


Part II. Recreation Management Goals and Strategies

This section describes the key recreation and public access goals for the Capitol State Forest. It describes specific activities and issues that currently occur across the forest landscape, and discusses potential objectives and strategies to be implemented over time.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Capitol State Forest’s recreation management niche is to provide trails, trailheads, camping, day-use and picnicking areas. Key elements of the program are:

- Facilities and trails maintenance
- Grant funding and administration
- Volunteer activities coordination
- Oversight for group events
- Volunteer hosts recruitment and training
- Education and enforcement

VISION

The vision of Capitol State Forest’s recreation program is to provide a safe environment where people can enjoy a primitive recreation experience in a “working forest” setting while protecting natural resources and trust assets.

Recreation management goals

The four recreation and public access goals for the management of Capitol State Forest developed through the planning process are:

- Goal 1: Provide a diverse spectrum and sustainable level of landscape uses
- Goal 2: Ensure recreation and public access is consistent with trust and ecological goals
- Goal 3: Support safe recreation opportunities
- Goal 4: Pursue sustainable funding resources and staff for managing recreation and public access in Capitol State Forest

RECREATION STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

These four goals are the backbone of the strategies and objectives listed below and found in detail in this section. Management strategies for each facility are outlined in Appendix H.

- Recreation facilities management strategies and objectives
- Recreation trails management strategies and objectives
- Organized events management strategies and objectives
- Dispersed recreation management objectives
 - Target Shooting management strategies and objectives
 - Hunting management strategies and objectives
 - 4x4 vehicles management objectives

RECREATION PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1

Provide a diverse spectrum and sustainable level of landscape uses

Objectives

- A. Provide access and recreation opportunities for a variety of uses by experiences they desire
- B. Balance recreation opportunities between permitted group events and individual use
- C. Manage uses for compatibility between user groups
- D. Address overuse/overcrowding issues

Goal 2

Ensure recreation is consistent with trust and ecological goals

Objectives

- A. Strengthen the link between DNR's trust obligation and recreation by:
 - Providing site specific information on resource management as it affects recreation
 - Managing access and providing information of road closures and relocations
 - Mitigating disruptions in recreation areas
 - Providing forest-wide outreach/education about land management activities

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- B. Address environmental concerns resulting from public access and recreation by:
 - I Identifying recreation activities based on land suitability, such as drainage, terrain and soil types. For example, a specific action may include restricting trail use during rainy seasons
 - I Restoring and minimizing recreation impacts on resources/ecosystems
 - I Monitoring and correcting the effects of overuse on facilities, specific areas and the forest landscape

Goal 3

Support safe recreation opportunities

Objectives

- A. Increase public awareness of forest vision and expected behaviors through volunteer work parties, a citizen advisory group, neighbor outreach and user education
- B. Enhance safety through facility design and engineering
- C. Enforce department polices and state regulations while promoting safe recreation opportunities

Goal 4

Pursue sustainable funding resources and staff for managing recreation and public access in Capitol State Forest

Objectives

- A. Implement sustainable recreation management criteria (see Appendix C)
- B. Ensure management activities do not exceed current funding levels.
- C. Actively participate as a catalyst in pursuing alternative funding (i.e., donations)

Balancing the recreation, public access, and forest management activities in Capitol State Forest is challenging. The department will monitor the success of these recreation and public access goals and objectives and make changes as necessary.

Facilities management strategies and objectives

FACILITIES OVERVIEW

The campgrounds and day-use facilities within Capitol State Forest provide a much-needed recreation opportunity for nearby residents, as well as visitors that travel from all over the state of Washington. Recreationist are drawn to the forest to experience the recreation trails winding through the Douglas-fir woodland, and forest's campgrounds and day-use areas. As similar camping and day-use opportunities on other lands become increasingly scarce, the facilities in Capitol State Forest continue to play an important recreation role in Washington.

Capitol State Forest has seven campgrounds and a total of 96 camping spots.

ADA camping opportunities are provided at six of the seven campgrounds.

Campgrounds remain at nearly full capacity all summer long.

FACILITIES OBJECTIVES

Outlined below are objectives regarding management of Capitol State Forest recreation facilities.

I. Objective

Maintain primitive camping and day-use opportunities in Capitol State Forest.

Discussion

The campgrounds and day-use facilities provide an unique recreation experience within Thurston and Grays Harbor Counties. During the public input process, it was clear camping is considered a very important feature of the forest's recreation program. In managing Capitol State Forest, the department continues to provide these opportunities while balancing its financial resources. DNR strives to fund facilities maintenance in a sustainable manner, before considering large-scale expansions or improvements.

Management strategies

- Look for creative ways allowing DNR to continue to provide primitive camping and day-use facilities in Capitol State Forest. These include:
 - Applying for available grant funding
 - Partnering with recreation clubs, organizations and volunteers
 - Consolidating facilities to reduce maintenance costs
 - Seeking a process to accept donations
 - Seeking sustainable funding sources

II. Objective

Maintain campgrounds and day-use facilities that are safe and enjoyable for public use, while providing for protection of the natural environment.

Management strategies

- Monitor impacts on the environment and mitigate identified problems as soon as possible, or discontinue use

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- Conduct routine facilities maintenance as often as necessary based on occupancy
 - Display facilities rules and regulations in an area visible to the public
 - Provide adequate education and enforcement

III. Objective

Minimize environmental impacts and provide for routine maintenance opportunities by shutting down campgrounds and trailheads during the winter months.

Discussion

The department closes all of the campgrounds and most of the trailheads within Capitol State Forest from November 1 to March 31. Closure discourages homesteading, reduces the potential impact of campers during the wet months, and allows DNR the opportunity to “catch-up” on routine maintenance projects. It reduces the need to close sites and inconvenience campers during the summer months to do maintenance. In an effort to prevent vandalism during the off-season, patrols of facilities are required during the winter months.

Management strategies

- Clearly post the closure of facilities
- Use local media to relay the annual closure and re-opening message
- Use education and enforcement for compliance
- Educate users on site closures through publications

IV. Objective

Utilize an adopt-a-site program to foster partnerships with individuals, local recreation clubs and organizations.

Discussion

Budget challenges making facility maintenance and operations increasingly difficult, a mechanism that allows recreation volunteers, recreation clubs and organizations the opportunity to assist with site maintenance is needed.

Management strategies

- Maintain an adopt-a-site agreement clearly defining the expectations and roles of the adopting party and the department
- Solicit individuals, recreation clubs and organizations to adopt sites
- Create signs indicating the site has been adopted
- Monitor agreements to ensure compliance

V. Objective

Further develop and enhance the volunteer campground host program within the forest.

Discussion

Well-trained volunteer campground hosts play an integral part in keeping facilities maintained and assist in reducing the amount of vandalism and misuse. Hosts also help to educate users on the proper use of the facilities and trails, and forest-wide rules.

Management strategies

- Implement a host program at campgrounds and larger trailheads
- Recruit and retain qualified individuals as hosts
- Conduct annual campground host training
- Provide hosts with equipment and supplies
- Explore options to fund campground hosts based on the size of the campground and the activity within the site

In 2004 the Backcountry Horsemen, Capitol Riders, adopted the Mima Falls Campground. Hundreds of volunteer hours were donated by the Capitol Riders, which helped DNR maintain this facility for all visitors.

Volunteer hosts and Middle Waddell and Margaret McKenny Campgrounds act as eyes and ears for DNR.

VI. Objective

As funding allows, relocate campgrounds and trailheads adjacent to streams and/or within areas seen as important to riparian species. These identified sites include:

- Porter Creek Campground and Trailhead
- North Creek Campground
- The “B” loop of Fall Creek Campground
- Sherman Valley Campground
- Three walk-in campsites in Margaret McKenny Campground loop “C”

Discussion

The Department of Natural Resources adopted a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), in 1997 to address the management of state trust land to comply with the Federal Endangered Species Act.

One of the primary functions of the HCP is to provide for the protection of streamside habitat. Several of the forest’s recreation facilities are adjacent to fish bearing streams and within riparian management zones. According to the HCP, “any future development of recreation sites would adhere to the riparian conservation strategy” (*DNR HCP Chapter IV.D.*). This strategy calls for the buffering of streams to protect streamside habitat and not allow site construction or expansion adjacent to or within an average of 180 feet of fish-bearing streams.

The department committed to explore over time the opportunity of moving existing sites away from streams to locations where there would be less human impact upon these sensitive areas. Newly

constructed or relocated sites are required to be built away from streams in locations where their impact to riparian habitat and function is not a concern.

Management strategies

- Identify possible places to move facilities currently adjacent to streams
- Monitor and seek available funding opportunities for relocation of facilities, keeping in mind that facilities located along the edges of the forest are easier to operate and maintain
- Ensure any relocated facility would have maintenance funding available
- Work with recreation clubs and forest users to assist in relocation strategies and implementation

VII. Objective

Strive to distribute recreation use more evenly throughout the forest

Discussion

Recreational use of the forest tends to be centered near the Waddell Creek Road in Thurston County, due to the expanded campground and trailhead facilities in the area. To reduce the impact and congestion an attempt to distribute some of this recreation use to other areas in the forest should be explored.

Management strategies

- Consider locating any new facilities in the western or northern half of the forest, concentrating facility locations along the edges of the forest
- Encourage staging events from sites outside of the Waddell Creek Corridor
- Upgrade current facilities located away from the Waddell Creek Road to draw users to other locations
- As existing facilities need major renovations, consider relocating sites to distribute use more evenly around the forest perimeter

Trails management strategies and objectives

TRAILS OVERVIEW

Through this public input process and in speaking with users, it is clear the trail system is perhaps the biggest draw of the forest's recreation program. As mentioned previously, the department manages its forest landscapes, such as Capitol State Forest, under the guidance of an HCP. The trail system must be managed to adequately protect wildlife habitats, including riparian species. New trail segments are designed to cross as few streams as possible, and existing trails are maintained in a manner which does not contribute sediment to flowing waters.

Using input from the citizens working group, the department created a future condition of the forest's trail system. It is the department's intent to follow suggested improvements to trails in this plan as funding allows. (See Appendix J for a list of proposed trail projects.) Prior to large-scale trail upgrades and/or constructing new trail segments, the department must have funding in place to maintain current trails and future maintenance and ensure new additions are compatible with the "working forest" concept and DNR goals and policies.

RECREATION TRAILS OBJECTIVES

Outlined below are objectives regarding management of Capitol State Forest Trails.

I. Objective

Provide recreation trails that are safe and enjoyable for public use while providing for the protection of the natural resources.

Discussion

Many components working together make the trails in Capitol State Forest a safe, enjoyable place for folks to recreate.

Capitol State Forest is closed during the winter season. Each year, trails are closed to motorized and equestrian use from November 1 to March 31. This downtime protects the clay-based soils the trails are built on during the wet winter months, allowing the department the opportunity to catch-up on routine maintenance projects, and reduces the need to close trail segments and inconvenience riders during the summer months.

Continuous trail assessments and an active on-the-ground maintenance program is the key to DNR's success in meeting this goal over the past several years. Permanent and seasonal staff, volunteers, Washington Conservation Corps crews and inmate crews from the Cedar Creek Correction Center carry out this work. Capitol State Forest is fortunate to have received grant funding from the Inter-agency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC) to assist in these efforts.

Volunteers donate thousands of hours each year to the trail maintenance program, providing eyes and ears, as well as muscle, to assist in trail work.

The forest's Education and Enforcement Officer also plays a major role in reducing trail maintenance costs by educating riders on the

proper use of the forest trails, curtailing abuse, and enforcing the forest's shutdown season.

Over the past several years, trail riders have requested the department create single-tracked motorcycle trails within Capitol State Forest. This idea was evaluated by considering the following:

- Clay-based soils found in the forest require regular, and often extensive, maintenance in the form of trail shaping and hardening
- Single-track trails do not allow access to the department's current motorized maintenance equipment. DNR found the single-track trail concept not to be feasible at this time

Management strategies

- Continue to apply for available grants to fund trail maintenance and capital improvements
- Continue to seek partnerships and volunteer efforts to assist in trail maintenance and improvements
- Strive to assess/evaluate trails on a periodic basis, such as every four to six months, to improve safety of riding conditions, resource protection, and to identify problem trail segments
- Conduct general trail maintenance including trail shaping, cutting encroaching vegetation, hardening short sections (less than 100 feet in length) of failing trail segments, replacing and repairing damaged signs, cleaning drain dips and ditches, and cleaning and replacing culverts
- Document and prioritize needed trail maintenance or improvement projects based on the following criteria in order of importance:
 - Priority 1: Public safety and environmental concerns
 - Priority 2: Available funding
 - Priority 3: Frequency of trail use
 - Priority 4: Accessibility of project site along the trail system
 - Priority 5: Current workload and volunteer availability
- Inspect all trail bridges annually and after major storm events; document bridge conditions and future maintenance
- Conduct bridge maintenance, such as: hardening approaches; painting chipped surfaces; replacing damaged planking, handrails, and bolts and screws; sweeping the bridge deck; and repairing washed-out footings
- Harden sections of trail longer than 100 feet which are having a negative impact upon the environment or are considered a safety hazard
- Attempt to keep trail widths at 48 to 50 inches, and reroute existing trail segments that are long and straight, to reduce the speed of riders
- Design new trail segments in a manner that limits excessive speed and provides for varying levels of difficulty

II. Objective

Identify and repair or replace all trail culverts found to be impediments to fish passage.

Management strategies

- Work cooperatively with region engineers and biologists to evaluate stream-crossing culverts and prioritize future work
- Develop a timeline for culvert upgrades and replacements
- Acquire funding for culvert replacements

III. Trail Objective

As funding allows, examine the possibility of relocating trail segments directly adjacent to streams seen as important to riparian species.

Discussion

The Department of Natural Resources adopted a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in 1997 to address the management of state trust land to comply with the federal Endangered Species Act.

One of the primary functions of the HCP is to provide for the protection of streamside habitat while carrying out management activities. Several of the forest's recreation facilities lie directly adjacent to fish-bearing streams and within riparian management zones. According to the HCP, "any future development of recreation sites would adhere to the riparian conservation strategy" (*DNR HCP Chapter IV.D.*). This strategy calls for the buffering of streams to protect streamside habitat and not allow sites to be constructed or expanded adjacent to or within an average of 180 feet of fish-bearing streams.

The department made the commitment to seek opportunities of moving existing trails away from streams to locations where there would be less human impact upon these sensitive areas. Newly constructed or relocated trails are built away from streams in locations where their impact to riparian habitat and function is not a concern.

Management strategies

- Develop criteria to help DNR determine which trail segments, if relocated, would potentially benefit streams and riparian function
- Prior to conducting major improvement on trails adjacent to streams, consider relocating the trail to a more suitable location
- Work with recreation clubs and forest users to assist in relocation strategies and implementation
- Seek funding sources for identified trail relocation needs

IV. Objective

Work with DNR staff and timber purchasers to reduce the impact on trail users during active forest management activities.

Discussion - *signage*

It is important the department notify the public of trail closures as soon as possible. This will help to protect the recreation users and the contractors. During harvest operations and road construction, closed sections of trail should be clearly identified and, if possible, blocked to limit access. Also, when trail reroutes are available, they should be clearly identified.

Management strategies - *signage*

- Work with foresters and purchasers to place and monitor signs warning of the trail closures and reroutes
- Work toward providing trail closure information on trailhead signboards and on the department website

Discussion - *closures*

During harvest operations and road construction, large sections of trail are frequently closed, even though the management activity is affecting only a short segment.

Management strategies - *closures*

- Look for strategic locations to place connector trails that would provide alternatives to long trail loops and reduce closures due to forest management activities
- Evaluate the feasibility of building temporary trail reroutes when permanent trail segments are scheduled for closure over extended periods of time

Discussion - *mitigation/reconstruction*

At times trails are damaged during forest management activities. Working cooperatively with others helps to limit the impact of scheduled forest management activities on the trail systems. The following strategies should be implemented in a manner that does not reduce or inhibit trust revenue.

Management strategies - *mitigation/reconstruction*

- Work with DNR staff during the design of forest management activities in an effort to reduce the potential impact to the trail systems
- Collaborate with timber sale purchasers and other business partners in an attempt to limit potential impacts of forest management activities on the trail systems
- Use language within forest management contracts to protect trail opportunities and mitigate and/or limit potential impacts
- Enlist volunteers to assist in trail reconstruction/reestablishment upon completion of management activities

V. Objective

Disperse the use of the motorized and the non-motorized trail systems more evenly throughout the established trail network.

Discussion - *motorized trail system*

Of the 89 miles of motorized trail located within Capitol State Forest, the trails in the northeast quarter (Waddell Creek area) receives proportionately more use and requires more frequent maintenance. Reasons for this situation include:

- Frequent use of the Middle Waddell Trailhead for day-use parking and as a staging area for permitted events
- ORV use originating out of the Middle Waddell ORV Campground
- ORV use originating out of the Tacoma Trail Cruisers private property located along the Sherman County Road
- Fewer short loop rides originating out of the Rock Candy Trailhead

Management strategies - *motorized trail system*

- Upgrade and/or expand the Rock Candy Trailhead to create a more structured place from which to ride and hold mid-sized permitted ORV events (150-200 people)
- Explore the possibility of establishing a formal trailhead in the area of the Porter Creek Campground, providing riders from west Thurston and Grays Harbor Counties a closer access point to the system
- Construct one or two connectors to the motorized trail system in the northwest section of the forest to create shorter loop rides

Discussion - *non-motorized trail system*

Of the 72 miles of non-motorized trail (which includes the hiker-only trails) located within Capitol State Forest, the trails in the eastern portion (Waddell Creek area) receive proportionately more use and require more frequent maintenance. The lack of use of the trails in the west half of the forest result in these trails becoming overgrown at a faster rate. Reasons for this situation include:

- Frequent use of the Margaret McKenny Trailhead for day-use parking
- Equestrian use originating from Margaret McKenny Campground
- No established trailhead in the eastern (Grays Harbor) side of the forest
- No short loop rides in the eastern portion of the forest

Management strategies - *non-motorized trail system*

- Explore the possibility of establishing a formal trailhead in the area of the Porter Creek Campground, providing

riders from west Thurston and Grays Harbor Counties a better access point to the system

- Look for an opportunity to create a shorter loop ride in the western portion of the forest

VI. Objective

Expand the opportunities for hikers and those who like to observe nature by creating more hiker-only trails.

Discussion

While collecting information from our citizens working group and in talking with recreation users over the years, it is apparent individuals want more trails dedicated as hiker-only. Hikers commented that they may be at risk when they are sharing trails with motorized recreation users, horses and mountain bikes. Currently the forest has approximately 10.5 miles of hiker-only trail located at 7 different sites within the forest.

Hiker-only trails are easier to construct than motorized, horse or mountain bike trails, because they are narrower, can maneuver more easily up steep hills, and require minimal hardening. Inmates or volunteers using hand tools can often construct these trails. Expensive structures such as steel bridges are often not needed. Hiker-only trails afford DNR the opportunity to educate the public by placing signage about forest development, wildlife and tree identification, the practices of a “working forest,” and the history of Capitol State Forest along the trail.

Hiking trails represent a good opportunity to get Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and new recreation clubs involved in the Adopt-A-Trail program. Trail adoption is an important tool to have in place prior to construction, to help meet the project objectives.

Management strategies

- Continue to maintain the current hiker-only opportunities within the forest
- Explore ways of expanding current hiker-only trails to offer more of an educational focus piece (i.e., educational signage along current trails)
- Look for opportunities and work with recreation clubs, organizations and other DNR staff to create new hiker-only trails

VII. Objective

Discourage and decommission all undesignated trail segments as soon as possible.

Discussion

At times, the department finds trail segments constructed by individuals without permission from the state. The trails are often carved into the landscape with little consideration for protecting natural resources or rider safety. Often these trails lead to adjacent

landowner properties and subdivisions providing personalized access to the forest.

Management strategies

- Identify, decommission and block undesignated trail segments
- Post proper signage at undesignated trail segments
- Use education and enforcement to curtail the use of undesignated trail segments

VIII. Objective

Design future trail segments that are mindful of the environment, forest management activities, and neighbors.

Discussion

All future trails should be designed in a manner that takes into account the potential impacts trail have upon the natural environment, other recreation experiences, and neighbors. Trails should be located away from property lines, fish-bearing streams, and out of riparian areas, if at all possible. Trails should also be constructed in a manner that reduces the impact to soils and other wildlife habitats.

Management strategies

- Work with DNR foresters and biologists to place future trails in locations that reduce the potential impact to riparian and other habitats and ensure compatibility with forest management objectives
- Meet with neighbors, recreation clubs and general recreational users when considering major trail addition projects to ensure that all potential concerns are addressed

Organized events management strategies and objectives

Background

There is a great demand by recreational clubs and organizations to host organized events in the forest. It is the goal of the department to continue to provide recreational clubs, organizations, and the public at large the opportunity to hold organized events within Capitol State Forest for non-commercial purposes.

Organized events, which are defined by the department staff as events with 25 or more participants and/or are advertised to the general public, are allowed upon approval of a permit/land use license. For each proposed event, a recreation club/organization must apply for a permit and provide proof of insurance in the term limits outlined in the permit application. As of 2004, the permits are offered free of charge to recreation clubs, organizations, and the general public. The permits are restricted to non-commercial activities and approval is at DNR's discretion.

Over the past five years, the number of permitted events has steadily increased. Approximately 20 events are held in Capitol State Forest each year, ranging from 25 to 600 participants.

Large-scale, organized events of 300 to 500 people have a substantial impact upon the developed sites, trails, environment and other individual recreation opportunities. Large-scale events are normally staged on properties adjacent to Capitol State Forest and use the forest trail system. Facilities in Capitol State Forest are best suited to handle small (25-125 people) and medium (125-300 people) events. As the size and frequency of events increases, more intensive management is required.

A majority of the groups that host organized events in the forest, conduct volunteer work prior to and/or after their event. Volunteer hours are currently not a requirement of the permit, but most recreation clubs see the value of helping with trail maintenance and provide volunteer labor. Developing a system of requiring volunteer work in order to sponsor an organized event is an option to consider as more recreation clubs are requesting event dates.

I. Objective

Provide for the opportunity for recreation clubs and organizations to host organized events, while balancing the need for individual recreational opportunities.

Discussion

Locations to hold organized events within the state are diminishing. An increasing number of recreation clubs and organizations are discovering Capitol State Forest as a prime location to host non-commercial events. Recreation clubs that have traditionally hosted events are asking to hold more than one per year. In addition, the size of these events are increasing. This increase in events and number of participants often brings about a greater amount of volunteer hours. It also creates an impact, such as full campsites, no parking, and crowded trail conditions to those individual recreation users who come to the forest to recreate.

Management strategies

- Allow permitted events on only certain weekends each month during the use season
- Explore a mechanism for charging permit fees for events or require volunteer hours in lieu of fees
- Disperse the staging of permitted events more evenly throughout the forest
- Enforce the use of facilities to not exceed the allowed maximum capacity

II. Objective

Minimize the impact from permitted events on the trail system, facilities and natural environment.

Discussion

As the number of permitted events continues to increase and the number of participants per event becomes greater, there is a greater impact upon the environment, facilities and trails supporting those events. Events early and late in the use season have a potential to cause trail and facility damage during wet years.

Management strategies

- Allow permitted events on only certain weekends each month during the use season
- Restrict permitted events to the drier months of the use season only
- Require recreation clubs to provide for environmental and site protection during events
- Require recreation clubs to conduct trail maintenance after their event to correct any problems caused by their event
- Attempt to determine the maximum number of participants per event that the forest's facilities and trails can sustain by monitoring the impacts from different sized events during a season
- Enforce the use of facilities to not exceed the allowed maximum capacity

III. Objective

Strive to allow permitted events that provide a safe and enjoyable recreational experience.

Discussion

As events and participant numbers increase, there is a rise in safety-related issues. More people means more cars and trucks at the trailheads and in the campgrounds and more horses and vehicles on the trails. This congestion diminishes user experience.

Management strategies

- Attempt to determine the maximum number of participants per event the forest's facilities and trails can sustain by monitoring the impacts from different sized events within a season
- Restrict permitted events to the drier months of the use season or when the trails are not as wet
- Continue to stress safety in department-issued permits and at pre-ride meetings

Dispersed recreation management strategies and objectives

Dispersed recreational opportunities in Capitol State Forest, such as hunting and sightseeing, are important to many who use the forest. Capitol State Forest provides one of the few remaining landscapes near the I-5 corridor available for certain types of dispersed recreational uses.

Most dispersed recreational activities do not require intensive management, as long as they are not in conflict with other uses of the forest. This is because these activities occur away from developed facilities, are not organized into recreation clubs or large groups, and have a limited impact upon the environment. Some dispersed activities, such as recreational target shooting, are becoming increasingly popular, requiring more intensive management attention to address the impact to other recreation users and neighboring forest residents.

I. Objective

Continue to allow dispersed recreational opportunities which fit within the context of the forest's overall management objectives.

Discussion

Capitol State Forest has finite capacity to provide locations for the many dispersed recreational activities that occur there. These activities must not inhibit the department from reaching its forest-wide resource management objectives, and they must not have a negative impact upon established recreation sites and trails, or the safety of others working, living next to, or recreating in the forest.

Management objectives

- Monitor dispersed recreational activities to ensure compatibility with resource management and other recreational objectives, and the safety of those working or recreating in the forest
- Keep apprised of new, dispersed recreation uses that come into the forest, and determine the potential future impact of these uses

TARGET SHOOTING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

Shooting Background

Shooting has taken place at different levels within the boundaries of Capitol State Forest since its establishment as a state forest in the early 1930s. In the early years, one could wander into the woods and shoot without encountering others. The rules stated you could not shoot in or across established recreation facilities (*WAC 332-52-040*) or across or adjacent to forest roads. Typical shooting can range from the hunting of game, target shooting, or shooting skeet off roads and old logging landings.

Discussion

Responsible target shooting is a recognized activity within the boundaries of Capitol State Forest, and, where possible, should be managed to coexist with

forest management activities, other established recreation uses, and neighbors. This premise may not be true in other landscapes managed by the department.

There are three types of non-hunting shooting activities found within Capitol State Forest: responsible target shooting, irresponsible target shooting, and the illegal use of firearms.

Responsible target shooting, which is practiced by a large portion of the shooting population in the Capitol State Forest, is done by those who come to the forest, obey the rules, are aware of their surroundings, pick up their targets and shell casings, and go home. Responsible target shooting is conducted by those who are advocates for their sport. Irresponsible target shooters tend to be those who shoot wherever they please, disregard safety, and leave shells, targets and other objects in the woods. There are others who are reckless and completely misuse firearms. These individuals drive down forest roads shooting signs, shooting at trees, cars, restrooms and other facilities. This is considered vandalism and is very dangerous. The actions of those who shoot irresponsibly and of those who completely misuse firearms are quite visible and, unfortunately, create a negative impression of target shooting.

Misuse of the forest by other user types, such as ORV or horse riders, can more easily be solved or mitigated by working in cooperation with local recreation clubs and organizations using the forest. There is currently no known organized group that target shoots in Capitol State Forest. Therefore, the collective pressure of positive users cannot easily be brought to bear on those who are less responsible.

During the early 1990s the Capitol State Forest became more widely used by individuals for recreation and leisure. During that same time period, neighborhoods and homes were built adjacent to the forest's boundaries. This surge of residential use and neighbors has increased the need for target shooters to be more cautious and responsible conducting their sport, and has made target shooting an activity that demands closer management and direction by the department within Capitol State Forest.

Dispersed target shooting takes place throughout the forest and carries with it many management challenges. These challenges include shooting without a proper backdrop, shooting near or towards neighbors or recreation sites, across trails and roads, use of discarded appliances as shooting targets, and the growing problem of garbage dumping throughout the forest.

Over the years, target shooting has become concentrated in a few gravel pits around the forest. These areas have easy access, room for several folks to shoot at one time, and provide for better visibility. While it is a bit easier to contain the activity, this type of concentrated use also brings about several management issues, such as the safety of others using the area, increased noise levels or excessive noise during morning and evening hours, and the accumulation of garbage.

The issues of managing both concentrated use and dispersed use for target shooting are complex. Both activities have benefits and drawbacks. The benefit of dispersed shooting is less noise and less destructive impact to a specific area. Concentrating shooters in one area allows staff to monitor for potential problems, such as safety concerns and garbage dumping.

An example of this complexity arose during the 2004 closure of a gravel pit heavily used by target shooters. The closure of the pit resolved noise complaints from adjacent landowners and reduced the amount of garbage dumping at the site. But, shortly thereafter, other landowners complained

to the department that the now-dispersed target shooters were inadvertently shooting directly towards their homes. Dispersed garbage dumping throughout the forest also increased.

Finding the correct balance between dispersed and concentrated use, as well as public and shooter education, is a key component to managing responsible target shooting.

In an attempt to reduce improper shooting and misuse while providing an opportunity for responsible target shooting within Capitol State Forest, DNR will strive to manage this use and control the inappropriate impacts that sometimes follow. If it is found that responsible target shooting cannot exist safely with current recreation uses and forest management objectives, the use may be disallowed.

I. Objective

Seek budget resources to manage target shooting in Capitol State Forest to provide for opportunity while striving to ensure compatibility with resource management objectives, other recreation uses, and surrounding neighbors.

Management strategies

- Develop a responsible target shooting campaign within Capitol State Forest
 - Educate target shooters to be aware of their surroundings, reminding them about neighbors, camp grounds, trails and other recreation activities taking place
 - Educate target shooters on the proper guidelines to follow when target shooting within the forest
- Partner with recreation clubs, neighbors and volunteers to teach srecreation use compatibility to visitors
- Use appropriate engineering techniques to restrict access to areas where shooting cannot occur in a safe manner
- Enforce shooting rules and regulations as current RCW's and WAC's allow; consider new rules needed to further improve safety and resource protection.
- Consider designating an area (zone an area) of the forest for responsible target shooting
- If attempts at allowing responsible target shooting continually fail, disallow the use

II. Objective

Seek to manage the target shooting pilot program in Capitol State Forest in a manner that provides for public and employee safety.

Management strategies

- Develop a responsible target shooting campaign within Capitol State Forest.

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- Educate target shooters to be aware of their surroundings, reminding them about neighbors, campgrounds, trails and other recreation activities taking place.
 - Educate target shooters on the proper guidelines to follow when target shooting within the forest
 - Encourage DNR staff and contractors to post signs when they are working in an area where target shooting is a known use

HUNTING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

Hunting has occurred within the boundaries of the Capitol State Forest for decades. From the Native American tribes that lived in the area and the early settlers to citizens today, the forest provides a place of opportunity for hunting. Each year, hundreds of visitors hunt deer, elk, bear, grouse and even turkey using modern firearms, bow and arrow and black powder rifles.

Access for hunting is provided forest-wide via the management road network that spans the forest. There are a few game management road networks, which are gated and allow for walk-in access only. All hunting in Capitol State Forest is regulated by the Washington department of Fish and Wildlife.

I. Objective

Provide access for responsible hunting when seen as compatible with resource management and other recreational objectives.

Management strategies

- When appropriate, such as when the fire danger is low and no forest management activities are taking place, coordinate with WDFW to open gated roads during hunting season to allow for public access
- Work in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and local authorities to enforce and regulate hunting activities

II. Objective

Manage hunting in Capitol State Forest in a manner that provides for public and employee safety.

Management strategies

- Make hunters aware of the other types of recreation activities occurring within the Capitol State Forest during hunting season
- Encourage DNR staff and contractors to post signs when working in the woods during hunting season
- Educate the public and other forest recreation users to the fact that hunting takes place across the forest landscape during the fall and winter months

4X4 VEHICLES MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

Background

4x4 trails are found in the Tahuya State Forest outside of Belfair and the Elbe Hills area, near Eatonville.

History

Prior to the late 1970s, the number of logging roads leading into Capitol State Forest was not as numerous as they are today. Many of the early access roads were old logging railroad grades or primitively built dirt roads. DNR employees, contractors and individuals often needed four-wheel drive vehicles just to gain access into the forest. By default, a recreational opportunity was created, as the designated forest roads of the time, provided a place for four-wheel drive enthusiasts to recreate. As the timber became more mature, the number of forest management activities increased. This increase in management activities, along with more stringent Forest Practice road standards, brought around an era of improved forest roads. Today an individual wanting to access Capitol State Forest does not need a four-wheel drive vehicle. Some forest roads, such as the D-Line, are paved to help protect riparian habitats.

Current

Four-wheel drive vehicles frequent Capitol State Forest after the first snowfall, driving up towards the higher elevations on designated forest roads. Most do stay on the designated road system. However, there are some who cause severe damage and become stuck by driving up road cut banks, spinning around on soft road shoulders, and tearing up power line access roads and open spaces, such as the grassy area at Camp Wedekind (closed).

For many years the Thurston County ORV Park, located adjacent to the Capitol State Forest to the north, provided a location for 4x4 enthusiasts to drive. After the park shut down in 2002, many displaced 4x4 enthusiasts looked to Capitol State Forest to provide a similar experience, often times driving off of designated roads, causing damage.

Due to the loamy, clay-based soils, which can be found throughout the forest, the moderately steep topography, the frequency of streams, and the potentially high costs to maintain a four-wheel drive trail system, Capitol State Forest is not seen as an optimal place for this type of use.

Management strategies

- Continue to provide access to Capitol State Forest for four-wheel drive vehicles via the designated forest road network
- Discourage four-wheel drive vehicle misuse through education, signing, engineering and enforcement
- Continue to repair areas that are severely damage by four-wheel drive misuse

