



Recreation Planning Committee Meeting Notes

April 11, 2017 | 6 to 9 p.m.

Deming Library, 5044 Mt. Baker Highway, Deming

In Attendance:

Committee Members

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

DNR Staff

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

Meeting Purpose: The committee continued with brainstorming ideas, and completed the issue sorting exercise.

Welcome: Dana Leavitt welcomed the group and did introductions, went over the agenda and reviewed the March meeting notes, which were approved.

Public Comment: Dan Probst advocated for DNR to find a way to accommodate motorized recreation in Whatcom County. Alexis Blue advocated for ADA accessible camping opportunities.

Brainstorming Exercise

Trail Running: Mark Harding prepared notes which he shared with the committee:

- Connectivity - to: communities, business/breweries/restaurants etc., public transportation, other trail systems
- Opportunities for short (5 miles) and long (50 miles) trail experiences
- Runners primarily desire single track dirt trails - only 18" width needed
- A mix of trails that are rolling and fast, and steep and technical
- Trails that lead to natural view points
- Trails that circumnavigate an area utilizing its best features
- Dead end trails are not preferred
- Typically run socially sometimes in groups of up to 20, therefore trailhead parking is useful
- Good maps of the area will encourage greater use by locals and those outside the area
- Signage - Kiosks at trailheads and major trail intersections, with trail system map; mountain bike community did a good job on Galbraith
- Trail racing events are becoming increasingly popular, trailhead staging area would be useful in certain areas
- No problem is sharing trails provided that common trail etiquette is observed - Galbraith signs
- Need a variety of technicality of trails to cater for a variety of experience and skill levels; interurban in Bellingham is a trail to some runners whereas to others more technical terrain is desired
- Multi-season use - trail runners aren't put off by weather, in fact bad weather attracts runners

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Nature Observation:

- We should recognize it as a use that takes place and accommodate it; but we may not need to plan for it; the Native Plant Society (in Whatcom County area) are willing to do plant inventories in sensitive areas; they could be a valuable ally going forward
- We should address it and put in the plan; they can enjoy nature observation on our hiking trails

Dispersed Recreation:

- Dan gave a brief description of this type of recreation - non-mechanized type of use on the landscape, no new roads, stay on existing roads to access areas, either hiking or horse riding and mountain biking on existing roads only; no facilities or camp sites
- Doesn't DNR already accommodating those folks? I believe they have set up NAPs and NRCAs which serve that purpose
- Historical sites in the logging industry itself are important to the public; many people don't know what the DNR does; we could route people toward those historical sites and the DNR should sell itself to them
- Agreed, the DNR should use that as an opportunity to sell its mission to the public
- How would we go about cataloging where mushroom hunters should go? Or where anyone searching for plants should go?
- Right now I am allowed to hike anywhere on DNR land, so how would this change? This would be a dispersed recreation area with-in a working forest

Chris Hankey told the committee he has received many calls from hunters concerned there will be trails everywhere after this planning process.

Committee Member's User Group Brainstorming –

- Ari Bezona met with the Mt. Baker Motorcycle Club and reported that it was a new idea to them to take ownership over a riding area and maintain it.
- There was some discussion around access through private roads to DNR-managed lands and that the Forest Service is preparing to close some of their forest roads because they cannot afford to maintain them and that's a concern committee members have in regards to DNR-managed lands. For DNR, capital funds would have to be set aside to ensure recreational access is available in the future.

Other ideas and comments from user groups and committee members included:

- Parking, parking and more parking
- The 38 road is a shared road between the DNR and the FS; the road is falling apart
- Shuttle access for mountain bikers
- There is concern about where this process is going to go; folks would love to have an area but they don't know where they are going, so not many people are divulging information
- ATV users need trail mileage and different difficulty levels; trails for the pro level and the family beginner levels
- Does the DNR pay a flat fee for road work? How does that work? Let's consider an additional fee for those who want to use the roads to be spent on road maintenance. There are maintenance funds that

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we pay into, but we can also directly work on the road. We will get back to you about that, or it may be possible to bring our region engineer to a meeting for a better explanation

- The off-road vehicle community already has a tax for that in the form of ORV tabs, and in Whatcom County we have nothing; so that will be a tough sell to this community
- The side-by-side community is growing. Many folks do not buy ORV tabs in this state because Washington does not accommodate the sport; if we can guarantee these funds are spent on the sport, we may be able to bring them back to investing in the sport in Washington
- The hiking community wants view points, and loops; like all of us, we want 50 miles of trail; they may want to get away from the crowds and the motorized community
- Out and back trails to different points along the rivers are ideal for access for the boating community, and could be of value to the hiking community as well

Issue Sorting Exercise

The committee broke back into 4 groups to work on the issue sorting started in March. The groups worked on identifying the top two issues from each “bucket list.” For this evening, the groups included:

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

After the groups came back together, Dana led the committee through a review of the top issues from each bucket list:

- **Developed Trails and Facilities**

Grp 1 - Prefer designated use and access. Access is important across the board.

Grp 2 – Shared use is important. Motorized users need a place to ride. Separation of users by unique access. Consider speeds on trails. Parking.

Grp 3 – Access and parking. Loop trails are important. Some separation of use is important.

Grp 4 – Fast vs slow trail users, parking and trail length are important.

There was also a discussion on how the committee and DNR could use the data from the comments. Mark Harding suggested creating a graph to show how the public comments were grouped and ranked. Other members noted the information would be helpful and Dana will follow up with Mark.

- **Dispersed Recreation**

Grp 1 – We think we could have shared trails. Viewpoints, vistas, well designed trail networks are important. Look at all user groups equally, don’t discriminate. Groups that are engaged and have ownership of their areas will take care of it and have protection of that area.

Grp 2 – Keep the beauty and serenity. Separate shooting. Segregate at your own will.

Grp 3 – Separation of uses. Educate the public about Working Forests and how recreation fits into the DNR’s mission.

BAKER TO BELLINGHAM RECREATION PLAN

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

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Grp 4 – Shooting and safety. Shared trails and user specific trails.

- **Economics and Quality of Life**

Grp 1 – tourism, events, recreation industry, quality of life that attracts employers and employees.

Grp 2 – 3 million Canadians live across the border. We can bring in outside money to the county.

Grp 3 – Canadians do come down to recreate here. We should be encouraging people to stay here and recreate. Build it and they will come.

Grp 4 – Leases and events – opportunities. Bringing in outside recreation dollars. Rec shops could be hubs for advertising DNR trail maps. Through education you get enforcement.

- **Education and Enforcement**

Grp 1 - Safety, trash, lack of existing enforcement.

Grp 2 – Educate the public about what the DNR does. Real fines for real crimes. Signs, QR codes, Maps are more and more important as less knowledgeable people wander around in the woods. Their enforcement officer is only paid if they get a grant every two years. If there is no grant, they don't get an education officer.

Grp 3 – Education is more in our purview than enforcement. We can educate fellow user groups. We need to educate other groups, and can educate the public about what the DNR does.

We volunteer hours for the education and enforcement officer. We are not enforcement. But we talk with folks and those volunteer hours help the DNR go after grants to help fund the education and enforcement officers.

Many people are unaware of the rules and regulations on DNR lands. More education leads to less of a need for enforcement.

Grp 4 - Better signage, info and maps. Rec use and user group activity minimizes nefarious activity.

- **Hunting and Fishing**

Grp 1 – Access. Closures during hunting season.

Grp 2 – Safety. Separate noise and rounds from shooting. Educate public to wear orange.

Grp 3 – Safety and education. Tell people when hunting season is. Let folks know where they are and are not allowed to hunt. Non-hunters should know when the seasons are, and be visible. Wear appropriate clothing. Gates may be closed, but that doesn't mean the area is closed to hunting. Hunters need to get out and walk.

Grp 4 – Gates and Access.

- **Natural Resources**

Grp 4 – Wildlife and water quality.

Grp 3 – Concern for the general habitat and environment. What will be impacted? How are we developing a plan to mitigate that?

Grp 2 – Habitat vs use and type of use.

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Grp 1 – Sustainability. Preserving trees, habitat protection. Water quality, wetlands and riparian zones.

- **Other**

Grp 4 – Work with organizations and clubs for maintenance and clubs. Volunteerism promotes ownership of the landscape.

Grp 3 – Make use of the volunteers that want to get out there and do something.

Grp 2 – Maintenance dollars should be in the plan. We need capital funding to build the trails, but we need to include maintenance funds in the original plan.

Grp 1 – Utilizing and harvesting the energy of the volunteers.

- **Processes and Agency Management**

Grp 2 – Recreation is one big money pot. The DNR needs money to make recreation work on DNR land. Whether it comes from an 8,000 acre harvest or from the legislature, we need funding. It is a 22 billion dollar industry and we are treated poorly.

Grp 3 – Learning from other groups. Learning from British Columbia, what’s working for some areas and not at others?

Grp 4 – Coordinate with adjacent landowners. Using volunteers to leverage funding.

Grp 1 – Balance amongst all the users groups. Access.

- **Access**

Grp 4 – Less gates and more access.

Grp 1 – Consider recreation use and how it affects neighbors and adjacent landowners.

Grp 2 – Parking, access, and traffic in residential areas.

Grp 3 – Open up somebody else’s gate first.

- **Water Recreation**

Grp 1 – Access to water, which will open up access to fishing.

Grp 2 – Access to views, the water, launches, and parking.

Grp 3 – Access, ingress and egress.

Grp 4 – Access to free flowing water, water without damns.

End of Meeting:

Meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.