

March 2023 PRRA Subcommittee Minutes

List of Attendees- Tim Smith, Tim Tunnell; Jason Farnsworth, Dave Zorn, Brian Peterson, Jeff Cowley, Mike Herman, Andrew Furman, Jonathan Wentz, Michael Steele, Brock Merrill

- 1) Subcommittee discussed the maximum number of reservations per user allowed at one time. Currently, 3 reservations are allowed, historically 5 reservations were allowed- negative and positive feedback have been received over the years. The subcommittee discussed the pros and cons and agreed on recommending a change to 4 max reservations/user at one time. This would allow individuals the ability to reserve two weekends. It would increase flexibility to use part of those reservations for farther out days on less available properties while maintaining part of the reservations for more rolling use during the rest of the season, thereby increasing opportunities for PRRA users. Four reservations was deemed an agreeable middle point.
- 2) Instances of users not parking in designated parking lots- the group acknowledged there are a couple properties where we occasionally have users parking off the side of the road in non-designated parking areas. The subcommittee agreed on the process of NGPC giving one warning, then begin revoking access to repeat users for one year, or permanently if the issue persists.
- 3) Area J and B parking lot maintenance- Users described a large washout/hole needing repairs for public parking lot- EDO will make repairs to maintain parking lots with noted issue.
- 4) Allowable recreation types on Area A- The subcommittee discussed at length the rationale for/against waterfowl hunting on Area A. This property is the only property where waterfowl hunting is excluded as an existing use while allowing other recreation opportunities (excluding the new pilot OCSW fishing site). The group acknowledged some of the policy discussions and decisions the GC will consider but only evaluated the circumstances specific to recreation and expressed that: 1) waterfowl hunting with or without temporary blinds is not prohibited by easement (permanent blinds are prohibited) with adjacent landowners; and 2) consistent with our approach on all other properties, the good neighbor policy's intent is to allow similar uses on these properties as are allowable on other similarly situated public and private lands (e.g. recreational uses occurring on neighbor properties within the Platte valley) in Nebraska. The group recommended adding waterfowl hunting as an existing use within the currently mapped geographic area where access is currently allowed. Access on the land surrounding the OCSW would be open to all uses but access in the water or sand area of OCSW remains closed to access. Signage would need to get updated if approved.
- 5) Survey changes- one survey question will be added asking about fish harvest on the newly opened Leaman OCSW area. NGPC will look into different user based statistics for PRRIP use.
- 6) OCSW pilot property access review Area K- The subcommittee reviewed year one information on the pilot property (Area K) and evaluated other properties under PRRIP ownership. Additional properties were deemed not appropriate for consideration at this time due to other constraints (active mining). The subcommittee also discussed the types of recreation at Area K and recommended adding waterfowl hunting as an additional use. The property is situated in a high disturbance area and contains no suitable WC habitat. This made it a unique fit for inclusion of waterfowl hunting during the entire year except the previously agreed tern and plover nesting season closure. Users would still be restricted to the land surrounding the open water and sand peninsula and access would be prohibited in the same manner it was for fishing

during the pilot year. The property has had significant congregations of snow geese using the upland outer area as well as the interior, and would provide an additional opportunity for hunting not available on any other PRRRA lands. A permanent parking lot is needed and was recommended for PRRIP to construct in 2023. Currently, a temporary parking lot is in place.

- 7) NGPC contract renewal- the contract is expected to be approved and provided to the GC in June for approval.
- 8) Public comments received- Two individuals have reached out verbally to the EDO and other PRRIP constituents and expressed a desire to close all waterfowl hunting on PRRRA lands, reduce shooting hours so waterfowl are not targeted during the first and last hours of the day aimed at keeping waterfowl present in the Platte valley for longer periods, thereby benefitting private landowners. The group discussed re-occurring comments regarding users not showing up when reserved, creating fake accounts, etc. EDO evaluated use data and no trends emerged. The subcommittee recommended no future changes needed.
- 9) Law enforcement or unlawful activities for 2022-2023 season- one deer was poached on Area B and was reported to law enforcement. Parking violations were reported to NGPC.
- 10) Keeping past registration numbers visible for previous dates to inform pressure- NGPC will look to change the system to keep past reservation data visible so users can view prior pressure, evaluate the likely impact on game behavior and harvest opportunities, and select sites based on that information.
- 11) Area B- The subcommittee evaluated whether this should remain permanently closed to deer hunting- the group recommended enrolling in lottery rifle season and open back up to other deer seasons similar to how it was pre-GW recharge construction (which precipitated the agreed change to no deer hunting at the time). The general feeling was there was nothing unique requiring special circumstances for deer hunting closure here.
- 12) Other action items or discussion- NGPC requested to add reminder email auto sent one day before reservation to reduce reservations not being used or canceled. We also discussed NGPC's ability to integrate google maps into the parking lot locations. The group agreed to re-evaluate high powered rifle closures on Area J, E, and N in 2024.

Recommendations:

Change Max number of reservations to 4

EDO complete parking lot repairs

Add waterfowl hunting as an existing use within the currently mapped geographic Area A where access is currently allowed. Access on the land surrounding the OCSW would be open to all uses but access in the water or sand area of OCSW remains closed to access. Signage would need to get updated if approved.

Add fish harvest survey question on public surveys

Add waterfowl hunting on Area K, construct permanent parking lot

NGPC modify reservation system to keep past reservation data visible

Open Area B back up for rifle deer hunting, including the lottery