

Cooper Landing Rifle and Sportsman's Club Development Plan

Introduction

Cooper Landing has had an active gun club for 70 years, having first been established in 1947. The Cooper Landing Rifle and Sportsman's Club (CLRSC)¹ is the oldest, continuously operating gun club in Alaska. As the community of Cooper Landing has grown, the location of the current gun range has become problematic. Residential neighborhoods and commercial recreation businesses have grown up near the range and the noise is now a frequent complaint from the neighbors. Additionally, Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) land slated for residential sale and development lies down-range from the shooting range, and cannot be safely developed as long as the range is in use in its current location.

Discussions have taken place for many years regarding moving the range to a new location, but the idea gained momentum in late 2013 when the Cooper Landing Community Club made it a priority to resolve this issue within the community. A committee was created that evaluated a number of public land parcels in and around Cooper Landing. At the March 2014 meeting, the Community Club decided that a State of Alaska-managed parcel near the Dave's Creek gravel pit (~MP 39 Sterling Highway) best met the needs for the community, and a number of actions subsequently followed. The Kenai Peninsula Borough requested that the State of Alaska reclassify the identified lands to make them available for a municipal entitlement request. The State of Alaska agreed with the reclassification request and a subsequent municipal entitlement application for the subject lands was approved. Throughout those discussions, there was continuing significant public support for the idea of developing a public shooting range at the new site.

Purpose of this Development Plan

This Development Plan provides the framework for the development and operation of a multi-use shooting range to be managed by the Cooper Landing Rifle and Sportsman's Club under a proposed lease with the Kenai Peninsula Borough. A long term lease is the most appropriate way for the KPB to transfer management authority for the use of the lands as a shooting range while the formal transfer of title of the lands proceeds from the federal government to the state government and finally to the KPB. The CLRSC hopes to eventually purchase the property once all the title transfers have taken place.

Organization

The CLRSC is incorporated with the State of Alaska as a Nonprofit Corporation, and holds tax exempt status with the IRS as a 501(c)(4) entity. (see attached Appendix A) The CLRSC is managed by a Board of Directors to provide safe and appropriate public access² for pistol, rifle and shotgun shooting. The shooting range will be managed for year round use, open daily for public use unless otherwise closed for scheduled training workshops, competitive events or law

¹ The Cooper Landing Rifle and Sportsman's Club is also known commonly as the "Cooper Landing Gun Club"

² members pay an annual membership fee

enforcement agency qualifications. Summer hours are 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., while winter hours are daylight hours. A Range Master shall be present during scheduled trap shooting and during any organized training and competitive events.

Location

The CLRSC desires to lease the following parcel of real property situated in the Kenai Recording District, Third Judicial District, State of Alaska, and described as follows:

S1/2 S1/2 SW1/4 SW1/4 Section 10; NW1/4 NW1/4 Section 15; and that portion of the NE1/4 NE1/4 Section 16 lying east of the powerline ROW, T5N, R2W, Seward Meridian, State of Alaska, containing 66.5 acres, more or less.

Site Attributes

This parcel was chosen from among a range of possible public land sites because it best meets the needs for a new shooting range. Among its attributes:

- There are no developed residential areas within miles (nearest is at Avalanche Acres, ~3 miles away and in a different valley)
- There are no developed recreational facilities or trails in the area
- The site is situated in a triangle of land with mountains on two sides, providing a safe backdrop for firearms shooting
- Shooting will be directed away from the Sterling Highway
- The direction of shooting is generally north/north-east, so is the best direction to minimize “sun in the eyes” of range users
- The site will provide needed shooting range access to residents of Moose Pass and Seward, as well as Cooper Landing
- The size of the parcel allows the range to expand as demand grows for more shooting sports access

Site Plan

See attached draft site plan (Appendix B) for the proposed layout. Once a lease is secured, a landscape architect will be hired to develop a final layout and site plan.

The State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities manages a large gravel pit on lands to the west of the proposed lease site. Additionally, Chugach Electric Association has a high voltage transmission line traversing the west and south side of the proposed lease site. The range will be designed so that all shooting activities will be directed away from the gravel pit and power lines.

A separate access road will be developed from the Sterling Highway, with a locked gate placed at the highway end to provide security and prevent unauthorized use. The CLRSC will seek a Right of Way across State land for the access road to link the proposed lease site with the Sterling Highway.

Fencing will be placed along all sections of the boundaries where public access might be expected (i.e., on section line easements, along the CEA transmission lines, etc. Signs will be posted notifying the public of the presence of an active shooting range and warn them of hazards beyond the fencing.

Facility Construction

(See attached excerpts from the Knik Public Use Area Rifle Range, Appendix C) These facility drawings are similar to what we anticipate our finished product will look like, depending on final site plan and layout. In addition, the facility will be built to all standards for state and national competition and to all safety standards recommended by the National Rifle Association (NRA). (See NRA Source Book resources: <https://rangeservices.nra.org/sourcebook.aspx>).

We expect to construct the project in the following general order:

- Develop road access from the Sterling Highway and parking area
- Clear and develop a 200+ yard rifle range (we will seek to develop up to a 300 yard range if the site permits)
- Clear and develop a pistol range
- Clear and develop shotgun range (to eventually include trap, upper and lower skeet houses, and 5-stand facilities)
- Construct a latrine
- Relocate current Club House to new location
- Construct necessary storage sheds for generators, equipment and supply storage
- Construct covered shelters for rifle and pistol ranges
- Construct an RV parking pad for volunteer host
- Develop an area for a walking archery range
- Develop an area for a walking rifle range

Funding and availability of volunteer help will dictate how soon the various construction elements will be completed. The CLRSC has been actively involved in hosting Friends of the NRA banquets and other fund raising activities to help facilitate future grant requests, and this is anticipated to be one of the sources for early funding. As state or federal funding opportunities present, the CLRSC will pursue public funding as well.

Operations and Maintenance

The CLRSC has demonstrated that it has been able to provide for a safe, well managed and maintained public shooting range facility that meets the needs of rifle, pistol and shotgun enthusiasts at its current range, and commits to do so at the new location as well. An NRA Range Technical Team (RTT) evaluation of the current range was completed in 2014 and provided a number of recommendations that were implemented to improve the operation of the current range. The CLRSC will consult with RTT representatives during the design and development of the new range to ensure best practices are used in the development and the operation of the new range.

Membership and User Fees

Any person who is at least eighteen (18) years of age, who may legally own a firearm in the United States and has never been convicted of a crime of violence, may become a member of the Cooper Landing Rifle and Sportsman's Club. The current annual membership rate is \$40/year or \$100/3-yr membership. Guests of members may use the facilities while accompanied by a member sponsor, who is responsible for the guest's compliance with CLRSC rules. The daily range reservation fee is \$200/day. Agencies are assessed an annual fee of \$200/year.

Hours of Operation

Hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. during summer and daylight hours during the winter. Should the range be closed for an organized training session, agency qualification or competitive event, the public will be notified of the range closure on the CLRSC website as well as the closure notice being posted at the entrance gate.

CLRSC Shooting Range Rules for Safety and Operation

See attached Appendix D for the Cooper Landing Rifle and Sportsman's Club safety and operation rules, which are provided to each member as part of their annual membership renewal. A complete set of safety and operation rules will be posted in the shooting sheds and all shooters will be advised to be aware of the rules. Members bringing guests must ensure the guests adhere to all posted safety rules.

Volunteer Host

A volunteer host is recruited to serve as the "eyes and ears" at the shooting range each summer to monitor activities 24 hours/day. Problems are reported to a Gun Club officer, or if more serious, to the Alaska State Troopers.

Facility Maintenance

As part of the posted shooting range rules, all shooters will be encouraged to take their trash to one of the several receptacles which will be provided on the ranges, or to the Cooper Landing Solid Waste Transfer facility located at Sterling Highway MP 46. Collection of the trash in the receptacles and maintenance of the backstops will be done by members on a volunteer basis. Annual work days will be scheduled for major clean up and maintenance efforts by the gun club membership.

Lead Reclamation and Environmental Stewardship programs

Lead and other metals is an inevitable byproduct of shooting sports. Lead and any other metals, will be collected and recycled periodically and proceeds from the sale will be used for CLRSC purposes. The backdrops for the ranges will be designed and constructed to simplify the collection of any lead or other metals which will accumulate as well as provide protection of the environment.

Environmental Concerns

Before any construction of roads, parking areas and shooting ranges takes place, an evaluation by qualified personnel will be made to assess whether small feeder creeks are anadromous fish waters requiring a higher level of permitting before any activities take place near them. The area will also

be assessed for the presence of any wetlands, so development can be planned to avoid them, and if avoidance is not possible, mitigate the impacts on any potential wetlands.

Insurance

The CLRSC currently maintains commercial general liability insurance of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 general aggregate. Under the proposed lease with the KPB, it is expected that these minimums will be maintained and that the KPB will also be listed as the Additional Insured. (See Appendix E for current Certificate of Liability Insurance)