

Shooting Facilities and Improvements Development and Oversight Task Force
April 10, 2026, Meeting Summary

Introduction and Approvals

Liz Whiting moved to pass the March meeting notes as is and several others seconded that motion. There were no objections, so the notes passed as is.

Deb O'Neill announced that the agenda was slightly altered, and John Kanta was going to speak at 11 instead. She also read an email from Jim Foster on behalf of the North Valley Sportsman Club stating that they received their lease and instead of going up 300%, the 10-year lease increased for the first year by 66% and will increase ~2% each year thereafter, doubling the lease in 10 years. They feel that they can absorb this increase, and concerns will be addressed with the DNRC Director next week.

Survey Update

Renee Lemon gave a brief overview of the progress of the survey and where we are now. In March, the surveys were reviewed, and comments were made by the committee. Sam Hoggatt sent the shooting range survey to the ranges with a May 8 deadline. Then, FWP will summarize the survey responses.

For the individual survey, Deb O'Neill sent out an email to all license ambassadors (about 112 people) to notify them that FWP will be sending out a flyer with a QR code. The personal survey will be conducted through July 1 to gather the most responses possible within the committee's timeline.

PR Subcommittee Report

The press release was sent out through Representative Sprunger and will be sent out through FWP and Mandy Rambo's list serves. Members of the task force are encouraged to share the press release.

Andy Larsson created a Facebook group for the task force so that they can get more engagement from the public. Any photos can be posted on the page pending admin approval. They will have to be careful not to censor people, but content must be within the context of the group. Andy Larsson motioned to go live with the Facebook group and with no objections, the motion passed.

Out-of-state presentation – SD CO John Kanta (SD Game, Fish and Parks)

John Kanta of South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks presented to the group about their new shooting sports complex and the process that they used to make it happen. In 2019, the PR act was changed to emphasize shooting sports and hunter's education and consequently, the governor wanted to create a big shooting range with John Kanta as the project leader. The goals of the project stressed having a safe, welcoming, inclusive place to offer shooting sports and practice. Through discussions with existing ranges, they considered advice and public needs to develop plans for the complex. The authority for the complex lies with the Game, Fish, and Parks with feedback from the commission and stakeholder group.

Development of the complex partially catered to the land that already existed. Land was acquired for a reasonable price and there was a ridgeline between the different bays. They did not have to bring any dirt in but instead cut into ridges to divide between the North and South ranges. Their planning team consisted of a variety of people, including a Paralympian, to ensure that accessibility was a priority.

The complex is divided into a north (for the public) and south range (technical, advanced, LE training etc.). It includes shotgun, archery, long-range, and a meeting area for education and banquets. The complex can accommodate year-round opportunities for all levels of shooters, education and outreach, LE training, and organized shooting competitions.

The total project cost was just over \$20 million, with a \$10 million fundraising goal. They are still actively fundraising and currently have ~\$6.8 million in donations and pledges. Some bays are free to the public and other areas are membership only and anyone under 18 is free of charge. The complex accrues over \$400,000 annually in maintenance costs, but in exchange for LE training and on-site storage, LE helps with some maintenance and operations costs (about \$70,000 annually). Additionally, local clubs pay annual payments with a per person cost for competitions. All funds go into maintenance and operations.

The primary concern with a new complex was the impact that it would have on local shooting ranges and other businesses. Subsequent decisions were made to stimulate the local economy rather than having amenities available for purchase at the complex. Notably, they do not sell gear or ammo on site, encouraging users to go to local stores to make purchases. Additionally, there is not a campground on-site so that a private campground can benefit from visitation. Overall, they have found that local clubs are looking for a home base and their memberships have been increasing because of the range.

All staff are trained as range safety officers and can address issues. Most issues are addressed through polite conversation, and any additional enforcement is managed through the local LE. They do not require waivers or sign-ins, and participation is at your own risk, but rules are posted to reduce liability.

Prior to construction, they predicted 30,000 visits annually, but they have already seen that in 5 months and are on track to see up to 100,000 visitors in the first year, partially due to the mild winter this year. They also anticipated 1,000 memberships within the first year and already have 700 memberships. They anticipated having one full-time staff member, but now they have 4 full-time staff and 15 seasonal staff members that work 15-40hrs per week. Several volunteers also help them out with various tasks as needed. Outside of the competitions, visitors come from within a 6-hour radius to use the facilities.

Wyoming Process Presentation—Jeff Hindoien

Jeff Hindoien presented about the shooting development complex that is being developed in Cody, WY. In 2023, the WY Legislature created a *State Shooting Complex Development and Oversight Task Force* with a similar structure to this one. They were tasked with choosing a single site for a shooting complex through an RFP. Ultimately, Park County (Cody) was chosen. The task force recommended that a joint powers entity to be created for siting, construction, and operation with general oversight going to WY Department of State Parks and WY Game and Fish was involved in planning hunter education programs. The construction is in the beginning stages, including road construction and water supply well-draining.

May Field Trip and Member Comments

The next meeting will be held in Great Falls on May 15th and then the group will go to tour the event area. Members are invited to stay the night and attend the event the following day.

The largest shooting event in Montana is taking place on June 20th and 21st in Forsyth, MT. Several members will be attending, and everyone is invited.

Members will visit additional shooting complexes as they travel, and report back. The committee then moved to pre-approve up to \$400 for travel, and all travel should be communicated to the committee. With no objections, the motion passed.

Public Feedback Session

There were no public comments made in person or online.

Final Comments and Next Steps

Please reach out to Deb O'Neill with any meeting conflicts and whether you will be attending the May meeting and need lodging.