Nason Ridge Stewardship Committee Planning Meeting- Hunting

April 12th, 2023 Lake Wenatchee Rec Club 6-8pm

Meeting Notes

*Welcome and Introductions*

*Review of past hunting policy on Nason Ridge Property, hunting policies on adjacent lands, user experiences on the property*

-Weyerheauser policy (written permission through permit system, paid agreement with WDFW for enforcement)

-Western Rivers Conservancy policy (written permission through permit system with limited # of permits issued)

-Chinook Forest Partners (plans to close lands to hunting access in Coulter Block)

-CDLT and Nasonview- hunting permission is at landowner’s discretion

*Review of WDFW regulations, hunting season timeframes*

-Reviewed GMU 245 boundaries, hunting seasons for grouse, deer, elk, bear, cougar, and bobcat

*Group discussion of recommended County policy*:

* Permit system: Group does not see the need to continue a permit system. The feeling is that WDFW rules and regulations are adequate for management on the Community Forest, and that there is no need to overcomplicate a system that works. Recommendation is to proceed with hunting with no written permit system above and beyond WDFW rules and regulations.
* Limitations on use: Group does not see the need to limit hunter numbers. From hunter observations, use has been declining over the years, likely due to the habitat becoming less desirable for deer as brush fills in. Hunters expressed that if they see many other hunters, they will go somewhere else anyway. The last few years, the number of permits issued by WRC was well under half of the permits available, so the cap wasn’t being reached. This could be re-evaluated in the future if there is an issue with crowding.
* Species: No desire to limit species that can be hunted or seasons in which they can be hunted.
* Type of weapon: No need to limit or restrict weapons at this time. WDFW does not recommend putting specific guidelines on type of barrel that is allowed, because of difficulty distinguishing/enforcing this type of rule. If safety becomes an issue in the future with increased recreation, limitations to primitive weapons may be considered.
* Accessible hunting: No interest in allowing motorized use for disabled hunters. However, access points should be accessible, so disabled hunters with the ability to travel non-motorized on road surfaces could still utilize the property.
* Baiting: Consensus that baiting should not be utilized on the property for ethical reasons. This would likely be voluntary and expressed through signage.
* Target Shooting: Consensus that target shooting is not appropriate on property
* Enforcement: If possible, have Sheriffs patrols and WDFW emphasis patrols for the first couple years of ownership to show there is a presence. The main issue occurring now is poaching outside of season. County will work with WDFW to help address poaching issues, and will get a good contact number that can be posted on signage so visitors can alert WDFW to poaching if they see it on the property.
* Signage: Signage is the priority for managing hunting in the near-term. Signage specific to hunting to be placed at main entrance points. Signage will include a self-register for hunters to help track hunting use. Include a contact number for reporting poaching and a website or email where more info can be obtained. Include wording on baiting and target shooting.
* No Hunting areas: Road buffers will not be used as No Hunting Areas. Rather, the USFS policy will be adopted. Policy is as follows:
	+ In or within 150 yards (450 feet) of a residence, building, campsite, developed recreation site or occupied area;
	+ Across or on roads or bodies of water, or where people or property are exposed to injury or damage
* Land Closure: Follow Chelan County policy for closing lands during extreme fire danger.
* WDFW Private Lands Access System: No interest in entering into agreement with WDFW to help manage hunting on the property.

Next Steps:

-No Resolution needed at this time

-Develop trailhead signage to be in place prior to hunting season

-Reach out to WDFW for advice/assistance on poaching issues

-Put in a request for occasional patrols by Chelan County Sheriff for first couple years of ownership