

# Park County WPLI Advisory Committee | MINUTES

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February 15, 2017 | 6:00 – 8:00 pm | Park County Library – Cody – Grizzly Hall

Meeting called by Bucky Hall, WPLI Committee Chair  
Type of meeting Advisory Committee  
Facilitator Tara Kuipers, Tara Kuipers Consulting

## Attendees

Committee Members: Christine Bekes, Jenny DeSarro, John Gallagher, Karinthia Harrison, Greg Mayton, Chris Pfister, Phyllis Preator, JD Radakovich, Rori Renner, Doug Smith, Chairman Bucky Hall, Co-Chair Lee Livingston, Facilitator Tara Kuipers, Committee Secretary Shaunna Romero

Other Attendees: Brandon Taglioli, Forest Engineer, Shoshone National Forest; Ken Ostrom, GIS Coordinator, Shoshone National Forest; Sam Hochhalter, Cody area Regional Fisheries Supervisor, WY Game & Fish; Park County Commissioners Joe Tilden and Loren Grosskopf; Cody Country Snowmobile Assoc. members Rob Marshall, Tate McCoy, Tim Metzler, Bert Miller, Brenda Miller; Charles Leonhardt and Fremont McCoy, Pinnear Racing; Grant and Nicholle Gerharter; Sean K. Leush; Linda Reynolds; Tommy Thompson, Trout Unlimited; Paul Spitler, The Wilderness Society

Absent: Wes Allen; Rick Harrison; Michael Hirsch; Bob Jackson; Joe Kondelis; John McGee; Hap Ridgway; Dustin Rosencranse

## NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, March 15 – 6:00 PM

Cody Library – Grizzly Hall

Forest Service and G& F personnel will continue with information on the vegetation and animal habitat of the High Lakes WSA.

### Actions:

Identify any concerns of semi-primitive use currently  
Enforcement or restrictions?

How are semi-primitive designations monitored? Enforced?

Winter / Summer season dates

Non-system trails

## AGENDA TOPICS

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### *Approval of Minutes* |

January 18 committee meeting minutes: Clarification of the committee's reference to "release of the remaining 23,000 acres" in the McCullough Peaks was requested. The minutes will be reissued with these revisions and presented for approval at the March 15 meeting.

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## *High Lakes WSA Forest Service presentation*

Shoshone National Forest Engineer Brandon Taglioli and GIS Coordinator Ken Ostrom provided maps showing the High Lakes WSA location/boundaries, history and current uses. Taglioli said that, of the 2.5 million acres the SNF encompasses, 56% is currently designated Wilderness. The High Lakes WSA comprises less than 1% of the SNF. The 14,700 acres in the High Lakes was designated as a WSA in the Wyoming Wilderness Act of 1984.

The High Lakes are a high use area for snowmobilers. Other uses include hiking, hunting, fishing and skiing (including summer back country skiing).

Forest Service management goals/standards of the WSA allow semi-primitive motorized winter recreation and non-motorized summer. To maintain the semi-primitive status, management includes regulation of the number of days camping in any one spot is permitted. (Semi-primitive refers to the recreational opportunity experience in an area, which is measured by the number of people and impact.)

Q&A:

Q: How does the percentage of Wilderness in the SNF compare to other forests?

A: The percentage is comparatively very high in the SNF.

Q: Does the Forest Service manage snowmobile use?

A: No, there has not been a need to. Use data has been gathered but not yet analyzed.

Q: Has the FS taken "gatekeeper" management efforts in other areas?

A: In the Popo Agie, registration for stock use is required; they are tracking the use/number of people.

Q: What dates define summer and winter use?

A: Because of variation in seasonal conditions each year, summer and winter use are more condition-based than date-based. The snowmobiling trail markers are typically pulled around the end of April, but use does continue as late as snow conditions allow.

Discussion of winter use trails continued. Trail A (the main highway) is the only groomed trail; markers are placed on others for guidance. Snowmobiles are permitted to go off trail. Ostrom noted there has been some intrusion into Wilderness. Rocks, some the size of "one-ton trucks" are prevalent in the area, preventing broader over snow travel. Ostrom said the only trails shown on the FS maps provided are FS trails, others do exist.

Q: Are there any grazing leases in the WSA?

A: There were sheep grazing leases at one time but all have expired.

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## *Game & Fish presentation*

Cody area Regional Fisheries Supervisor Hochhalter provided a history of Game & Fish management and fish resources in the High Lakes today. Hochhalter said that during the westward expansion of the 1800s, a high harvest of the fish populations resulted in stocking fish native to the eastern United States. Between 1910 and 1939, fish stocked in the Big Horn Mountains and alpine waters were brook, rainbow, and "black spotted" or "mountain trout" (today's Yellowstone cutthroat). Lakes of the Beartooth Plateau were historically fishless. Hochhalter said, though records from the time are incomplete, brook trout were stocked in at least 32 of the approximately 50 lakes within the High Lakes WSA in the 1930s.

Today most High Lakes WSA's lakes support high density brook trout populations. Four are not suitable spawning habitat for brook trout and instead are stocked every other year with golden trout or cutthroat trout.

The area is a popular location for backpack fishing trips. Beartooth Lake is accessed for ice fishing. Angler use data is not collected.

Q&A:

Q: Would it be practical to clear non-native brook trout out and stock native?

A: The lakes are challenging in method/means to stock, but are not out of consideration. (Note: No conservation populations of Yellowstone cutthroat trout exist in the High Lakes area.)

Q: Would a Wilderness designation complicate stocking fish efforts?

A: Yes, logistics are more challenging and more bureaucratic hurdles exist in Wilderness areas.

Q: Is stocking fish by helicopter feasible for Wilderness areas?

A: G&F will continue using helicopter to stock those historically stocked by this method (since the 80s), but will not add additional.

Q: Is the only criteria for helicopter stocking the fact that it was historically a stocked lake?

A: Yes, but the decision to stock is still given a lot of scrutiny because of other species that might be impacted like frogs.

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### *High Lakes WSA Field Trip*

The High Lakes field trip is planned for Saturday, April 1. The committee members will be divided into two trips, one going out at 9 a.m. and the other at 12:30 p.m.

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### *Public Comment*

Bert Miller, Wyoming State Snowmobile Association president and a member of the Governor's Outdoor Recreation Council offered comment. Miller said the snowmobile club takes care of approximately 37 miles of trail in the High Lakes WSA, including building a safety shelter. The club has partnered with the Forest Service the past three years and Miller said, it is a great system, a great partnership. The club feels the current uses in the WSA are working very well. Miller said the High Lakes are a highly valued snowmobile area; the only other comparable in the region is the Big Horns.

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### *Closing*

The meeting was adjourned.