

SHOOTING RANGE FACILITIES TASK FORCE
JULY MEETING NOTES - DRAFT
FWP HQ, HELENA
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, JULY 7, 2026

Facilitator: Deb O'Neill (FWP)

Notetaker: Natalie Schaus (FWP)

Task Force Members Present: Senator John Fuller (co-chair; Montana Senate), Representative Kerri Seekins-Crowe (co-chair; Montana House), Seth Berglee (Shield Arms), Senator Willis Curdy (Montana Senate), Mitch King (Montana Outdoor Legacy Foundation), Christie Knudsen (shooting association), Mandy Rambo (Department of Commerce), Richard Roth (Governor's Office), and Liz Whiting (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board)

Task Force Members Excused: Representative Courtenay Sprunger (Montana House), Andy Larsson (Skinner Sights)

Invited FWP Staff: Jeff Hindoién (Legal), Sam Hoggatt (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division), Renee Lemon (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division), and Marty Tuttle (Legal)

Invited Guests: Walt Proulx (CO DNR, Cameo Shooting and Education Complex Manager)

Meeting Objective: Start outlining task force recommendations.

Meeting Goals:

- 1) Gather information about the CO shooting facility.
- 2) Discuss individual survey and facility survey findings.

Tuesday July 7, 2026

9:00 a.m. Introduction—Deb O'Neill, FWP

- There is a big agenda today, but no times so it will be at the committee's pace.

9:03 a.m. Q&A w/Walt Proulx, Cameo Shooting and Education Complex Manager

- He has been doing major range consults across the country for 8 years
- There are often mistakes made that are tied to politics, personal goals, etc.
- He gives honest opinions
- The Cameo Shooting Sports Complex is one of the best in the country, if not the world
- He was involved in the design and development before working for the state
- What is the objective for Montana?
 - o The commission was started through legislation to figure out what would be best for the state (several shooting facilities, one large one, etc.).
 - o We are coming into another legislative session for a recommendation
- Location is critical and it will fail if it is in the wrong place. Everyone who represents their area thinks it is the best location, but it involves more factors.

- There needs to be infrastructure that can support large events
- Economic development should come from a large shooting complex from tourism
- Last year they hosted 539 permitted events (not including non-permitted events)
- If there is a reason to be there past the 2 days, that is also important for economic development
- They have been open since August of 2018
- Failures are almost always related to selfishness and lack of following advice
- If you have local companies that are interested in helping, you can do a project like this for a fraction of the cost
- 1,800 acre footprint
- There is a fee structure including day passes (\$12), annual passes (\$150), per person for some events, and the percentage of gross for other events
- He has 4 FTE on staff and 5-7 temps
- Ben Avery has 50 FTE
- Their land was a formerly reclaimed coal mine property
- There are many ways to go about land acquisition, but it is easiest if you have the state government behind the project
- There are about 150,000 people within an hour of the range
- There are fewer hotels in the direct area, but there are more a bit further away
- Sometimes events will fill a hotel by buying a block rate
- They sell ammo, but not guns because managing an FFL as a public entity is tough
- They are trying not to be in competition with local businesses, but they may open up for concessionaires
- Companies nearby have gotten more patronage since the facility opened
- There are several local gun clubs and a small range, but they are also getting more business
- 4H and other youth groups train there
- They host an adaptive shooting sports event every fall and the veterans group comes out weekly
- Smaller ranges rely on local attendance, they don't have as much money, and they can't host major events
- Everyone needs a local shooting range, but also, a major facility fills in the gaps
- Most states can't have multiple large shooting facilities
- They don't compete as much with other facilities because the events themselves seek sponsorships.
- Since they are state funded, they look into being more revenue neutral
- Some events put them at capacity, so staff is dedicated to help them with the event
- Most of the user groups consider this to be their home range, including some clubs
- Most that rent the range out for events are for profit groups
- Their operating budget is \$460,000, not including FTE (they are State employees)
- The state engineering group did the drawings
- The annual lease is only a few thousand dollars
- There are more shelters than buildings
- Since the facility didn't use much state money, it was easier to push the project through
- Denver would've brought in more traffic, but it would've been more expensive and much more difficult to acquire land

- The Cameo Shooting and Education Complex name was from a company called Cameo and their emphasis on education
- The Chambers of Commerce have a good relationship with them, local organizations, and other groups receive presentations regularly
- There is a county and state sales tax, but a lot of economic impact measurements were done by local groups
- There is no exact way to find out the economic impacts
- To do something like this facility, you would need a minimum on 2,000 acres, but even more is better
- They are on city water
- The location was already chosen and the land was acquired before his time
- He has multiple things that he looks at: year-round weather, lodging, transport, interstate access, local population, north-facing areas, geographic features, proximity to an airport
- 5 people with no dog in the fight should help to make the decision so that it is truly the best location
- North facing slopes tend to melt snow faster, wind is an issue
- It is cheaper to cut into a hillside

10:25 a.m. Break

10:54 a.m. Report outs

- Would WMAs be able to be used for a range?
 - o Jeff Hindoien: It depends on where the funding sources came from and what the intended purpose can include. He can look into them and talk to the finance side to see what could be available.
- Seth Berglee: Wyoming is a different style because it is a State/ County/ Municipality facility. There are more funds coming in for this project and they hired a CEO to run it.
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: Both projects are interested in working with us on a regional level even though they have different approaches
- Liz Whiting: Cody was partially chosen because of the tourism of Yellowstone. Some committee members were against it because of the weather, wind, and topography. We shouldn't build it thinking that it is going to make the state rich, because that isn't really going to be the case. Ideally, it should be a minimum of 500 acres, and it should have campsites or lodging, there's no need to reinvent the wheel. Daily passes in addition to annual memberships are a good idea and so is an indoor air rifle range so that it is usable during winter. If you don't have community buy-in, you will never be successful. CMP did a \$10 million match with Cody, and if it goes well, they will consider a match with another state.
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: The South Dakota tour was fascinating, and they have a lot of sponsors
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: The Quigley was also talking about other matches around the state
- Senator John Fuller: He, his son, and his grandson took first in the 3-generation shooting competition
- Christie Knudsen: went to the New Mexico center with Andy Larsson. They have a lot of lodging and hiking facilities available. They also sell deer and elk hunts. An

important thing is having a facility for banquets because you could also use it as a classroom. A welding/ maintenance area is also a smart idea

- Senator John Fuller: Each discipline has its own technological requirements that have a cost
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: There is a family range that SD would expand if they redid the design because it gets so much use

11:30 a.m. Lunch Break

12:10 p.m. Shooting Facility Surveys Discussion

- Q12: 1,016 were in favor of a premium shooting complex and 224 were opposed
- Q4: it is hard to say how much people would actually travel one-way to shoot
- Q5: Mostly people experienced challenges with lack of facilities for certain shooting sports and overcrowding
- Q6: 48% strongly agreed and 29.55% of people said they agreed that they would participate more in shooting sports if there were new or improved facilities
- Q7: most people wanted more access to long-range rifle, mid-range rifle, pistol bays, and short-range rifle access
- Q8: most people want year-round access improvements and longer shooting distances
- Individual Survey Discussion:
 - o There are concerns about locations that would be available that are close to a highway
 - o There may have been some confusion about the type of club question
 - o There are concerns about whether people would be willing to pay for a day pass
 - o Community buy-in is important
- Club Survey Discussion:
 - o FWP should do a better job of communicating what their grant program can cover

1:09 p.m. Public Feedback Session

- No one raised their hand for public comment

1:10 p.m. Work Session

- Seth Berglee: It doesn't make sense to use the funds to make more than one \$2-\$3 million facility. It doesn't make sense to reinvent the wheel for range improvement project funding. We should look at both paths forward and what a \$4-\$5 million project would look like (location, cost, features, etc.). Then, if the legislature shuts down a big project, at least we would have a better framework for smaller projects.
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: she is not going to give up on whatever the committee decides when it comes to the legislature. She thinks we should look into grant opportunities, leases, and other funding sources

- Liz Whiting: Would it make sense to take a vote as a committee to see what people are leaning towards?
- Seth Berglee: It might make the most sense to set up subcommittees to look into funding, location, etc.
- Mitch King: This larger facility is not an FWP endeavor, it is a state endeavor. This is a shooter, hunter, and tourism facility and we need to not forget the tourism part of it. It needs to be funded through a combination of things, not just one tax.
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: Mandy can look into funding and the governor's office can look into location.
- Seth Berglee: we should look into using state land that is already owned, even if that means leasing it
- Sen. John Fuller: he thinks the only economic driver for MT would be a destination shooting complex. As a committee, we need to make a decision about which lane we want to pursue and which way we want to go. Made a motion for the task force to pursue establishing a destination shooting complex for the benefit of the people of Montana.
- Liz Whiting: wants to add a caveat that we will continue to work with local clubs
- Mitch King made a friendly amendment to continue pursuing supplemental grant programs to supplement existing shooting facility needs. The amendment was accepted, Sen Fuller made the motion and Mitch seconded. Passed unanimously
- Rich Roth: the committee is tasked with looking for both options, so he thinks we should come up with a site recommendation
- Subcommittees should be land and location, grant funding for the big project, and grants and programs for current smaller shooting ranges
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: If we could figure out a location suggestion, that would help us move forward
- Seth Berglee: we need to have a list of things that we are looking for in a location
- Mitch King: Could we set up an RFP to gauge proposals for a facility
- Seth Berglee: we should come up with a list of things that the RFPs would be judged on (location, airports, etc). Bozeman, Kalispell, Missoula, and Billings are the 4 major airports (in that order)
- Mitch King: Proposal that we develop a specific list of criteria and utilize that criteria to focus an RFI
- Seth Berglee: Moves that we set up 3 subcommittees: pursuing the complex and its parameters, funding for clubs and a complex, and (state) land use requirements
- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe: we should wait for the RFI for after these subcommittees meet (all agreed)
- Next meeting was moved to 8/10/26

2:15 p.m. Subcommittee Assignments

- Complex
 - o Mitch King, Chair
 - o Seth Berglee
 - o Liz Whiting
 - o Rich Roth
 - o Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe
 - o Sen. Willis Curdy

- Rep. Courtenay Sprunger
 - Nephi Cole (support)
- Funding
 - Mandy Rambo, Chair
 - Rich Roth
 - Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe
 - Seth Berglee
 - Sen. Willis Curdy
 - Mitch King
 - Nephi Cole (support)
 - Sam Hoggatt (FWP support)
 - Renee Lemon (FWP support)
 - Lena Havron (FWP support)
- Land Use
 - Seth Berglee, Chair
 - Andy Larsson
 - Rich Roth
 - Sen. Fuller
 - Christie Knudsen
 - Sen. Curdy
 - Jeff Hindoien (FWP support)
 - Ryan Weiss (DNRC support)

2:33 p.m. Break

2:53 p.m. Task Force Next Steps

- Email Deb about days that you could (or could not) make it to a subcommittee meeting
- Please send any mileage changes to Deb
- Deb can send the list of criteria that was brought up to everyone
- Land Use Subcommittee- 8-11 on July 16th
- Need more information about DNRC contacts
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- August 10th in Helena

3:21 p.m. Adjourn