

# Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility Master Plan

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Benton County Parks

Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility

## Master Plan

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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 1100 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. Timing of pertinent issues specific to the Range, and a desire by the County to complete the eight master plans in a timely manner has led 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, military and law enforcement personnel are allowed to shoot at the site for no charge. The TCSA sponsors a large 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. This 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 for 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

Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility Master Plan public process timeline:

- July 14, 2009 – Draft RMSF Master Plan presented to Benton County Park Board
- August 11, 2009 – RMSF Master Plan was adopted by Benton County Park Board.
- February 1, 2013 TCSA Revision to the 2009 RMSF Master Plan submitted to the Benton County Park Board.
- February 19, 2013 – 2013 RMSF Master Plan was adopted by Benton County Park Board.
- January 3, 2016 – 2016 RMSF Master Plan Revision submitted to the 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

The 2009 version of this Master Plan advanced 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 pursued and obtained 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 the 2009 Master Plan fulfilled one of the requirements for a patent transfer and set a 20-year planning horizon for improvements on the Range.

### Regarding Operations and Management

Roles, responsibilities, and contact personnel for all involved parties has 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 sub lessee and concessionaire. Benton County Park Board will take the lead in communicating the operations protocols and will be 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 proposed development locations have been completed in

2009 as part of the patent transfer process. All measures have 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

Completion of this Master Plan and the exercises related to the patent transfer (BLM) and lease extension (DFW) have 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 County staff 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. 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, lease holders, concessionaires, and other third party agencies) at the first of each year, and whenever there is a change in said contract 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 2016-2036 period. All of these improvements are tied to specific sites on the Range, and all of those sites 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.

The planned capital improvements to the Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility contained in the 2013 version of this Plan included the following items:

Hunter Education Range :: The multi-phased project will include:

Phase One... Was completed August 2012

- Graded and created berms for bullet containment, safety, and noise control;
- Poured concrete firing line and installed shooting lane barricades for various firing lines and target stands;
- Installed tables and benches;
- Graveled the parking area;
- Constructed the practical application area for the simulated hunting exercise.

Phase Two...The firing line cover was completed 2011, Irrigation lines, planting trees, and grass have not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

- Install irrigation lines to support trees and grass;
- Plant trees and grass for aesthetics and dust control.

Phase Three...Projects have not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

- 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. Project have not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

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. This Range has been completed and is closed out.

New Storage Facilities :: Two 40-foot Conex boxes will be placed side-by-side, 16-feet apart with a pole-style roof covering them. Project was completed in 2011 and is closed out.

New Restrooms :: New, plumbed, modular restrooms will be placed on slabs at the Rose-Iris, Shotgun, and Hunter's Education ranges. The Rose-Iris and Shotgun Range restrooms have been completed in 2012. A handicap accessible Porta-Potty has been installed at the Hunter Education Range. This project has been completed, and is closed out.

Pistol Bay Improvements :: Expand the depth of existing bays. Add additional bays and extend the access road toward the south west boundary. Add irrigation lines to promote vegetation and hinder erosion. These items were completed in 2014 and are closed out. Add power to bays and shade structures. Add new Conex containers for equipment and target storage and building an event building with restrooms will be added as the growth of the discipline continues. Project has not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

Create a new 100 foot by 50 foot dedicated parking and leveled firing point at the South end of the Pistol Bay property to support the monthly Bunchgrass Rifle shoots. Project was completed in 2014 and is closed out.

Pistol Bays – New Parking :: Level and tier ground east of the Pistol Bays building to provide parking and electrical hookups for RVs. Project has not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

Sporting Clay Road Improvements :: Grade, widen in spots, gravel and provide parking for handicap access to Sporting Clay areas on hill west of the trap fields. Handicapped parking is provided behind the clubhouse with a concrete walkway providing handicapped access to the present sporting clays field. This project is closed out.

Primitive Range – New Power :: Electricity will be provided to the range. Project has not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

Road Surfacing – Entrance to Shotgun Clubhouse, and up Canyon to High Power Range :: This is a difficult road to maintain in its dirt/gravel state and is a source of dust mobilization. The road will be paved or resurfaced. Project has not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

High Power – New Firing Lines :: New firing lines will be added at 400 yards and 500 yards. This project was completed in 2015 and is closed out.

New Silhouette Range :: Construction of a new 200-500 yard silhouette range immediately to the north of the Rose-Iris Range. This project has not been completed and will be carried over in this revision.

### Planned 2016 capital improvements

Planned capital improvements to the Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility contained in this 2016 revised version of the Plan now include the following items:

Hunter Education Range :: The unfinished portions of this project continued from the 2013 Plan include:

- Install irrigation lines to support trees and grass
- Plant trees and grass for aesthetics and dust control
- Provide electrical power to the site
- Obtain 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.

Rose Iris Range House Expansion and Modification :: Add a 12 foot by 40 foot extension to the east side of the current Rose-Iris Range House to help minimize the congested area inside and provide more room for storage of equipment and vending machines. Also replace the existing wood stove with a heating and air conditioning unit.

Pistol Bay Improvements :: Add electrical power to bays and shade structures. A new event building with restrooms will be added in the future as the growth of the discipline continues.

Pistol Bay Access Gate :: Restore the Pistol Bay event gate access and emergency exit from the Pistol Bays on the BPA road at the South East corner of the RMSF property.

Pistol Bays – New RV Parking with Electrical Hookups :: Level and tier ground east of the building to provide parking and install electrical hookups for RVs.

Primitive Range – New Power :: Provide electricity to the Primitive Range.

Primitive Range – Pole Building :: Construct a Pole Building/Cover to provide relief for Primitive Range children and adult participants during inclement weather conditions. The building/cover will be constructed on previously disturbed ground.

Road Surfacing – Entrance to Shotgun Clubhouse, and up Canyon to High Power Range :: This is a difficult road to maintain in its dirt/gravel state and is a source of dust mobilization. The road will be blacktopped or reworked to reduce dust mobilization and improve smoothness.

New Trap, Skeet, and Sporting Clays/Five Stand Fields :: Add four new Trap, Skeet, and Sporting Clays/Five Stand Fields to the east of the existing four Trap and Skeet Fields to support the projected increase in shotgun shooting activities.

New Silhouette Range :: Construction of a new 200-500 yard silhouette shooting range north of the Rimfire Range.

Construction of an Indoor Range :: To provide a future indoor all weather shooting location for individuals and various shooting events that will ultimately bring in more of the shooting public and membership participants. To be constructed to provide year round all weather shooting for rim fire rifles and pistols, air rifles, and centerfire pistols. This facility will include proper ventilation, bullet traps, target holders, lighting, restrooms, and storage rooms. This project was in the original design plans for the RMSF and is being resurrected in this revision with the planning group working on details and evaluating the feasibility of obtaining grants.

New Archery Range :: Development will consist of two ranges. One will be for standard yardage distances, 10 through 60 yards with silhouette targets. The second one will consist of (in conjunction with the Primitive Range) 3-D targets on a trail to simulate a hunting environment.

New Benton County Sherriff's Training Facility :: A new facility will be constructed on RMSF property near SR 225 by the Benton County Sheriff's Department. This Range will be dedicated exclusively for their use.

High Power Range Communication System :: A permanently installed communication system with loudspeakers will be installed at the high power range to allow clear communication between all firing lines and the target pits in all weather conditions. Current communication is by commercially available radios which are frequently intermittent and difficult to use in windy conditions which often occur at the range.

High Power Range Electrical :: Electricity will be run to the match offices at 200 and 900 yards, to support the Communication System.

Site Wide Emergency Communications :: A site wide communication system will be installed between all the various RMSF ranges to support emergency communications including notification of fires and other emergencies that might affect personnel at all the ranges on the RMSF.

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