Eric Brown - The road simply won't be converted to a trail. The whole Mid Fork is being taken out of consideration because of the marbled murrelet.

Mike McGlenn – That's all second or third cut, not old growth. Murrelet is an Old Growth bird.

Ari Bezona – The residential areas in questions are around Kendall, but if you go up the DNR access point off the 542, there aren't many houses up there. I support a trailhead in the unit. That North segment on Sumas may need to be removed from consideration.

Wendy McDermott – I would like to think we could consider the trail proposed by Dan Probst. Maybe allow for the concept in future planning.

Committee responses to questions

What is the single best idea?

Mark Harding - Best Idea? Connect the two areas on Whatcom Lake. The more connection, the better

Glenn Gervais – I agree.

Shawn Lucke – Concept D. recognizes long term launch area.

Chris Tretwold– Option D. Water access that I'm interested in. Stewart Mountain/Mirror Lake connectivity would be good.

Wendy McDermott – Option D, water access, Maple Falls. Stewart Mountain Connector.

Arlen Bogaards – I like the connectivity with the county park. So Stewart and Mirror Lake would be a good chunk of park land.

Walden Haines – I support Concept D for the connectivity mentioned. Slide Mountain has some low land conditional use. Non-moto on Red mountain would probably be the safest for DNR.

Bert Isaacson – Agree with Walden.

Mike McGlenn – Concept D with additions. Red/Sumas issue. Sumas is too small. Don't see the need to put motorized on Red Mountain - doesn't fit. Concept E, the Stewart Mountain is good. The Canyon Lake fish site would be great, as would Road 38.

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Eric Brown – Connectivity with Whatcom County parks has a lot of potential. Option D. I would like to see if North fork had something available more than 2 months out of the year.

Ari Bezona – Moto perspective, Concept E, with two moto rec areas, ideally mostly 4x4s, quads, UTVs on Sumas, with some dispersed single track. Red has great single track and I'd like to keep that. And there are others in my group who would agree with me.

Dana Johnson – Agree with Ari. Horse and moto have worked together well for many years.

Bill Lawrence – Appreciate the connectivity between D and E.

Kevin Vanderhorst – There was discussion about sharing Red mountain between moto and non-moto. Stewart Mountain should be included in D and Red should be mixed use.

Lance Hansen – Agree with Ari. But there should be more non – moto access on Stewart.

What are the top two trail concepts?

Lance Hansen– East Lake Whatcom Area. Sumas.

Kevin Vanderhorst - Sumas. Lake Whatcom area

Bill Lawrence – Agree with Kevin.

Dana Johnson – Lower N Fork is the best trail system out there. Sumas.

Ari Bezona – Lake Whatcom connectivity. Stewart to Mirror Lake. Sumas and Red Mountain Trails.

Eric Brown – Concept D, North Fork for Mountain Bike. Equestrian on Red and shared use with moto out there. Shared use, shared respect. Middle Fork Connector.

Mike McGlenn – Mid Fork Connector. Connector at Stewart, tying in to county parks, and tying in to Mirror Lake. Whole East side of the lake is wonderful. Combine agency assets for trails and parking. Y Road tree farm would be great for parking. But DNR, County parks, and this user group would have to make Weyerhaeuser buy off on the idea.

Bert Isaacson – with Kevin.

Walden Haines – Mixed use on Red would be good. Agree with Mike.

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Arlen Bogaards – Lower North Fork concept. Hesitant with murrelet with recreation hanging in the balance. Stewart Mtn, Lake Whatcom is a great trail concept.

Wendy McDermott– Elevation of N Fork doesn't get a lot of support. Connectivity opportunity with Canyon Lake? *Dana Leavitt - No, that's being kept as primitive environment.*

Chris Tretwold – Stewart. Red Mountain on Concept D.

Shawn Lucke – Stewart and Red Mountain Concept D.

Glenn Gervais – Stewart. N Fork has existing trails. I think those should be grandfathered in to the murrelet plan.

Mark Harding – Stewart and full connectivity for Lake Whatcom.

What are the top two facilities?

Mark Harding – Work with county parks and pool resources.

Glenn Gervais – Additional facility off Y road.

Shawn Lucke – Red would be great for us and recreational drivers on roads.

Chris Tretwold - Water access off 542. Trailhead off Stewart - Y Road.

Wendy McDermott – Same as Chris.

Arlen Bogaards – Agree with Chris and Wendy.

Walden Haines – Stewart Mountain trailhead and Forest Road 38.

Bert Isaacson – With Wendy and Arlen.

Mike McGlenn – Stewart Mountain parking lot. Forest Road 38 road open.

Eric Brown – Stewart. Water access off 542. Parking in general, limits issues with neighbors. Put trailheads in far enough to mitigate issues with neighbors.

Ari Bezona – Camping. Campground on N side of Red mountain would be good. Trailhead on Sumas. Big enough for Jeeps and trailers and trucks. Access point on Red Mtn, could be smaller for dirt bikes.

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Dana Johnson – Stewart and Whatcom county parks. Trailheads away from houses. Keep them in DNR landscapes off main roads.

Bill Lawrence – Water access. Parking has to be far enough in that it doesn't bother people. Will have push back if we flatten the Y-road tree farm.

Kevin Vanderhorst – Sumas Mountain parking. Water access.

Lance Hansen – Agree with Dana.

What is the top priority to let go of right now?

Lance Hansen – Higher up on North Fork due to elevation.

Kevin Vanderhorst – None of it.

Bill Lawrence – Agree, all needs to be considered.

Dana Johnson – North Fork due to elevation. But a lower area would be good with the top area.

Ari Bezona – Nothing.

Eric Brown – Due to the murrelet, Mid Fork is off the table. So nothing else at this point.

Mike McGlenn – Nothing. I like D with the two additions I made.

Bert Isaacson – Nothing, areas aren't big enough to start with.

Walden Haines– Nothing, it is paired down enough.

Arlen Bogaards – I'm concerned with motorized use on north Red. Anything that has conditional use. Put it all on the plan. Depends on the murrelet strategy.

Wendy McDermott – Blend D and E. Red mountain motorized use seems problematic. County code is a problem, until that is solved this plan won't get to SEPA because it will be litigated. And the murrelet strategy needs to be figured out.

Chris Tretwold – agree with Wendy.

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Shawn Lucke – We fly Black Mountain, and the views are worth the work for three months of access.

Glenn Gervais – Nothing. High altitude of North Fork opens opportunities for winter recreation.

Mark Harding – We should prioritize what we develop so that we get something accomplished.

Future Meetings: The schedule for committee meetings includes:

- February 13
- March 13
- April 10

No date has been set for the next community meeting. It will be a two-night event, with one meeting in Bellingham and one meeting out in the county near the planning area.

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