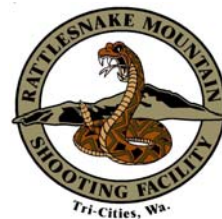




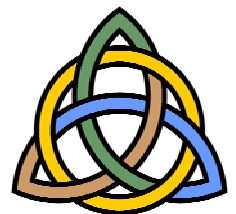
**Rattlesnake Mountain  
Shooting Facility  
*Master Plan***



August 2009



**Tri-Cities Shooting  
Association**



**Benton County  
Parks**

**Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility**

# **Master Plan**

August 2009

## Acknowledgements:

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### **Tri-Cities Shooting Association Board of Directors**

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Richard Hare - Secretary  
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## Introduction

The Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility (referred to hereafter as “the Range”) is one of eight units within the Benton County Parks System. The property is 740 acres in area and lies north of Benton City in central Benton County.

Three of the eight park units are leased by Benton County from the federal government, including part of the Range. Benton County leases much of the Range property from the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under a “Recreation and Public Purposes” lease that was originally signed in 1985. Other portions of the Range are the property of the State of Washington and are leased by the County through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). Currently, both leases are overseen by DFW via a memorandum of understanding between DFW and BLM. Unique to the Shooting Facility within the Park System is that Benton County subleases operations and management of the entire Range to a third party contractor – the Tri-Cities Shooting Association (TCSA).

In 2007 and 2008, Benton County undertook a comprehensive parks planning process that examined the Parks System both in its entirety and piece-by-piece. One of the chief recommendations of the *Comprehensive Parks Plan* (CPP) was to complete “master plans” for each of the eight parks in the System. Time of pertinent issues specific to the Range, and a desire by the County to complete the eight master plans in a timely manner has lead to this planning exercise.

## Setting, Use, and Need

The Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility extends along a generally north-to-south frontage of State Route 225. The Range is across the highway from Horn Rapids Park – a separate Benton County park; and is itself completely surrounded by public lands held by the federal government and the State of Washington. The Range is relatively isolated, and its nature of being disconnected from private lands or lands of intensive uses or facilities help to make for a safe and functional location.

Generally, the entire Range is positioned on a large hillside that is the northeastern flank of Rattlesnake Mountain. Within the Range, there is various topography, including hills, ravines, and flat areas. The soils are generally of the deep alluvial variety found throughout the area, with occasional rock outcrops and talus areas. There is no naturally-occurring permanent water on the Range, and the vegetative cover is uniformly upland shrub-steppe with sporadic and predictable localized weed infestations. A range of expected endemic wildlife can be found on the site, notably including elk, deer, coyote, and badger among the larger mammals.

The Range is sub-leased by Benton County to the Tri-Cities Shooting Association, who is solely responsible for its operations and maintenance. The Range is primarily used by the TCSA membership, which at the time of this plan numbered over 2,000 members. The general public is allowed to use the Range for a modest day use fee, and law enforcement is also allowed to train at the site. The TCSA sponsors a number of events and competitive shooting matches throughout the year that bring users to the facilities from outside the immediate area.

Master plans serve as a planning and sometimes as a budgeting tool for managers. Having an adopted master plan in place will allow the landowner agencies, the County as leaseholder, and the TCSA as operations contractor to understand what kinds of major projects are expected to occur on the properties over a twenty-year horizon. The plan is also a helpful tool in the grant application process, as it allows the TCSA and/or the County to demonstrate to potential grantors that they are proactive and deliberative in their development of the site.

The Master Plan also functions as a “Plan of Development”, which satisfies BLM requirements for a “patent transfer” of the federally-owned portions of the Range from the BLM to the County. The Plan of Development makes clear to all parties and the public what kinds of developments are planned for the property into the future and where those developments will occur, therefore helping to avoid natural resource, cultural resource, and deed restriction conflicts.

## Comprehensive Parks Plan

In August of 2008, Benton County formally adopted the Comprehensive Parks Plan, and this is the guidance for Parks System management and development both in regards to overall vision and philosophy and in regards to specific major projects. Regarding the Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility in particular, the CPP concludes that the Range “is hard to manage because of

the lease situation”; and that the County “should pursue land conveyances from the BLM and DFW”. Five major actions cited in the CPP for the County to pursue relevant to the Range include:

- Pursue ownership of the property.
- Master plan the Shooting Facility.
- Improve the main entry with consistent welcoming signs and landscaping.
- Improve parking, access, restrooms, and drinking fountains.
- New hunter’s education facility.

## Process

In Spring 2008, the Park Board determined that, based on the CPP findings stated above and the ongoing growth at the Range, the time was right for a master plan to be developed for the Range. Over a three-month period, the Board worked with the TCSA, the public, and County staff to complete this Master Plan through an iterative process that included ample opportunities for scoping, review, and revision.

Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility Master Plan public process timeline:

- May 12, 2009 – Staff’s Draft I (initial) presented to Park Board, TCSA, and public.
- June 5, 2009 – First round of comments due from Park Board, TCSA, and public.
- June 9, 2009 – Staff’s Draft II (revised) presented to Park Board, TCSA, and public.
- June 12, 2009 – Second round of comments due from Park Board, TCSA, and public.
- June 12, 2009 – Staff’s Draft III (revised) presented to Park Board, TCSA, and public.
- July 3, 2009 – Final comments due to staff.
- July 9, 2009 – Draft III endorsed by TCSA Board of Directors.
- July 14, 2009 – Draft III presented to Benton County Park Board.
- August 11, 2009 – RMSF Master Plan adopted by Benton County Park Board.

## Conditions, Issues, and Options

The condition of the Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility is good. The TCSA maintains a functional, well-kept facility that provides a variety of opportunities for the recreational shooter in a comfortable setting. The layout and the management of the Range combine to create a safe and accessible facility that is an attractive asset for the County and for the community.

Major issues concerning operation of the Range center mostly on meeting the growing demands of the recreational shooting community. The ability to get existing facilities upgraded and new facilities constructed in a timely fashion to meet the needs of the shooters has been challenging; and while this is sometimes a funding issue, it is more often a bureaucratic issue at the Range.

Benton County and TCSA are taking actions and exploring options in an effort to deal with the issues that encumber development at the Range. These are detailed in the **Findings** section below and chiefly include securing a long-term lease with the State of Washington for State-owned lands, completing a “patent transfer” with the Bureau of Land Management to take possession of the federally-owned lands, and completion of cultural resources surveys (and mitigations) for the entire Range in order to remove that obstacle from future projects.

## Findings

The Park Board, Tri-Cities Shooting Association, affected agencies, and user public have made the following findings regarding major issues that lead to development of this Master Plan:

### **Regarding the Comprehensive Parks Plan**

This Master Plan advances all five actions cited in the CPP in regards to the Range; specifically:

- Benton County is and will continue to pursue ownership of the federal lands now leased through the BLM (called the “patent transfer”). Ownership of these properties by the County will make management and development easier and more efficient.
- Completing the Master Plan satisfies an action unto itself.
- This plan calls for “dressing-up” the main entrance at the Rose-Iris Range and other similar entries throughout the Shooting Facility with consistent landscaping and signage.
- The additions of parking, access, restrooms, and other amenities are called for in this Master Plan.
- A new hunter’s education facility is a high priority capital improvement of this Plan.

### **Regarding Leases and Ownerships**

The single greatest encumbrance to making progress on capital developments on the Range has been the difficulties in obtaining approvals from the managing agencies and negotiating the requirements and expirations of multiple lease agreements. Benton County needs to continue to pursue a single long-term or non-terminating lease with the State of Washington and a “patent transfer” from the United States for the respective properties underlying the Range. Completion of this Master Plan fulfills one of the requirements for a patent transfer and sets a 20-year planning horizon for improvements on the Range.

### **Regarding Operations and Management**

Roles, responsibilities, and contact personnel for all involved parties has not always been well understood and communicated between and among the parties. With the BLM and DFW jointly in the role of landowner, the County in the role of primary leaseholder, and the TCSA in the role of sublessee and concessionaire; it has been demonstrated that “wires get crossed” and “balls get dropped”. Benton County will take the lead in clarifying and communicating the operations protocols and the official points-of-contact for each of the parties.

### **Regarding Environmental and Cultural Resources**

With the adoption of this Plan, all locations for future developments will be known and mapped. Cultural resource surveys of all of the development locations will be completed in 2009 as part of the patent transfer process. All measures are and will continue to be taken to avoid disturbance to natural and cultural resources whenever possible and to mitigate such disturbances when necessary

### **Regarding Funding**

The TCSA has missed-out on a number of funding opportunities for improvements to the Range because of the issues detailed in this Plan in regards to terms of leases and approvals related to natural and cultural resources concerns. Completion of this Master Plan and the exercises related to the patent transfer (BLM) and lease extension (DFW) should put the TCSA (and the County) in a better position to be eligible for and more competitive in pursuing new grants in the future. The TCSA will continue to be self-sustaining and will receive no direct funding from Benton County, but the County may choose to partner on specific capital improvements at the direction of the Park Board and the County Commissioners.

## **Plan of Development**

### **Operations and Management**

Benton County will extend its concessionaire lease agreement with the Tri-Cities Shooting Association for operations and management of the Shooting Facility. The TCSA commits to providing regular reports about activities, events, projects, and issues pertinent to the Range; and will inform the County through its official point-of-contact before major development projects begin and when such projects are concluded. This includes all of the projects described below in this document – even though these projects are approved and cited herein, TCSA must still communicate its intent to proceed with projects ahead of time.

Benton County does not foresee providing any funding resources for expenses related to ongoing operations and management, though on a case-by-case basis, the County may elect to partner with the TCSA on projects if funding is available. In addition, the TCSA will be responsible for creation of a “toxic materials abatement plan/program”, mostly to address lead accumulation and the removal thereof.

Benton County will compile and distribute official contact information for each of the involved parties (landowners, leaseholders, concessionaires, and other third party agencies) at the first of each year, and whenever there is a change in said contact information. This is to reduce confusion and broken lines of communication. Also, a protocol needs to be followed in order to further assist communication. TCSA's identified points-of-contact need to work directly with Benton County's points-of-contact, respective of their concessionaire agreement; and the County will work directly with the landowner agencies, respective of their lease agreements.

### **Capital Improvements**

The following abstracts represent all of the "significant capital improvements" to be made at the Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility over the 2010-2030 period. All of these improvements are tied to specific sites on the Range, and all of those sites will have been surveyed for cultural resources during the summer of 2009. This "Plan of Development" will be the record submitted to the Bureau of Land Management representing the County's development intentions as part of the patent transfer approval process. The TCSA and Benton County understand that if deviations from this record are planned, or if new developments are conceived, this Plan of Development will need to be revised and resubmitted to the BLM and the DFW. These abstracts correspond to an official large-format Master Plan Map that is not attached to this document.

Planned capital improvements to the Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility include:

Hunter Education Range :: A facility, open to the community, where people can become educated in the safe and proper handling of all types of hunting and sporting items. This will be a place where real world obstacles will be placed in a controlled environment and the safe and proper methods for handling firearms become easily accessible to all. The multi-phased project will include:

Phase One...

- Grading and creation of berms for bullet containment, safety, and noise control;
- Pour concrete firing line and install shooting land barricades for various firing lines and target stands;
- Install tables and benches;
- Gravel the parking area;
- Construct the practical application area for the simulated hunting exercise.

Phase Two...

- Install a cover over the firing line to allow the range to be used in inclement weather and to provide shade;
- Install irrigation lines to support trees and grass;
- Plant trees and grass for aesthetics and dust control.

Phase Three...

- Provide electrical power to the site;
- Construct a multi-purpose, multi-discipline building containing classrooms, kitchen, restrooms, and storage.
- Install lights for evening use of the range.

Entire Range - New Irrigation :: A new, shared well and large capacity storage tank will be installed to provide water for trees and grass at the High Power, Shotgun, and Primitive Ranges.

Centerfire Reactive Plinking Range :: New range to be constructed in the Rose-Iris complex that will give the shooter a fun, safe, and educational venue to sharpen their skills.

New Storage Facilities :: Two 40-foot Conex boxes will be placed side-by-side, 16-feet apart with a pole-style roof covering them. This will be a safe and secure area to consolidate storage of vehicles and other equipment.

New Restrooms :: New, plumbed, modular restrooms will be placed on slabs at the Rose-Iris, Shotgun, and Hunter's Education ranges.

Pistol Bay Improvements :: Expand the depth of existing bays. Add additional bays and extend the access road toward the southwest boundary. Add irrigation lines to promote vegetation and hinder erosion. Add power to bays and shade structures. Construct access road to long range target areas and build impact berms for these areas. Add new Conex containers for equipment and target storage and an event building with restrooms will be added as the growth of the discipline continues.

Pistol Bays - New Parking :: Level and tier ground east of the building to provide parking and electrical hookups for recreational vehicles.

Sporting Clays - Road Improvements :: Grade, widen in spots, gravel, and provide parking for handicapped access to Sporting Clay areas on hill west of the trap fields.

Primitive Range - New Power :: Electricity will be provided to the range.

Road Widening Between Rose-Iris Range and Practical Pistol / Cowboy Action Range :: The existing road will be widened to make the fire-break more effective, to improve traffic flow, and to provide some extra parallel parking during larger events. Trees will be planted to line the road to provide an aesthetic, screening of the ranges, shade, and wildlife habitat.

Shotgun Range - New Clubhouse :: The new clubhouse will include a restroom, meeting space, and storage.

Road Surfacing - Entrance to Shotgun Clubhouse, and up Canyon to High Power Range :: This is a difficult road to maintain in it's dirt/gravel state and is a source of dust mobilization. The road will be blacktopped.

High Power Range - New "Flag" Roads :: New gravel roads will be constructed to assist with the efficient and safe operation of the range from the pits to the 600-yard line.

High Power Range - New Firing Lines :: New firing lines will be added at 400 yards and 500 yards. These additions will make RMSF the most complete high power range in the Northwest. With these upgrades, RMSF will provide a high power range that will meet or exceed the needs of all shooters in this discipline.

High Power Range - New 1-Mile Firing Line :: In addition to the new lines at 400 and 500 yards, the possible addition of a new line at the one-mile mark, depending on ability to authorize, site, and construct the line.

High Power Range - New Office / Storage Box at 900-Yard Line :: A Conex box will be placed at the 900-yard line that will serve as a small office and storage facility that will afford the match directors a place from which to operate on both sides of the canyon in a safe and professional manner.

New Silhouette Range :: Construction of a new 200-500 yard silhouette range immediately to the north of the Rose-Iris Range.

Revegetation :: For purposes of habitat restoration, weed suppression, and dust abatement; TCSEA will work with Benton County and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to restore areas across the Range to a natural shrub-steppe condition with native plants and seed.

Rose-Iris Range - Main Entrance Improvements :: Vegetation and road surface improvements along main entrance driveway leading from SR 240 to parking area. Possibly to include new flag garden. All improvements to occur in already-disturbed areas.

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