

Response to Concerns About Recommendations Stemilt-Squilchuck Recreation Plan January, 2018

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 is 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.

General Concerns:

- Consider a 'do nothing' alternative; less managed approach.*
- Concern about increased access and increased use
- Concern about denying access at any time of the year
- More emphasis on wildlife protection
- Forest Ridge access shouldn't result in loss of other green dot roads
- Concern over loss of motorized use area
- Concern about losing access to private roads if non-green dot roads are closed
- Please make specific mention of 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. Prior to and during spring and summer operations require the land management agencies to undertake a season long noxious weed control program.*
- Permits and funding will be required for implementation

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 **vehicle** 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.

Concern:

- Non green dot roads. Do you mean permanently close to vehicle access or do you really mean "public access". This means no mountain biking or hiking?
- Map incorrectly shows county roads as green dot roads (Upper Wheeler and Stemilt Loop)
- No plans or budget to grade Upper Wheeler Road
- Close basin loop and jump off ridge until April 1 for wildlife protection
- More road maintenance needed
- Do not close roads- families use them for outings

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.
- Consider seasonal closures of new and existing trails/routes to protect wildlife, particularly during elk calving season.

Concern:

- More detail needed around non-motorized trails
- More detailed description of seasonal closures needed: timing and locations*
- Need more motorcycle and bike trails, moto track
- More extensive trail network systems separating user groups: equestrian, hikers, bikers, motorcycle
- Increase size of camp and parking areas as much as possible
- Add garbage collection areas

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.

Concern:

- Long term plan for costs, upkeep, maintenance, and enforcement
- Concern about overall development of the basin (orchard and Mission Ridge), already not enough enforcement so how will we enforce more use?
- How to enforce maximum stay length to ensure migrant workers don't stay at the campsites all season?

- Enforce illegal dumping

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 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 at a minimum maintain access for vehicles with four wheel drive.
- Open a '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 could be limited to ATVs to reduce road impacts and be subject to seasonal closures for wildlife and road surface protection. Reduction of green dot road mileage elsewhere in the basin would be needed to stay within the 'no net gain' objective.

Phase II:

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

Concern:

- Strong concern about opening connector road between Orr Creek and Upper Wheeler- would lead to more vehicle hunting rather than on-foot hunting

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):

- Upon transfer of Sections 22 and 16 from DNR to WDFW, critical wildlife habitat conservation will take management priority. 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 USFWS habitat protection guidelines are unknown at the time of this document, *increased use and development is not proposed* for these lands.
- Agencies will continue to work collaboratively to find alternatives for any displaced recreational opportunity in other parts of the basin. Options for addressing current recreational impacts in a restorative manner will be assessed.
- Assess for feasibility of designating non-motorized trails near Lily Lake, if this is deemed appropriate under USFWS guidelines. 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.

Concern:

- Add pit toilet to Lily Lake

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, 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.
- 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.
- Designate non-motorized trails near Upper Wheeler Reservoir. 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.

Concern:

- Do not include any facilities at Upper Wheeler Reservoir access other than parking*

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. 2-3 campsites.
- Formalize a parking area and trailhead for day-use including fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, 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.

Concern:

- Add walk-in campsites at Steffen's Meadow*

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.
- 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 5 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 snowmobile trail segment in Section 22 need to be closed based on USFWS habitat restrictions, then consider enlarging the sno-park in Section 23 to accommodate all winter motorized access to the groomed snowmobile trail system. If the existing sno-park in 23 is not adequate, assess feasibility of creating another sno-park in Section 23 on County land.

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.

Concern:

- Do not close Lily Lake sno-park (multiple responses on this)*
- Winter use should focus on keeping snowmobiles higher on the mountain- with smaller snowpacks wildlife has been holding out higher in the basin longer
- Clear Lake sno-park is on private land and could be shut down by landowner, especially with higher use. Also, Lily Lake sno-park is higher, more shaded, and closing this would limit length of time snowmobiles could access groomed trail system*
- Put up gates to prevent wheeled vehicles from using the snowmobile trails, especially at Lily Lake and Clear Lake

Trails:

- Maintain existing snowmobile trail system (Sections 22, 23, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34). Discontinue use of groomed trail segment in Section 22 if USFWS 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 Country 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 in Section 28. 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.

Concern:

- Winter non-motorized area isolates private property in Section 21 from snowmobile use (multiple responses on this)*
- Concern about losing access to the west side of Mission Ridge and the Swift Creek Bowls, one of the most popular off trail snowmobiling areas
- Can't skiers and snowmobiles both use Sections 31, 32, and 29?*
- Move non motorized winter boundary to Orr Creek road and follow the Stemilt Loop through Sections 13, 20, 29, and 28
- Create an area for both motorized and non-motorized use*

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.

Concern:

- Do not connect trails from Squilchuck to Naneum Ridge or from Squilchuck to Mission, to preserve wildlife connectivity*
- More detailed description of seasonal closures needed: timing and locations*
- Need more motorcycle and bike trails, moto track*

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).

Concern:

- For zone 2, Summer trails-educational materials and signage to Squilchuck-comment related to fire education and seasonal closures. The statement leads one to believe state parks closes trails seasonally for fires.

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 Sportsmens 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 a 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.

Concern:

- The Noyd Easement from Forest Ridge should be restricted to only the Noyd family for winter use only - preferably it should be rescinded.

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.
- Create non-motorized trails and other small trails near the site currently used for dispersed camping just below section #33, by converting existing non-green dot road corridors to non-motorized trails.
- 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 Naneum 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).

Concern:

- For zone 3, describe how the non-motorized trail recommendations would impact green dot roads - are these on green dot roads or non-green dot roads?
- Less green dot roads in Zone 3; dead end road in Section 4 should be abandoned and turned into trail
- More detail needed around non-motorized trails*
- More extensive trail network systems separating user groups: equestrian, hikers, bikers, motorcycle

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 Naneum Ridge (west of groomed snowmobile trails) by leaving the area primitive and used by non-motorized users.
- Voluntary motorized vehicle closure in Section 30 to maintain quality backcountry skiing opportunity.

Concern:

- Can't skiers and snowmobiles both use Sections 31, 32, and 29?