

Preferred Recreation Recommendations Stemilt-Squilchuck Recreation Plan March 2018

Below are the recommended recreation ideas and strategies that package together the various recreation concepts compiled through Recreation Committee meetings and from previous planning documents including the Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation and Access Plan. This alternative is based on feedback from the Stemilt Partnership and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in response to the draft concepts developed by the Recreation Planning Committee to show the variety of ideas and opportunities that could be considered in the Recreation Plan. The preferred alternative seeks to balance enhancing recreation opportunities with reducing impacts to the natural and ecological processes for water and wildlife within the basin. This alternative is open for discussion and input from the Recreation Committee, land managers or owners, the Stemilt Partnership, and the community. Any final recommendations need to be approved by the Stemilt Partnership and land manager or owner of the property.

Recommendations Common to All Zones

Roads:

- Green dot roads:
 - Public motorized access is provided on green-dot roads. The green dot road system within the basin (Orr Creek, Lily Lake, Upper Basin Loop Road, Schaller Road, and Pole Flats Road) contains 16.6 miles of road that are open to all motorized (this total does not include Jumpoff Road or Naneum Ridge Road). Maintain public access by addressing maintenance needs on green dot road system.
 - There should be no net gain in green dot road mileage resulting from any proposed changes to the green dot road system.
 - Green dot road proposals will be brought before the state agencies at the green dot road annual meeting, and go through a public process prior to implementation.
 - Consider a seasonal closure of the green dot roads accessed from the Stemilt Loop Road to protect road surfaces during spring melt-off, prevent illegal mudding, and prevent wheeled vehicles from driving on groomed snowmobile trails. The seasonal closure would begin when snow starts to accumulate and end on fishing opener in April or earlier in dry years.
- Non-green dot roads:
 - Non-green dot roads are currently closed to public vehicle access. Implement effective vehicle closures on these roads such as gates, tank traps, or natural obstacles. The current high density of non-legal roads in the basin affects wildlife and resources, and is not compliant with the green dot system.
 - The Stemilt Partnership Roads Committee provides a stakeholder panel to review proposals for closing and placing barriers on non-green dot roads to ensure all access needs, such as private property, irrigation district infrastructure, forestry, etc. can still be met. The Roads Committee also reviews green dot road proposals such as seasonal

closures and re-routes. All closures will be vetted by the Roads Committee prior to installation.

- A comprehensive road inventory and analysis should be completed to evaluate Stemilt Basin roads for the following criteria: resource protection, protection of water user easements, public safety, and importance for recreation and management access.
- Create signs at strategic access points, trailheads, campgrounds, gates, and barriers that describe the green dot road system and allowed uses.

Camping, Day-Use, Trails:

- All improved campsites would include a buffer zone to protect shorelines and meadows.
- Dispersed camping opportunities that are in compliance with the green dot road regulations will remain available along the Upper Basin Loop Road.
- Engage in collaborative effort between land management agencies to seek additional funding for long-term maintenance of any camping/trailhead facilities before they are installed.
- Consider seasonal closures of new and existing trails/routes to protect wildlife, particularly during elk calving season. Seasonal closure dates and locations will be based on input from WDFW wildlife biologists, and would follow the elk calving season of spring-early summer.
- WDFW recommends completion of a habitat and road inventory and assessment to determine appropriate trail locations to minimize impacts to natural resources. WDFW recommends limiting new trail development to Zone 1.
- Consider new trail development within existing open road buffers, to minimize impact of new trail development on wildlife. This could allow for a north/south trail as noted in the Nanuem Plan, while minimizing fragmentation of habitat and impacts to wildlife.

Education and Enforcement:

- Promote a more active education and enforcement presence, especially along the Upper Basin Loop Road in Zone 1. Coordinate across agencies to provide consistent enforcement of green dot road regulations and to share the burden of law enforcement presence. Patrol high use areas to enforce green dot road regulations, shooting restrictions, illegal dumping, and promote resource protection and public safety.
 - Focus a collaborative effort between WDFW and Chelan County Sherrifs Office to identify a stragety to meet enforcement needs in the basin.

Noxious Weeds:

- Agencies should take appropriate action to address weed control in high use recreation areas, roadsides, and trailheads, and other areas that will be prone to disturbance under the proposed uses in the recommendations.

Implementation and Maintenance:

- All recommendations will undergo appropriate environmental review and permitting prior to implementation.
- Long term funding and maintenance strategies will be in place prior to implementation.

Zone 1

Use in Zone 1 is concentrated along the green dot road system comprising the Upper Basin Loop Road and Orr Creek Road and is primarily motorized access-based.

Zone 1: Summer Preferred Alternative**Roads:**

- Grade, gravel, and maintain the green dot roads to high use recreation sites such as Clear Lake in good condition so passenger vehicles can access these sites. Coordinate between agencies, landowners, and irrigation districts to assess options for road maintenance cost-shares.
- Grade and gravel sections of the rest of the Upper Basin Loop Road and other green dot roads most needing improvements. The goal for these roads will be to at a minimum maintain access for vehicles with four wheel drive.
- Open a green dot 'connector' road between Upper Wheeler Road and Orr Creek Road in Section 20, to complete a legal motorized access route from Forest Ridge to the green dot road system. This connector would be open to public access, and may be subject to seasonal closures for wildlife and road surface protection. Reduction of green dot road mileage elsewhere in the basin would be required to mitigate the increased mileage and meet the 'no net gain' green dot road objective.

Camping, Day-Use, and Trails:

- For camping and day-use improvements, existing impacted areas will be used; the focus will be on accommodating existing use at peak to average times and reducing spread of impacts.

Lily Lake (Section 22):

- While interest in improvements to recreational facilities at Lily Lake has been expressed in prior planning efforts, no development is proposed for Lily Lake through this planning effort as the transfer of ownership of Sections 16 and 22 is pending at the time of this document.
- Options for addressing current recreational impacts in a restorative manner will be assessed.
- Assess options for designating non-motorized trails near Lily Lake. Improve the existing trail around Lily Lake for walking and hiking use.

Clear Lake (Section 23):

- Formalize camping sites within the currently used area for recreation use. Delineate sites by placing natural edges around the sites. Ensure all campsites have an appropriate fire ring to contain existing campfires and a picnic table. 5-8 walk-in campsites are possible within the current footprint. Allow room to create additional sites in the future if needed.
- Formalize and improve a parking area and trailhead for day-use including fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, and equestrian use on designated routes. The trailhead should include a vault toilet, trash container, and interpretive and regulatory signs sharing information on rules, expected behaviors, natural and cultural resource information. 15-20 parking spots.
- Assess options for designating non-motorized trails near Clear Lake. Trails could be conversion of non-green dot roads to trails or occur within road buffers of existing open roads. Improve the existing trail around Clear Lake for non-motorized walking and hiking use.

Upper Wheeler Reservoir Access (Section 29):

Phase I:

- Improve the parking area and trailhead near the existing gate for day-use including fly-fishing, hunting, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The trailhead should include a sign identifying rules and regulations. 5-7 parking spots. Mountain biking on Wenatchee Heights Reclamation District property would not be allowed.
- Extend green dot road designation to include improved parking area. Reduce green dot road mileage elsewhere to accommodate this change.
- Provide additional parking at road junction Orr Creek/Upper Basin Loop Road. 5-7 parking spots.
- Continue to allow dispersed camping at the road junction of Orr Creek/Upper Basin Loop Road, within green dot regulations.

Phase II:

- Assess the need for a vault or pit toilet for day use at the improved parking for Upper Wheeler Reservoir access.

Steffen's Meadow (Section 28):

Phase I:

- Formalize camping at Steffen's Pond/Meadow to reduce spread of impacts and contain off-road motor vehicle use. Delineate some of the high-use sites by placing natural edges around the sites and restoring vegetation. The campsites will include fire rings to contain existing campfires. 2-3 campsites with vehicle access.
- Formalize a parking area and trailhead for day-use including fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, and wildlife viewing. The trailhead should include educational and interpretive signage to identify rules and regulations and inform the public of the importance of natural resource conservation. 5-8 parking spots.
- Formalize and designate non-motorized trails near Steffen's Meadow. Some of these trails could be conversion of non-green dot roads to trails or formalizing user-created trails. Dispersed campsites will remain available in the meadow, with walk-in access.

Phase II:

- Develop a vault toilet for day and camping use. This would be phased in to align with the improvements to the green dot road system.

All Other Dispersed Sites along Orr Creek/Stemilt Road Loop:

Phase I:

- Maintain all existing dispersed sites that are off the primary Stemilt/Orr loop road that are in compliance with the green dot motorized use rule (within 100' of green dot road). Close or convert to walk-in only all other dispersed sites that are more than a 100' off the road. Restore impacted areas if any dispersed campsites are closed.
- Monitor use and impacts at these sites and evaluate use levels to see if additional facilities and vault toilets are needed.

Phase II:

- Provide facilities at the dispersed campsites including delineating sites, fire rings, and picnic tables, and toilets as needed based on monitoring results.

Other Trails:

- Create a trailhead/ parking area at base of Upper Wheeler Road (Section 10); 5 parking spots. Trailhead should include a sign identifying rules and regulations.
- Continue to assess non green dot roads for conversion to non-motorized trails.
- Assess opportunities to create sustainable new trails along the existing green dot road corridor buffer. Evaluate trail proposals for potential impacts to water and wildlife.

Target Shooting

Phase I:

- Designate no target shooting zones around high areas for day-use and camping, following WDFW Public Conduct Rules. Post signs to help achieve compliance with this rule.

Phase II:

- Designate area(s) for target shooting if appropriate sites are found. Evaluate the potential to create a target shooting area near old quarry (Section 27). This site contains steep sides and steep back hill for bullet containment. Consider time and resources needed for cleanup of debris from homemade targets and shells, collaborate amongst agencies to address this need if establishing an intentional shooting area.

Zone 1- Winter

Sno-Park:

- Maintain the existing two sno-parks in Sections 22 (Lily Lake) and 23 (Clear Lake) for snowmobile use.
- Create a sno-park at the base of Upper Wheeler Road with a seasonal toilet and 5 parking spaces for non-motorized winter snow sports (snowshoe, backcountry ski, cross-country ski). Alternative non-motorized parking could be located at Orr Creek Road.

- As part of the seasonal green dot road closure proposal, close gates at snoparks when snow falls to prevent wheeled vehicles from driving on groomed snowmobile trails.

Trails:

- Maintain existing snowmobile trail system.
- Designate a non-motorized winter use area per the Naneum plan concept (including the Lake Clara/WDFW Section 23 identified in the Naneum Plan). The boundary of this area is agreed upon between representatives of both winter motorized and non-motorized users. The non-motorized winter use area will be accessible from Squilchuck State Park, Mission Ridge Ski Area, and Section 16.
- Designate a snowmobile route link on the green dot road through the winter non-motorized area to allow Forest Ridge residents authorized to use the Noyd Easement to access the groomed snowmobile system. Create an annual permit system for residents of Forest Ridge that includes an educational component on the routes available for motorized use and stewardship of the area; users of this snowmobile link will agree to stay on the designated route through the non-motorized area.

Zone 2

Use in Zone 2 is concentrated around Squilchuck State Park and Mission Ridge expansion area, and is primarily non-motorized.

Zone 2- Summer

Trails

- Mission Ridge plans to implement non-motorized multi-use trails linking the Mission Ridge expansion area with Squilchuck State Park and Scout-A-Vista. Trail connectors will be primarily located in the NW corner of Section 19, and include connections with Scout-A-Vista property and Squilchuck State Park.
- Consider a seasonal closure of trails in this area to protect wildlife, particularly during elk calving season.
- Noyd Road Easement currently does and will continue to provide designated motorized vehicle access route for authorized Forest Ridge residents to access Upper Wheeler Road. Consider an annual permit issued for residents that includes educational material and acknowledgment of the rules and regulations of the area. A seasonal closure may also be implemented as needed to protect road conditions, wildlife, and water.
- Consider strategic fuel breaks and wildfire/fuels reduction planning with trail development.

Trailheads and Signage

- Create a trailhead at the main Mission Ridge parking lot with signage, vault toilet, and garbage collection for hikers going into Stemilt and to Lake Clara. This trailhead will be for non-motorized access into Stemilt and Lake Clara.
- Develop educational signage to inform visitors about the risk of fires, ways to prevent forest fires, and seasonal trail closures to protect wildlife and/or the trails at Squilchuck State Park and nearby trails.
- Create signage for clarification of trail use types. Use signage to delineate uses for different trails (hiker, equestrian, mountain bike).

Camping

- Provide additional signage on boundaries of Squilchuck State Park to alleviate private property issues (people camping on private property).
- Consider expanding camping opportunities in Squilchuck State Park (and possibly Mission Ridge property) according to recreation development planning by Washington State Parks and private landowners.

Zone 2 Winter

Trails

- Create a snowshoe/backcountry ski trail from Squilchuck State Park to Mission Ridge/Section 30 non-motorized winter use area (likely utilizing a summer trail platform).
- Create groomed cross country ski trails in Section 19 and NE ¼ Section of 30. Evaluate feasibility of connecting to cross country ski trails in Section 17.

Zone 3

Zone 3 – Summer

Trails

- Assess feasibility of creating a north-south trail per the Naneum Ridge Plan. This may mostly be in zones 2 and 3. Explore the potential for a high elevation route within the buffer of the existing road corridors along Mission Ridge and Naneum Ridge roads. Locate trail to ensure high quality user experience. Consider seasonal trail closures during critical wildlife periods as part of the proposed trail.
- Maintain dispersed hiking opportunities in Zone 3, both off trail and on non-green dot roads that are closed to vehicle traffic. WDFW does not support designated trail development in Zone 3 (other than a north-south trail as per Naneum Plan), due to its high value as core summer elk habitat.
- Maintain "wilderness feel" of area east of Mission Ridge ski area and north of Naneum Ridge (west of groomed snowmobile trails and green dot roads) by leaving the area primitive and used by non-motorized users (this concept applies for both summer and winter).

Roads:

- Consider seasonal closure of Pole Flats Road (closed for core summer elk habitat, open in fall for hunting) to off-set development of additional green dot roads elsewhere in the planning area.

Zone 3 – Winter

- Consider creating a seasonal warming hut at Four Corners on the groomed snowmobile trail system, with a toilet.
- Consider creating a seasonal back-country hut or yurt on Naneum Ridge in Section 36 for non-motorized winter use, with a toilet.
- Maintain a non-motorized play area in the high elevation terrain east of Mission Ridge Ski Area, as per the winter non-motorized area mentioned above. This area is accessible to non-motorized travelers due to it's proximity to the ski area and Squilchuck State Park, and separating ski and snowmobile use increases safety for both user groups.
- Maintain quality high-elevation play areas for snowmobile access in terrain closer to the groomed snowmobile routes, traditionally used for off-trail snowmobiling (see winter recreation map).