**Preferred Recreation Alternatives**

**Stemilt-Squilchuck Recreation Plan**

**December, 2017**

Below is the preferred recreation alternative that packages together the various recreation concepts compiled through Recreation Committee meetings and from previous planning documents. This alternative is based on feedback from the Recreation Committee and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in response to the alternatives initially created to show the variety of opportunities that could be selected in the Recreation Plan. The initial alternatives ranged from a low to high level of development and change. 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 open for discussion and input from the Recreation Committee, land managers or owners, and the Stemilt Partnership. 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 access is provided on green-dot roads.  The Upper Basin Loop Road serves as the primary access to zone 1. 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.
* Non-green dot roads:
* Non-green dot roads should be permanently closed to public access. The Stemilt Partnership Roads Committee provides a stakeholder panel to review proposals for closing and placing barriers along other non-green dot roads. The Roads Committee also reviews green dot road proposals such as seasonal closures and re-routes.
* 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.

**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.

**Zone 1**

Use in Zone 1 is concentrated along the green dot road system comprising the Upper Basin Loop Road and Upper Wheeler Road and is primarily motorized.

**Zone 1: Summer Alternatives**

**Preferred Alternative**

**Roads:**

***Phase I:***

* 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.
* 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 maintain access for vehicles with four wheel drive.

***Phase II:***

* Grade, gravel, and maintain the Upper Basin Loop Road in good condition so passenger vehicles can access these sites.

**Camping, Day-Use, and Trails:**

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

**Lily Lake (Section 22):**

* Sections 22 and 16 are subject to restrictions tied to the funding used by WDFW to purchase the lands from DNR (will be referred to in this document as S6 restrictions). 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.
* While acceptable levels and types of use under S6 guidelines are unknown at the time of this document, it is clear that *increased use and development* will not be an option for these lands.
* Agencies will continue to work collaboratively to find alternatives for any displaced recreational opportunity in other parts of the basin, and to address current recreational impacts in a restorative manner.
* Assess for potential to designate non-motorized trails near Lily Lake, if this is deemed appropriate under S6 restrictions. Some of these trails could be conversion of non-green dot roads to trails. Formalize 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 ATV 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.
* Formalize and designate non-motorized trails near Clear Lake. Some of these trails could be conversion of non-green dot roads to trails. Maintain and formalize the existing trail around Clear Lake for non-motorized walking and hiking use.

**Upper Wheeler Reservoir Access (Section 29):**

***Phase I:***

* Formalize a parking area and trailhead near the existing gate for day-use including fly-fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, and wildlife viewing. The trailhead should include a sign identifying rules and regulations. 5-7 parking spots.
* 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.
* Formalize and designate non-motorized trails near Upper Wheeler Reservoir. Some of these trails could be conversion of non-green dot roads to trails.

***Phase II:***

* Develop a vault toilet for day and camping use at the Orr Creek/Upper Basin Loop Road junction. This will be phased in to align with the improvements to the road.

**Steffen’s Meadow (Section 28):**

***Phase I:***

* Formalize camping at Steffen’s. Delineate some of the high-use sites by placing natural edges around the sites. The campsites will include fire rings to contain existing campfires. 3 campsites.
* Formalize a parking area and trailhead for day-use including fishing, hunting, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The trailhead should include a sign identifying rules and regulations. 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.

***Phase II:***

* Develop a vault toilet for day and camping use. This will be phased in to align with the improvements to the road.

**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 (100 ‘ off the road). Close or convert to walk-in only all other dispersed sites that are more than a 100’ off the road.
* 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, picnic tables, fire rings, and vault 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.
* Look for opportunities to create sustainable new trails along the existing green dot road corridors with a buffer of 50 -100 feet. Evaluate trail opportunities for potential impacts to water and wildlife.

**Target Shooting**

***Phase I:***

* Designate no target shooting zones around high areas for day-use and camping.

***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.

**Zone 1- Winter**

**Sno-Park:**

***Phase I:***

* Create a sno-park at the base of Upper Wheeler Road with a seasonal toilet and 10 parking spaces for non-motorized winter snow sports (snowshoe, backcountry ski, cross-country ski). Alternate non-motorized parking could be located at Orr Creek Road.
* Maintain the existing two sno-parks in Sections 22 and 23 for snowmobile use. If the sno-park and associated groomed snowmoble trail segment in Section 22 need to be closed based on S6 restrictions, then consider enlarging the sno-park in Section 23 to accommodate all winter motorized access to the groomed snowmobile trail system.

***Phase II:***

* Evaluate the feasibility of creating a sno-park in Section 16. Plow the beginning/steep section of the Upper Wheeler Road to provide easier access for non-motorized snow sports.

**Trails:**

* Maintain existing snowmobile trail system (Sections 22, 23, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34). Discontinue use of groomed trail segment in Section 22 if S6 restrictions disallow motorized use in this area.
* Designate a non-motorized winter use area per the Naneum plan, bordered by the groomed snowmobile trail system to the east. The boundary of this area is agreed upon between Apple Valley Snowmobile Club and representatives of winter non-motorized users.
* Designate a snowmobile route link on the road from Noyd Easement through winter non-motorized area to link to 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.
* Create non-motorized Nordic ski trail connections outside of the orchard in Section 17. This would need a reasonable graded route and connections to Section 19. The trail would be groomed, and connect to Squilchuck State Park and Mission Ridge.

**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**

* Create non-motorized multi-use trails linking Mission Ridge expansion area with Squilchuck State Park. 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 strategic fuel breaks and wildfire/fuels reduction planning with trail development.
* 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 Forest Ridge residents to access the green dot road system. 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.

**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.
* Develop educational signage for fire precaution and seasonal closures 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).
* Expand camping opportunities in Squilchuck State Park (and possibly Mission Ridge property) according to recreation development planning by Washington State Parks and private landowners.

**Wildlife Conservation Area**

* Set aside Eastern section of 19 for a Wildlife Conservation Area. This area has been identified between Mission Ridge and Wenatchee Sportsmen Association, and will help buffer impacts from development in Section 19. Recreational use in this area will likely be subject to seasonal closures to protect elk calving.

**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.
* Noyd Road Easement provides designated snowmobile access route for Forest Ridge residents to access groomed snowmobile system. An annual permit will be issued for residents and will include educational material and acknowledgment of the rules and regulations of the area.

**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.
* Open road system to Naneum Ridge road to ATVs and motorcycles. Enable a motorized loop on green dot road system (or on designated motorized route). Designate the Pole Flats road for this use.
* Create non-motorized trails and other small trails near the site currently used for dispersed camping just below section #33. Look to first re-purpose the existing road corridors.
* Explore potential for higher elevation non-motorized trails, potentially off of the Naneum Ridge Road access points.
* Develop designated non-motorized multi-use trails (out and back or loop trails) using existing primitive roads in the eastern part of zone 3/Upper Stemilt Basin (Sections 27, 28, 33, 34).
* Maintain "wilderness feel" of area between the backside of Mission Ridge and Nanuem Ridge (west of groomed snowmobile trails) by leaving the area primitive and used by non-motorized users (this concept applies for both summer and winter).

**Zone 3 – Winter**

* Create a warming hut at four corners on the groomed snowmobile trail system with a permanent CXT bathroom for snowmobile use.
* Create a back-country hut or yurt on Naneum Ridge in Section 36 for non-motorized snow sport use with a vault toilet.
* Maintain "wilderness feel" of area between the backside of Mission Ridge and Nanuem Ridge (west of groomed snowmobile trails) by leaving the area primitive and used by non-motorized users (this concept applies for both summer and winter).
* Close motorized vehicle access in Section 30 to maintain quality backcountry skiing opportunity.