

Update on Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp:

Talking Points: The original “Master Plan” was developed to help identify challenges and possible solutions. It was a brain storming process to look at as many options as possible – it was never intended to be used as the final “Master Plan”. Now is the time to bring interested parties together to develop priorities and build a master plan that will gain consensus.

How did we get here:

The Department was approached by the Wildlife Heritage Foundation about the possibility of a project to upgrade the facilities at the Conservation Camp. In addition, the Game and Fish Commission expressed interest to the Department about making improvements to the Camp. Based off of these discussions the Department hired an engineering consultant to draft a master plan for possible upgrades to the camp. The “plan” was a collection of ideas that could be pursued at some point in the future. It was not an implementation plan.

This plan was distributed to a few individuals in the Department and the Foundation for review and comment. It was also presented at the Lander Region All-Region-Meeting in July of 2010. The Foundation then began some discussions with individuals in the community that would have an interest in the proposed project. Based on this interaction and some misunderstandings about the purpose of the plan several concerns about the proposed project were brought forward to the Department. Based on these concerns a meeting was held at the Lander Regional office on December 8, 2010. This meeting was held to gather more information on those concerns and to determine a course of action.

A result of the December 8th meeting the Department has completed a thorough internal review of the proposed plan. The Department is conducting a public meeting in Dubois to discuss the review, gather additional input from the community, and identify individuals who would be willing to assist the Department in revising the proposed plan and setting priorities. The internal review has been completed and edits are being made to the plan. The working group will receive a copy of the edited plan for use in their work.

Review Process:

In order to gather additional comments on the master plan document it was delivered to each Division and the Director’s Office for review and comment. There was a deadline for feedback of January 31, 2011. The Services Division received feedback from the Director’s Office and the Wildlife Division. Comments are as follows:

Comments from December 8th Meeting:

There were a couple of inquiries at the December meeting in Lander that need a response. The first question was, “what is the mission of the camp”.

Vision:

The Department’s vision for the future of the Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp is to have a modernized facility that provides unparalleled educational opportunities for Wyoming’s citizens while preserving the current wildlife and historical values of the area. Wyoming enjoys some of the most impressive wildlife resources anywhere. The

camp should reflect the quality of those resources while helping to achieve the department's mission and promote the department's brand.

Programs offered at the camp will continue to focus on conservation education and hunter and angler recruitment and retention. Though many of these programs will be offered by the department, the facility will be available for use by other groups and educational institutions only if their programs are directly related to these goals.

The second question was asking the Department to ensure that the development on the site didn't conflict with the standards the private landholders are held to on the easements on their lands. The Lands Administration Section reviewed all of the current easement documents to ensure the proposed renovation/construction doesn't conflict with any stipulations that the private landholders are required to follow.

Summary of changes to master plan:

- Sideboards for usage – Game & Fish Staff (Director's Office and Division Administration) agreed to the establishment of usage sideboards of – May 16th through September 30th. Any usage outside of these sideboards will follow an established set of guidelines developed in conjunction with Lander Region personnel. Any decision on usage will be made by Department administration with consultation from the Lander Region.
- Shooting Ranges – Staff supports the need for shooting instruction during activities at the camp. Other options for offering this instruction will be investigated, shooting ranges will not be constructed on-site.
- Location – Staff is committed to using this location for its conservation education programs and other activities. With the uncertainty of funds for the project it is prudent to prioritize the needs of the current facilities and upgrade based off of those priorities.
- Increased Capacity – after a review of the housing capacity and proposed changes the total increase in maximum number of participants would be approximately 25.
- Wood Stoves – heat will be provided by propane gas and/or electric baseboard heaters.

Ongoing Communications:

The Department has prepared this update outlining the current status of the project and the next steps in the process. The update includes comments from the Department's internal review of the plan (see above), the vision/mission of the Camp (see above) and the next steps of the process.

An e-mail with this update will be sent to all of the participants of the December meeting in Lander. They will be asked to submit further comments if they desire to do so. The update will also be distributed to all of the Divisions within the Game & Fish Department.

In addition to written communications the Department organized a public meeting in Dubois held during the month of June. At this meeting the Department gathered additional information/comments on the proposed plan from interested constituents in the community. These comments will assist the Department in developing the final planning document that will be taken to the Game & Fish Commission.

Next Steps:

Post and distribute an updated/edited copy of the master plan to all interested parties. This updated/edited plan will incorporate the initial input from the December 8th meeting, comments supplied by Department personnel and the June 22nd public meeting.

In addition, the public meeting will help the Department identify individuals willing to participate on a working group to help develop the priorities for the final plan. This working group will consist of Department personnel, both headquarters and regional, citizens from the community, local landowners, NGO's and other governmental entities.

The ranking of the priorities for this project will be developed through input from Department personnel, the working group and other external constituents. This ranking process will help the Department determine what parts of the project should be completed based on the amount of funding received.

Funding:

During all of this review process the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of Wyoming will be continuing to look for funding partners to finance improvements to the camp. The final amount of renovation/construction to the camp will be determined by the amount of funding that can be secured and the ranking of priorities developed through input received from all the interested parties.

Game & Fish Commission:

The Department will make a presentation to the Game & Fish Commission containing all of the input received from both our internal and external commenting process. Based on input from the Commission a final master plan will be developed and made available for review.