

Learnings from Feb 21, 2013 Meeting with DNR SE Washington Region

We met with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) SE Washington Regional Manager (Todd Welker) and the DNR Alpine District Manager (Ken McNamee) on Thursday, February 21, 2013 to discuss our issues regarding the lack of public vehicular access to Barber Springs Ridge and Hudson Creek Hill, and the lack of any enforcement activity of Green Dot regulations in this area during the 2012 hunting seasons. We felt the meeting was very worthwhile and productive. A summary of key learnings from that meeting, and 'refinements' to our direction based on those learnings, follow.

Learnings:

On a very positive note, DNR is actively working to try to get a route over Hudson Creek Hill designated as a green-dot designated road, which would be open for public vehicular travel seasonally between May 1 and Nov 30. They stress that this is not yet a done-deal, and there are still a couple of hurdles before the route can be so designated. But they are cautiously optimistic that they could possibly accomplish this before next hunting season. The likely route would follow the Manastash Ridge Road northwesterly from its junction with the Taylor Ridge Road, to where it connects with the Hudson Creek Road; thence southeasterly down Hudson Creek Road to the North Fork Wenas Road; thence back to the existing green-dot segment of the North Fork Wenas Road. If successful, this route would open up a substantial part of Hudson Creek Hill to public vehicular access; though it would do nothing to provide vehicle access to any part of Barber Springs Ridge.

DNR has also been investigating the feasibility of green-dotting a route similar to one we recommended that would provide public vehicular access along the foot of the southwest face of Barber Springs Ridge, ultimately tying the North Fork Wenas/Hudson Creek roads to the Forest Service 1701 Road system to the west. The primary obstacle to this potential solution is that the short creek-crossing corner in the SW corner of Section 07 would have to be relocated to avoid infringing on NJK's property. From an engineering standpoint, this should be fairly easy, but someone would have to find grant funding to accomplish the relocation, as no DNR funds are available for providing public access to these (School) Trust lands. Similarly, if road upgrade/relocation funds could be procured, the DNR has identified a potential route (similar to our recommended "non-traditional" route) that could tie the South Fork Manastash Road in with the Manastash Ridge Road – thus providing a public vehicular linkage from Ellensburg via South Fork Manastash Road with Hudson Creek Hill, the SW face of Barber Springs Ridge, and the USFS 1701 road network. DNR will provide us with ball-park estimates of the road upgrade/relocation costs for these two options, and we plan to work with other organizations to see if grant funding can be arranged.

The DNR reported that there is virtually no opportunity to designate the Barber Springs Road from South Fork Manastash to USFS 1701 (i.e., the "traditional" access route from Ellensburg through this area) as a green-dot road without securing public access permissions from NJK Timber, and NJK has been strongly opposed to granting such permission. There is no interest

on the part of DNR to acquire these NJK lands. DNR suggested we work with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and the Washington Recreation & Conservation Office to see if there is any opportunity to acquire the NJK lands. If Sections 05 and 07 (NJK ownership) were in public or quasi-public ownership, then the Barber Springs Road would be a logical green-dot candidate.

As to the lack of green-dot enforcement activity in 2012, DNR indicated green-dot enforcement is primarily done by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), in conjunction with their hunting regulation enforcement activity. The [limited] DFW enforcement activity in 2012 in our area was primarily in the Mud Flats/North Fork Wenas/Taylor Ridge area. DNR expects DFW will start moving this activity further north and west, into the Hudson Creek/Barber Springs area in the future. But DNR agreed they needed to do more signage and 'public education' before they would be pushing DFW for more green-dot enforcement in the area. DNR is trying to secure funding to sign our area before next hunting season.

DNR's view is that there is no practical opportunity for permanently removing the Barber Springs / Hudson Creek area from the LT Murray Cooperative Road Management Green-Dot area.

Our direction:

We have already initiated contact with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. We intend to pursue that relationship further, both from a 'support our effort' standpoint, as well as from a potential collaborator to either acquire the NJK lands, and/or to secure grant funding for road upgrade/relocation work to open up other green-dot public access routes through our area. Based on DNR's recommendation, we also intend to get in touch with The Nature Conservancy and with the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office, with the same goals.

We have already been in touch with the Pacific Northwest Four-Wheel Drive Association (PNW4WDA), who have been supportive of our efforts. The PNW4WDA has reportedly been in contact with NJK Timber in the past. We intend to work with PNW4WDA to try to understand NJK's goals, concerns, opposition and sales aspirations. If PNW4WDA cannot provide a clear understanding of this, we may choose to meet directly with NJK Timber ourselves to better understand where they're coming from, and what opportunities may exist.

We need to continue our efforts to "sign on" as many supporters, and supporting organizations for our effort as possible. The larger our support base, the more weight our recommendations will carry. If you have not already replied to earlier emails requesting your vote of support for our position statement, please do so at your earliest convenience. And if you've forwarded the Position Statement on to others, and have not heard back from them, please consider giving them a gentle reminder.

Thanks for your continuing support. We are making positive progress.