

SHOOTING RANGE FACILITIES TASK FORCE
MAY DRAFT MEETING NOTES
FWP GREAT FALLS OFFICE
8:30 AM – 12:00 PM, MAY 15, 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), Richard Roth (Governor’s Office), Representative Courtenay Sprunger (Montana House), and Liz Whiting (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board), Christie Knudsen (shooting association),

Task Force Members Excused: Mandy Rambo (Department of Commerce), Mitch King (Montana Outdoor Legacy Foundation), Andy Larsson (Skinner Sights)

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

Invited Guests: Meegan Bennett and Ron Steffen of McGough Construction

Meeting Objective: Expand Task Force knowledge to gather targeted information.

Meeting Goals:

- 1) Gather additional information about the SD facility.
- 2) Understand preliminary shooting facility data from survey.
- 3) Understand preliminary shooter needs data from survey.

Friday May 15, 2026

8:45 a.m. Introduction—Deb O’Neill, FWP

- Deb gave an overview of the agenda
- Seth Berglee moved to accept the April Meeting Notes and Rep. Seekins-Crowe seconded the motion, so it passed

8:50 a.m. Report Outs

- Rep. Seekins-Crowe: Will be going to Rapids City 6/19 and 6/20 and if anyone would like to join, they can. She has reached out to legislators in Wyoming but has not heard back yet.
- Liz Whiting: Took the flyers and had great success at pawn shops, but not at chain gun stores. Some stores said that they would not post it because it was not branded.
- Senator Curdy: Has been spreading the word at meetings and has received positive and negative feedback. He has also been working with a range that has experienced a large lease cost increase on state land.

- Overall: The next session will have to look into lease costs. Maybe they can make that a topic of their legislative report. So far, the governor is on board and if that changes, we will hear about it. In the meantime, we need to look into potential locations.
- Sen. Fuller: he will be shooting at an event soon
- Rep. Sprunger: Outside of the press work, she talked to the North Valley club and they are running into issues with fees. She has some outreach to do, but has had a lot of traveling for work.
- Christie Knudsen: She is going to the New Mexico Shooting center soon. She went to the NRA annual meeting with Andy Larsson

9:06 a.m. Q&A with Meegan Bennett and Ron Steffen of McGough Construction

- Ron Steffen: They recently wrapped up the SD Shooting Sports Complex and are here for any questions
- From groundbreaking to finish, it was 16 months (mostly due to civil issues out of their control. Realistically a project like that could be completed in 12 months or less
- Seth Berglee: Can you give a timeline for involvement of the company?
- Ron: Game, Fish, and Parks is managed in coordination with the state engineering agency (OSE). The project was a hard bid, so they came in after design and did the work. The design team encompassed an architectural firm. These projects need a landscape architect and civil engineer. The programming timeframe for onboarding prior to construction usually takes 8-10 months. A project of this scale can be done in 2 years. A hard bid lengthens the time. If they had been brought in earlier, they could've worked better with and pushed the design team.
- Rep. Seekins-Crowe: how much did you have to bring in
- Ron: They put in two wells and brought in half of the electric
- Seth Berglee: Was the well and septic all on site controlled
- Ron: yes, it was all on site controlled
- Sen. Curdy: How many change orders did you experience?
- Ron: This was hard bid, so they didn't have change orders that weren't scope driven. Even so, they had less than 12. Typically, in a design build there is a bit of nuance and usually there is a guaranteed maximum price.

9:32 a.m. PR Subcommittee Update—Rep. Sprunger

- They saw statewide coverage of the news about the survey. They haven't seen the press release through CBS Montana, but that is it.
- Belgrade News, Livingston Enterprise, and the Daily Montanan got the word out through newspapers
- DWP sent the press release out to their list serve and so did the Department of Commerce
- The social media account is up, but not very active. Today, the task force should get images and video footage of the members shooting today.
- Deb O'Neill: The main and regional Facebook pages for FWP have also posted the survey and it has gotten a lot of hits. They also sent out flyers to license ambassadors

9:37 a.m. Shooting Facility Survey Update—Sam Hoggatt, FWP

- They sent out the initial email on April 8th, then there was a follow up email in late April
- Deb, Sam, and Natalie called any remaining clubs that had not responded
- They got a 44% response rate
- Overview:
 - o Ranges would like to add or expand on shotgun sporting clays, rifle ranges greater than 500 yards, and youth or beginner focused areas
 - o Most ranges have buildings and indoor storage, restroom facilities, and electricity
 - o Range and Facility infrastructure, access, and improvements to water and power
 - o Some people wanted to add that they wanted safety features and better access
- Next steps:
 - o When do we want to close the club survey? Not for a bit
 - o Look into where potential grant money would come from for a big facility
- What could be good for a beginner facility?
 - o Doesn't need to be its own facility, can just be incorporated into existing structures
 - o Air Gun
- Funding Overview:
 - o Shooting Range Program: PR funded
 - o Community Shooting Range: 50/50 match program
 - 100% of applicants received funding
 - Lots of ranges come back after receiving a grant
- Sen. Curdy: Did you encounter concerns of not wanting a singular shooting sports complex?
- Sam Hoggatt: No, most concerns were about their facility
- Sen. Curdy: He has heard concern that they will lose money and not be able to continue if there is a bigger complex
- Seth Berglee: He sees how that could be a perception, but bigger complexes have shown that it actually brings more membership to smaller clubs because it gets more people interested in shooting
- Rep. Seekins-Crowe: We could visit the Billings facilities because there are already lots of options in Billings. That would likely not be the right place for a complex because of its proximity to Cody
- Deb O'Neill: What would you like us to compare across the club survey data?
 - o Rich: Key takeaways would be helpful

10:27 a.m. Individual Survey Update—Deb O'Neill, FWP

- Results:
 - o Over 1200 responses so far from sending it out to our list serve and other task force members' actions
 - o About 500 people gave us their email
 - o Most shooters shot weekly
 - o Most shooters traveled less than 25 miles to shoot
 - o We got information from all but 12 counties

- Over 50% responded that they would like to see year-round access as their main priority
- About 60% said they would participate more if the shooting facilities near them were new or improved
- The number one type of shooting they would like to see is long range rifle
- Over 80% said they would like to see a large shooting complex in the state
- People would drive 50-100 miles to go to a complex
- The Bozeman area was where most people would like to see a complex (likely skewed because of where people taking the survey were from)
- Kalispell was the least favored area for a complex
- Questions/ Next Steps:
 - Rich Roth: What are the shooting facilities around the areas where people answered this survey?
 - Seth Berglee: How many people live in one area but would like it in another area? Could we figure out what cities would be within a 6-hour drive of potential locations?
 - Sen. Fuller: we should look more into the economic impact of these facilities
 - Seth: There is a chamber group in SD that tracks economic development, and we could reach out to them to get more information. Grand Junction probably has similar data.
 - Deb will look into more data regarding the economic impact of shooting complexes and how widespread that impact is
 - Why did Wyoming choose Cody when Cheyenne could draw shooters from Denver?
 - We should look into other factors that led to that decision
 - We should look into the lease information related to the WY complex
 - Sen. Fuller: Real estate—the best place would be on DNRC land, but it is more expensive now.

10:57 a.m. Public Feedback Session

- Ted Beardsley: Owns a gun shop in Manhattan. When a lease expired, the state reevaluated their role in historical sites. If there is a state facility, when there are major shooting events, only the local city would benefit, but all tax dollars would be paying for it. He would like to know how to combat that
- Wes Oedekoven: He instructs 4H. He would like to bring up that Flathead county is struggling to find facilities to host shooting sports events. They have had to move their facilities to another building in the fairgrounds. Please keep in mind local clubs that would like to make things work. Their youth program is broad, and they do air rifles, air pistols, shotgun, muzzleloader, and archery. They use the same facility for these, but it is unclear if they will be back in their original building. Across the state, they are not the only county that is fighting to find good locations. Scott Francis, the state coordinator, may be able to answer more questions about the 4H programs. There are a lot of limitations about safety, and it limits the number of kids that can participate in these programs. He first heard about this meeting through Facebook.

11:01 a.m. Questions, Next Steps, Review, and Close

- What would help you all start forming recommendations?
 - o Seth Berglee: get the metric that Wyoming used for grading (methodology) the applications
 - o Sen. Curdy: can we reach out about economic impact data?
- Would you like to have a June meeting in 2 weeks? Would you rather wait and have an in-depth July meeting
 - o Liz Whiting: she cannot make it to the proposed June meeting date
 - o Seth Berglee: Could we change the meeting to a Zoom-only for the purpose of getting more information from other states?
- FWP will try to synthesize the information better for the July 7th (tentative) meeting
- Christie Knudsen: can we get numbers rather than percentages from the survey
- Sen. Curdy: we should send the survey out through 4H clubs
- Rep. Seekins-Crowe: can we get more information on 4H youth shooter numbers?

11:25 p.m. Adjourn